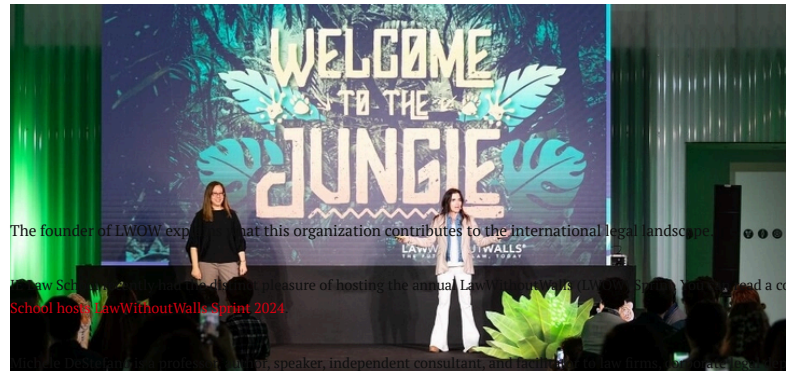


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## The keys to the importance and success of LawWithoutWalls by Michele DeStefano

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The founder of LWOW explains what this organization contributes to the international legal landscape. [IE Law School hosts LawWithoutWalls Sprint 2024](#)

... speaker, independent consultant, and facilitator for legal departments, and legal startups on innovation and technology, culture creation, teaming, and cross-practice, cross-border initiatives. Recognized by the ABA as a Legal Rebel and by the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers (North America) as one of top 20 most innovative lawyers, Michele is a professor of law at the University of Miami, a Program Chair and Affiliated Faculty at Harvard Law School, Executive Education, and the founder of LawWithoutWalls, a multi-disciplinary, international think-tank of over 1000 lawyers, business professionals, entrepreneurs, and law and business students that collaborate to hone new skillsets and mindsets and create innovations at the intersection of law, business, and technology.

She answered some questions to understand the success and importance of LWOW.

### WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF LAWWITHOUTWALLS?

"LawWithoutWalls enhances leadership and teaming skills that are essential to be a successful professional service provider today including: humility, self-awareness, flexibility, audacity, curiosity, creativity and the ability to give and receive feedback.

Although each team is charged with finding a discreet problem within an assigned Topic Challenge and creating a viable, innovative solution with a prototype and business plan, the real purpose is to upskill and reskill how we approach problems and collaborate on multidisciplinary teams. The focus, therefore, is not simply on complex problem solving (which lawyers already excel at) but instead on collaborative problem finding and solving skills. LWOW Sprint helps us enhance our understanding of the target audiences and key stakeholders for whom we are solving the problem and who may be impacting the problem (or solution) in other ways so that we can separate symptoms from root causes. It also helps us improve the way we investigate, share, and communicate with our teammates and the LWOW community at large about the problem we are attempting to collaboratively solve and the solution we intend to create.

In addition, LWOW Sprint is a kind of train-the-trainers event that provides practical tools to help leaders create the right climate, team structure, and process so that a culture of creativity, inclusivity, and innovation can thrive. In short, in our short three days together, we change in inches, yet the impact—on ourselves and how we interact with others at our own organizations—is felt in miles. Moreover, we leave knowing we are now part of a diverse community of kindred spirits who embrace technology and believe in change and innovation."

### WHY DID YOU PARTNER WITH IE LAW SCHOOL?

"First and foremost, we partnered with IE Law School because of Soledad Atienza. I met Soledad during our first year of LawWithout Walls in 2011, before IE Law School was up and running and we are very similarly minded. We are both entrepreneurial and believe in changing the way we educate future legal professionals

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what they might do one year out of law school—but also what they will do 10 years out in jobs that haven't been created yet. The third reason is because Law School supports LWOW by sending students who are super intelligent, creative, and ambitious—and a perfect fit for the LawWithoutWalls community.”

#### **WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LAW AND TECHNOLOGY?**

“Technology of all kinds (including predictive analytics, analytical AI and more recently generative AI, has been replacing tasks and augmenting the work of legal professionals for some time. It has helped them spend less time on low value and more time on high value strategic work. For example, law firms, corporate legal departments, and the Big Four legal departments use AI everyday to help with compliance and due diligence and to help accelerate contracting cycles, automate contract analysis, conduct legal research, and do document review exponentially faster and more cost efficiently. They also use it to identify opportunities for revenue generation. For example, they use it to cross-check specific clauses with payment or other records to identify breaches, and generate and standard legal letters for collection. They also use AI and data analytics to identify repeated breaches in a contract to negotiate the restructuring of commercial arrangements and deal structures in ways that generate greater revenue. They also use it for litigation analytics and outcome prediction.”

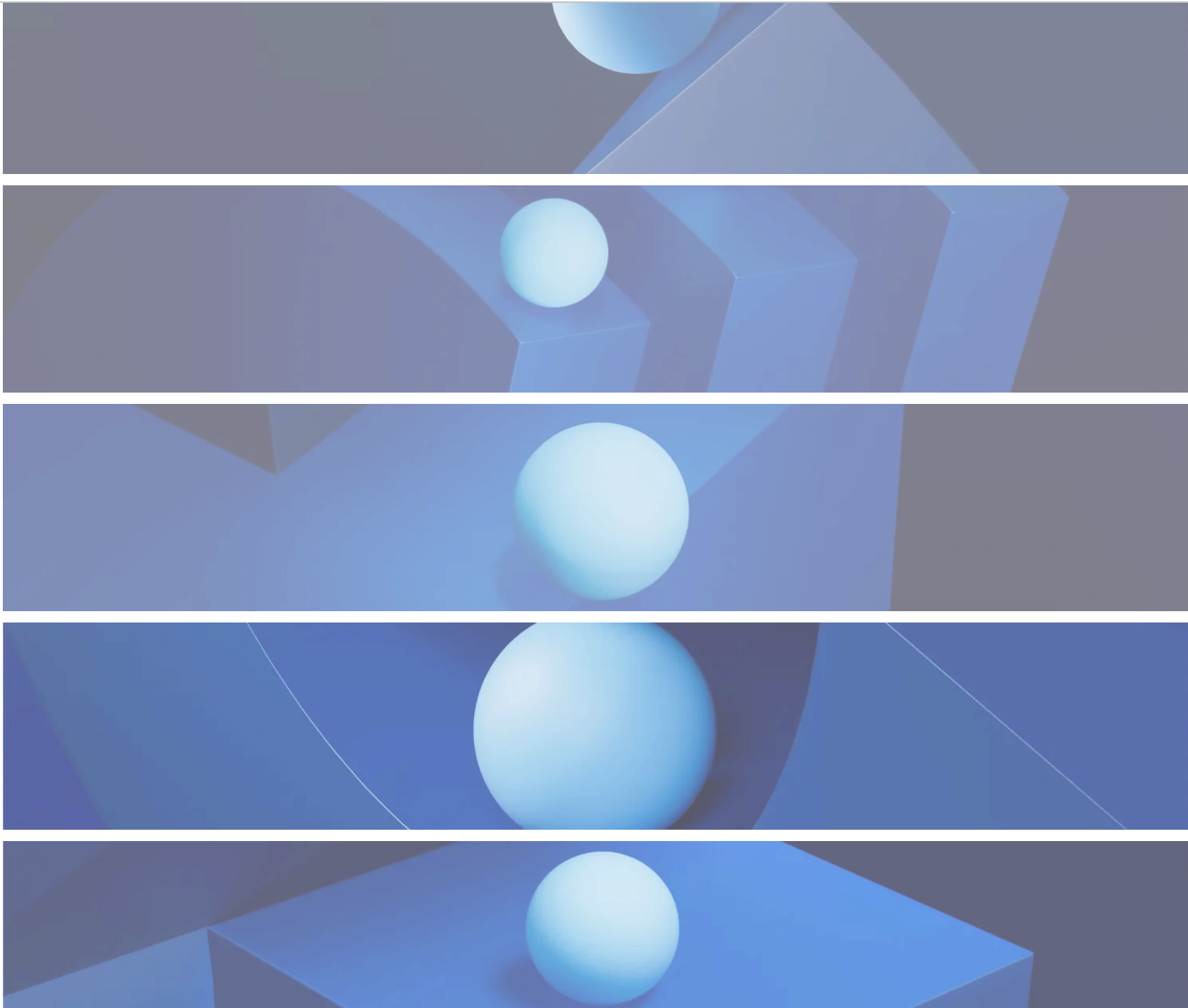
“And as I talk about in my new book *Leader Upheaval: A Guide to Client-Centricity, Culture Creation, and Collaboration*, all of this, is changing the value of what lawyers do and the focus of clients. Today, instead of focusing on what we do, clients are focusing on how we do it. Clients need their professional service providers to help manage change, to leverage technology differently, to learn new skills, to partner on multidisciplinary teams to problem-solve collaboratively and creatively—often in sprints to find innovative solutions. To provide truly client-centric service, shifting the focus from “service” to “experience,” legal professionals need to become adaptive and inclusive leaders with a digital mindset. And the beautiful thing is that AI can help with that. Lawyers can use AI to personalize the customer/client/user experience and make their lives easier (which is what client centricity is all about).”

“I predict that the words “law and technology” will eventually be redundant because the successful professional service providers of the future (in law or any other industry) will seamlessly use generative and analytical AI to (continue to) help them enhance knowledge management and sharing, improve resource utilization, retain top resources (by saving them from the mundane work and identifying those most likely to leave), optimize productivity and increase overall efficiency, better identify business targets, answer requests for proposals (RFPs) with more precision and persuasion, enhance invoicing and collection processes, and even avoid scope creep. Technology will help them better brand, market, and differentiate themselves in a marketplace. It will also help them develop novel innovative products and services that do not yet exist and that are more novel than what humans can ideate on their own and that overcome expertise bias.”

#### **WHAT DOES GLOBAL LEGAL EDUCATION MEAN?**

“Global legal education is that which exposes students to how law is practiced in different countries and cultures. Unfortunately, there are very few courses at law schools around the world that truly provide global legal education and that is one of the reasons why I created LawWithoutWalls. The law marketplace historically is filled with walls: walls between schools of different ranks, walls between professors and students, walls between law and business, walls between legal education and practice, walls between schools in different countries with different justice systems. LawWithoutWalls is designed to break down some of those walls and importantly one of the skills we focus on is cultural competency. Why does cultural competency matter? Even if we could truly provide our students with “global legal education,” without also teaching cultural competency, it will be of little value. This is problematic because the world is global. A big majority of law graduates will work at law firms or companies that have a global reach and that require working on global teams. So for me, teaching students cultural competency is extremely important and will serve them better in their future than teaching them about how law is practiced around the world. It is true that cultural competency is not an easy thing to teach and I tell all my students from around the world that I become a little less culturally incompetent every year. Yet, it is a focus for us in LawWithoutWalls. We are purposefully one of the most (if not the most) culturally diverse legal community with participants in this year's Sprint from over 22 countries around the world. And we put together our teams to be purposefully culturally diverse so that like me, the LWOW Sprint participants become a little more culturally competent each year.”

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