

Could STEM Increase Your Firm's Profits?

With the exception of patent law, there used to be a time when science and the practice of law were in two completely different lanes. Science, Math, Engineering, and Technology (STEM) degree graduates were encouraged to pursue a medical or master's degree- not a JD. But as the connection between science and the law continues to expand, the legal profession is in need of lawyers with scientific backgrounds to keep up with the technological changes that are rapidly occurring. Unfortunately, this evolving need is not being met, as STEM graduates continue to look past law school for other career options.

An Expanding Legal Industry

As the role of technology expands in our everyday lives, so does the need for technical experts within the field of law. Every new advancement brings new with it new legal questions and potential disputes. The attorneys of 50 years ago could not imagine that lawyers would one be litigating the liability of autonomous cars or helping emerging biotech companies negotiate technical clinical study agreements. It doesn't end there though. Other areas of law where where a STEM background is beneficial include:

- Health law
- Biotechnology
- Bioethics
- Cyberlaw
- Aerospace law
- E-Discovery
- Environmental law
- Globalization

- Corporate law

Science has even invaded the realm of domestic law, with disputes over the parental custody of frozen embryos.

When a client seeks representation for a technical matter, he or she does not want to spend the extra time or money it takes to cram four years of technical education into a lawyer's brain. Instead, these clients want attorneys who already have a basic understanding about the technology at the center of their legal matter. Law firms who have hired attorneys with STEM backgrounds will be better positioned to secure these lucrative clients and successfully handle these growing areas of legal service.

Finding Lawyers With STEM Backgrounds

Unfortunately, the legal industry's new appreciation for STEM lawyers has not exactly been reciprocated. Technical graduates often choose to take their expertise in other directions for a variety of reasons. For some, the thought of three (or more) years of school is enough to send them screaming. While others fail to see the opportunity and potential of getting a legal education. Law schools, like Harvard and the University of Arizona, are trying to fill this gap by actively recruiting STEM graduates, even accepting GRE test scores in addition to LSAT scores. Many law schools are also promoting STEM based legal work by providing their students with specifically designed clinical opportunities.

For the law firm trying to recruit lawyers with STEM backgrounds, law school relationships are valuable for identifying the best and brightest. Find a school in your area that provides students with technology based programs and offer internship opportunities with your firm. You may also consider expanding your practice to attract more technical clients. Look for an established attorney within the practice area you hope to offer and consider a partnership or contractual relationship.

The value of a STEM education is quickly increasing within the practice of law. As you seek ways to expand your profits, don't make the costly mistake of ignoring the expanding role of technology within the legal industry.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.