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DISTINGUISHED LEADERS

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How are the business and profession of law changing, and how should lawyers adapt for the future?

The legal profession is at an inflection point. Just as the Inflation Reduction Act reshaped how we structure energy transactions, AI is fundamentally reshaping how we practice law, particularly in contracts. Automated drafting and review tools are compressing timelines and commoditizing routine work. But complexity doesn't disappear. It migrates. The lawyers who thrive will be those who do what AI cannot: understand the commercial economics behind a deal, anticipate regulatory shifts before they happen, and translate that insight into actionable strategy for clients.

In energy transition work, for example, no algorithm can negotiate the nuanced interplay between tax credit qualification, sequestration

liability and long-term offtake economics. That requires deep industry knowledge and judgment. Adapt by going deeper, not broader. Become indispensable where complexity lives. The commodity work is gone. Own the expertise that isn't.

What is the best advice for someone considering a career in law, or someone already in the profession who is seeking to make a greater impact?

Find an industry you genuinely love and go deep. When I began focusing on energy transactions, the industry focus transformed my practice. The more I understood the economics of energy, the better my tax advice became.

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Technical legal knowledge alone is never enough. For those considering law, seek out complexity. The commodity work is disappearing. What endures is the judgment that comes from understanding not just the law, but the business behind it.

For those already practicing, position yourself ahead of where your clients are going, not where they are today. I began studying carbon capture incentives before most clients understood their potential. That early investment built credibility that no amount of general practice could replicate. And mentor others actively. The connections forged through programs like Minute Mentoring have reinforced my own thinking as much as they have helped others. Leadership and expertise compound together. Invest in both.

What is the greatest challenge you've faced in your legal career?

When I joined Bracewell in 2007 as a general transactional tax partner, I never anticipated

my practice would transform almost entirely around energy and carbon capture. The greatest challenge was building that expertise before the market fully recognized its importance.

Studying Code section 45Q credits in 2018 required real conviction. At the time, carbon capture was nascent, commercially unproven and poorly understood. Persuading sophisticated clients to structure transactions around incentives that had no established market precedent demanded both technical mastery and credibility I had to earn transaction by transaction.

Building Bracewell's CCUS practice from the ground up, expanding it from a Houston tax team into a national, multidisciplinary group spanning environmental, corporate, FERC and pipeline safety, required sustained leadership through genuine uncertainty.

The reward is watching projects like Tallgrass Trailblazer become operational, proving that early conviction, deep preparation and client trust can move an entire industry forward.