

Pioneers and Pathfinders: Jennifer Leonard

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Zeynep Ersin

Welcome to Pioneers and Pathfinders, Seyfarth's podcast about the people and ideas reshaping the legal industry.

Kevin Young

I'm Kevin Young, an employment litigator and counselor, and I've spent my career putting new tools and ideas to work in client service and helping colleagues and clients to do the same.

Zeynep Ersin

I'm Zeynep Ersin. I lead innovation and design thinking at Seyfarth, focusing on reimagining how legal services are built, delivered, and experienced.

Kevin Young

Each episode, we sit down with someone on the front lines of legal innovation to unpack what they're doing and what it means for where our industry is headed.

Zeynep Ersin

We'll keep it fresh, we'll keep it fun, and we'll keep it to 30 minutes. Let's jump in.

Today we're joined by Jennifer Leonard, founder of Creative Lawyers. Jennifer works with law firms, legal departments, and law schools to help legal professionals navigate innovation, change, and the rapid evolution of AI.

Kevin Young

We'll discuss the future of legal education, the skills lawyers will need in an AI enabled profession, the importance of design thinking and human centered problem solving, and why this may be one of the most exciting moments in the history of legal practice.

Zeynep Ersin

Jennifer also shares the inspiration behind her new book, *Unprecedented: Designing a Human Centered Law Firm When Everything Is Changing*, and her perspective on how lawyers and legal organizations can prepare for what's next. Jennifer, hi, how are you? Welcome.

Jennifer Leonard

you both. It's so great to be here. Thanks for having me.

Kevin Young

Thanks for being here. We're excited. I know you're now focused on creative lawyers. And I think maybe a good starting point would be just to tell listeners a little bit about creative lawyers and what brought you to founding that.

Jennifer Leonard

I guess in hindsight, things always look really organized and nice, but while you're living in them, they certainly don't feel that way. I've been very fortunate to have a lot of different types of experience in the law for sure. And now my partner, Mary Al Stashevsky and I have sort of taken all of those disparate experiences that have built on one another to build creative lawyers, which really focuses on supporting law firms, corporate legal departments, law schools. We do some pro bono work with state courts as well and other organizations to think through what we're living through right now in the legal profession and how we can take a human-centered approach to supporting human lawyers, legal professionals, clients in navigating what's next. And we do that through various educational programs that range from executive briefings for executive committees and law firms to summer associate programs to help new lawyers get off on the right foot and we do some consulting work as well around change management in law firms and corporate legal. As you can imagine, most of our work the last three years has really focused on AI, but we're really excited about the future of law generally. I would say also the abrupt change in the level of skepticism among people in the profession has been really refreshing. Like the first season of Creative Lawyers when we were going into firms to present about AI and what it means for the business model and lawyer development. There was so much skepticism. Like we were basically brought in to persuade partners that this was real. And so it was kind of not argumentative, but there was a tension there because we recognized that, or at least we thought this was a really real transformation, but the conversation was, you know, not accelerating the adoption or the experimentation. And now, like we never do any sort of persuading of anyone. It's just sort of focused on, okay, well, where do we go from here? And how do we do that? So I think that's been really fun.

Kevin Young

Is there a common theme, Jen, that you're hearing when you go into the law firm meetings, meeting with executive committees?

Jennifer Leonard

Yeah, definitely. I think a couple of themes are really perplexing right now to law firms. And they've been there all along. It's just sort of they're starting to feel real to people in a way that they didn't a couple of years ago, I think. Which is good for change management because unless people feel urgency, they're unlikely to change behavior in mass. But I think one is the increasing conversations that they're having with clients and how to approach those conversations from a place of confidence and proactivity versus

being fearful of having conversations only about the bottom line and, you know, how bills will be reduced as a result of AI. And some of that is, you know, I think to date, some of the reasons that those conversations have been difficult have been because of law firm partners' hesitancy to raise it. But now that it's being raised, I think that part of the conversation on both sides has to be around reasonableness and talking collaboratively about how to shape the future, because now a lot of calls that law firm partners are having really are, you know, we expect our bills to be reduced. We expect this to be much more efficient in the future. And the reality is that.

It may not be that you're becoming incredibly efficient at what you're doing. It may be that it's taking just as much time to do what you're doing, but you're reshaping the way that you're working to better serve your clients. And coming at the conversation on both sides from a place of focus on pricing, I think automatically sets you up in a little bit of an adversarial conversation versus something where a partner opens the conversation and says, look, like,

This will have implications on how we bill in the future. And we are definitely thinking about that actively. I would love to think about that with you. But what I really want to do is big picture, think about how we achieve better outcomes for you as a result of using this technology. And I would love to have a conversation that's ongoing that focuses on what you need and allows me to reshape how I work. And that will in your to your benefit with pricing and with facilitating the business that you're serving.

Kevin Young

It reminds me I was having a conversation not too long ago, but with the in house client that's focused they're asking all of their partner firms, you know, kind of how are you using the technology currently, where are you investing, that kind of thing. And she said something to the effect of, you know, there's working more efficiently with the technology and there's working more powerfully. And we expect everyone to work more powerfully right now and then define the efficiencies, you know, but whether it's on whatever day today is a day's

if today's day one, I don't know. But I think there's like some recognition for some clients at least that the power has to be on harness now, but the efficiency might take some time. I don't know if everyone's that patient though.

Jennifer Leonard

I think that this is one of the reasons why we counseled our clients a year or so ago to be having more proactive conversations because now for partners who haven't, the conversation is really on efficiency and pricing. And I think it can be a better conversation. And lots of clients are still in a place where partners can be proactive about that conversation. But I love the framing of powerful versus efficiency. In our presentations, we call it the efficiency trap because it's

like the number one word that we always kick off presentations with like what's one word that you associate with using AI and efficiency is always the first word. And I think it is a trap because a lot of times like I don't practice anymore, but in the work that we do, a lot of times it can take longer to review AI outputs. But the end result is much, much more powerful than it would have been before.

Zeynep Ersin

I think some of the early hesitation also came from an understandable concern that the conversation would move immediately to what AI meant for hours and pricing before there had been an actual opportunity to have the broader conversation about outcomes, value, and how the tech might help us serve clients differently. Outside counsel are accustomed to being called because of their expertise. AI presents a slightly different dynamic because it's moving so quickly that no one can reasonably claim to have every answer.

I think we're seeing greater comfort with bringing informed experience to the conversation, sharing what's worked, and acknowledging what is still developing, learning alongside our clients. No one is an expert because it's so fast and it's so rapidly moving that I think that there's also been a bit more comfort now with being in that space of being, you know, willing to say, Hey, I may not be an expert, but here's what I've experienced, and sharing those use cases and you know what worked and being able to have a dialogue around it as opposed to I think the pressure of feeling like you need to have all the answers, right? You need to have them figured out because this is what is expected of you when you get that call to engage. But I think that on both sides, there's a lot of willingness to be transparent and we should continue to kind of encourage that and those conversations. I think that's where a lot of the learning continues to happen too is the sharing of those experiences.

Jennifer Leonard

And I agree with you completely that I think part of the hesitancy is just partners are busy. A lot of them in the early days were not focused on this. It's not a priority. But I think a lot of it has to do with what you're saying. Like they don't talk to their clients unless they know what they're talking about. Like that is what their value is, is being expert counselors. And so to walk into a conversation where they both are not expert at the tech, because as Kevin said, nobody is really expert in all the different angles of AI. But also like has no idea what the answers to the questions that might come up in that conversation are. But I also think law firm partners are very well equipped to handle these conversations. They're hired to help clients navigate ambiguity and ask the right questions. And I think if they take that framing and apply it to that conversation, I mean, I'm not a general counsel, but I would feel very confident if a partner called me and

asked the right questions and then went away and thought about it and came up with some ideas.

Zeynep Ersin

I think too, because the most important thing in in these relationships is the comfort of knowing your outside counsel knows you, knows your business. So they're able to come at it from that perspective. They're an expert in their legal field, as well as, you know, the implications of what this means, but also how it will impact what's important to the client and being able to have a conversation about it in in that regard.

I've been happy to see our attorneys becoming increasingly comfortable navigating those conversations. How can we do this together? What can we learn from each other? And what does that look like? And can we continue to build and augment leveraging this technology in new ways and how we are gonna deliver legal service? So, kind of one piece of this, which is certainly near and dear to my heart, and I know yours, Jen, is like the design thinking of it all. How would you describe design thinking for our listeners as it kind of relates to law. Like what does that look like? And how is AI part of that, I guess, now?

Jennifer Leonard

It's such a great question. And it's so funny, Zeynep, it's like the curse of knowledge situation that Adam Grant talks about. Like you and I have been focused on design thinking for so long that I'm amazed when I ask groups of partners who's familiar with it, and very few are. It just feels like you're a broken record because you talk about it all the time, but so few people know what it is. So design thinking writ large is solving problems from the viewpoint of the person or organization that you're trying to solve for, versus solving from the perspective of the expert in that particular domain. So instead of approaching it by thinking like a lawyer, approaching solution generation by thinking like a client or thinking like a new associate or a retiring partner. What are they feeling about succession planning? What are new associates thinking about when it comes to their career development and their fears and concerns about AI and with your clients, I I wanted to pull on a thread that you mentioned, Zaynep, in the conversations, because it really connects with design thinking to me so much. And I can't take credit for this thought. It's from Whitney Stefko Dover at Ford Motor Company, who's brilliant. And we were having a conversation about how law firms talk to their clients about their AI transformations and how it's so focused on the firm. It's sort of like we've got these licenses now, we have these many logins, we've had this many attorneys go to training.

And it's sort of like, well, that's that's really important for your internal change management efforts, but I don't really care. Like it doesn't matter to me how many times people have logged into your platform of choice. What matters is are we seeing our deal velocity accelerate? Are we seeing better, more strategic approaches to multidistrict

litigation that is relevant to our business? Like, how are you refocusing the problem on your client and storytelling around that?

Not your own change management problem. So, and then again with the associate development piece, which Kevin, that was sort of the second theme that all law firms are focused on now. And I think actually a much bigger problem than the client conversation around pricing and value is what are we going to do with our new associates? They are coming out of law school very confused about what they should be doing with AI. Every school has different policies. Many are still rooted in. You know, this is cheating, this is you should not be using this. And then they come into firms and they're sort of expected to know how to use it. But also just the business model itself. How do we support this training and development when corporate clients will no longer subsidize that training? And how do we build a pipeline for the future of our leadership? And I think to put their money where their mouths are, firms generally speaking, is that what you care about?

Do you care about the future pipeline of leadership, or does it feel good to say we care about the future pipeline of leadership? Because the budgets that you have and the investments that you make are reflecting your values as a firm. So if you're not willing to invest in whatever the next iteration is of leadership development and skills acquisition, then you don't really care as much as you're saying that you do.

But that's another opportunity for design thinking is putting yourself in their shoes and thinking from scratch about what it means to develop legal intuition and judgment in a world where the old way is not going to be possible anymore.

Kevin Young

And I mean, we've all heard anyone who's been to law school in the last several decades heard things like, well, law school doesn't teach you to be a lawyer, it teaches you to think like a lawyer, that kind of thing. And I think that it seems to your point, like there's been this embrace of an approach that law school shoulders part of the burden and then the firms shoulder another part of it. And for the big firms, clients, you could argue in some way subsidize a piece of that. And to your point, we're hearing the same things. I mean, just it's not just, you know, some clients that have objections to your first year of working on their work, for example. We heard that sometimes. I think there's also the trend of, you know, a really supercharged partner has to really think long and hard to and be intentional by saying, I want to give the junior associate this opportunity, even though maybe I could do it pretty quickly myself, because I want them to grow and I want them to be a future leader at the firm and so on and so forth. My question though, to get off the soapbox on that is if you were designing it all from scratch, I mean, what changes would you make at the law school level? Like when they first get there, would you overhaul a law school education? Is that something you've given thought to?

Jennifer Leonard

Gosh, yeah, you're being so diplomatic about it. I worked in law schools for 10 years focused on exactly this question, which is, you know, how would we redesign legal education to meet a modern era of practice when it feels like so much of what you learn in law school? Yes, it's important. It's important to learn critical thinking, it's important to learn how to anticipate unanticipated questions and be prepared to respond to them.

But is that worthy of the investment that law students are making in a world that is less certain now than it's ever been before? And I think that, you know, there has been so much resistance to changing the model. And to go back to the design thinking point, if you adopt a professor centric approach to thinking about legal education, and I'm not trying to paint with a broad brush here. This is like very generally speaking.

There are obviously outliers, and there are schools like Suffolk where they have been very tech forward. and there are others, Vanderbilt, Chicago Kent, Stanford. But, you know, the professors are valued for research and publication and scholarship. That is their coin of the realm, right? And they really, really value the work that they do, obviously, around scholarship and around teaching. You know, I think they genuinely care about their students, but

Frequently they are living in academia exclusively. Many of them have no connection to the practice of law. And the conversations that take place between firms and law schools tend to take place between the talent teams in firms and the career strategy offices in law schools. And I lived in one of those offices. So I was in many of those conversations. So you might have really well-meaning, knowledgeable people on both sides of the conversation, but they're not the people with the power to change their organization. So until you are having conversations that make the question urgent for professors by having law firm chairs and managing partners come and have direct conversations. And you know, you have input, this is like getting very in the weeds of academia, but you have input into the curriculum from people who are not just tenured law professors, but people who are on the legal writing faculty, the professionalism faculty, working in career strategy and other places in the law school, that is how I think you start to gain some traction in redesigning the curriculum. But in many schools they do, or clinical professors as well. But in many schools they don't vote on the curriculum. So to answer your specific question about how I would redesign it, I think it should be much more project-based, much more experiential, teach skills like collaboration, design thinking, systems thinking, in addition to those critical thinking skills. But do I think that it needs to be taught through studying appellate case law alone and Socratic method and legal writing around it? I think it should be a much more integrated approach to understanding problems holistically. And there are great courses for that in the upper levels frequently, but they're electives and many times students are taking them after they already have their jobs. So they're a lot less incentivized to be focused on it as much. So those are some starting points. I'm also going to borrow from Bridget McCormick because I love her and think she's everything she says is amazing. But she also says that she would redesign law school so that the first week students spend in a state court trial system to see what law actually looks like for most people,

because studying appellate case law, as Jim Sandman, another brilliant mentor of mine, has said, means that both sides of the dispute had lawyers of the caliber to brief in order to get to an appellate court, which is not representative of how our legal systems were. So I think from an access to justice lens, a skill building lens, and a systems redesign lens, there are lots of places where we could improve the curriculum.

Zeynep Ersin

Now of course are thinking about what that looks like in terms of offerings with respect to trainings and competencies that are going to be expected of kind of this next generation of lawyers and what does that look like you know as it relates to AI fluency, data literacy, certainly things like design thinking. But from your perspective, you know, where do you see that either being adding on to and augmenting what the law schools are doing, or are there variations of that that you think would be slightly different for the law firm or corporate legal teams as well? What does that look like in a law firm environment? And I'll add to it as part of that, you know, what do you think the next generation of lawyers should know that previous generations didn't?

Jennifer Leonard

I think they're really hard problems to solve. I'll say that I don't know that I'll have a perfect answer to this, though I think about it pretty much like 23 hours of the day about how to solve these problems. I think, you know, starting from where we are and how we've always been trained, you're trained through these rote tasks, right? And over time you develop the ability to recognize patterns and judgment and all of those things that are valuable in practicing law. If you're not gonna have those reps on the field anymore.

What replaces that? How do we develop that judgment without that? First, I think to use the optimistic lens again, I was a junior associate in a law firm. I don't remember it being a particularly enjoyable part of my career. It certainly allowed me to develop the ability to spot patterns, but I think one of the things that helped me better understand lawyer formation was I went from a law firm practice to a municipal law practice where

We didn't have the luxury of spending four years before we got to a deposition learning those skills. We really by necessity were thrown right into the deep end from the beginning. And by doing that, I mean, in the first year I was in a city law department, I learned more than in three years as a law firm associate because I'm actually trying things, learning from feedback. And that feedback, I don't mean formal feedback. I mean like, Did we win? Did we actually advance our clients' interests? And if we didn't, what did I do incorrectly that I need to change for the next time? And I don't think the law firm business model is ever gonna support throwing first years in the deep end with client work. I hear some people say that, like, let's get them in front of the clients faster. I no law firm partner I know wants to put a first year in front of a client.

But I do think that we could take a page from that book and create more simulated experiences that are more like flight simulators. And I know Stanford's working on this

with a with another firm with three crowns, but ways to get those reps in safe environments that approximate what I experienced in the law department. And then I think like the other thing about optimism is I also don't remember my mentorship experience as a junior associate being like this rosy walk in the park where I was getting great formative feedback. I had a couple partners who were really good at it, but most were not trained or interested in it and didn't have the time. So can we leverage AI and partners who are really strong at mentorship and reward them in some way for participating in these newly developed training sessions? Those would be some of the formats I would use. I mean, I think we are moving to a world where the knowledge of the law, the knowledge to get the right answer through research and writing, I would never say it's not important, but increasingly it will be done by AI, right? Partners will be able to get the right answer. What you now need, and this goes back to our conversation about billing discussions or value discussions with clients, what you need now are associates who understand how to ask the right questions and understand how to provide more creative direction to both.

Humans that will eventually report to them and AI systems, I think we'll move to an era where we've been getting more and more specialized over the last 20 years or so in practices. And I think that trend will reverse itself because associates will be able to learn across many different practice areas. And those that become skilled at creatively directing and strategically directing systems will be valuable across different practices areas of the firm. And a lot of the research shows that humans who are really good at managing and leading other humans also tend to be the ones that are best at working with AI systems. So actually teaching management skills from the outset, I think is something that we should be focused. We always should have been focused on, but it actually has direct applications for AI. And I think all of the human skills that I cared about when I was working in a law school and teaching in a law school.

Are even more important now. Your ability to empathize with other people, which is core to design thinking, your ability to collaborate, to listen, to approach things with curious humility, all of those things that aren't always rewarded in a traditional law firm environment, I think become the biggest differentiators for associates of the future.

Zeynep Ersin

I think we're in this moment, Jen, to that point where AI could also be a really powerful tool to help facilitate those types of conversations between a good manager, leader, mentor, and the attorney they're supervising because they could even go through the AI together, right? And they develop the prompt together and then they review the output together. And it actually creates a framework to have some of those more professional development substantive type conversations, but incorporating the technology as part of that. Because I think, you know, sometimes it's easy, everyone's going through the motions of trying to get everything done to sit down and say, I'm gonna I want to sit down with this junior attorney and go through this deliverable and talk about, you know, this particular point, why it's sound, this one, how maybe we would incorporate a different view on it and why. But at least if you're engaging in part of the assignment together through thinking about how to prompt AI and then review what the output is

saying. I think it also provides a somewhat of a an easier way to talk about it that often I think can be easy to move past. So I a hundred percent I think that's a really poignant and thoughtful point.

Kevin Young

The roles that you're seeing pop up within law firms across the board changing in a way that you think will be lasting like you know, do you think virtually every, you know, sophisticated firm in the futures can have a chief AI officer and other roles that don't exist today?

Jennifer Leonard

Yeah, absolutely. I and again, like it's another reason for me to be excited about this era. I used to counsel students on their careers. And I remember, you know, 2014 talking to alums who weren't happy in associate roles and wanted to do something else. And the well-intentioned advice that I would give them is like give it a little bit more time because

It's gonna be a red flag if you're moving around this early and you don't wanna like step out of a practice role to take on something riskier, which doesn't even sound like me. That's how much the culture has changed, right? And now I see lawyers that I worked with who are now mid-level or senior associates stepping into roles in legal tech companies and taking on hybrid roles as embedded AI attorneys in their practice group or KM attorneys their practice group and legal engineers, getting hybrid degrees. And I think that's so exciting because for so many of us, like being a practicing associate was not something that lit us up. But it didn't necessarily mean that we wanted to leave our firms or we wanted to leave the practice. It's just that there were so few alternatives to what we were doing. And my hope is that we end up retaining a lot more of this amazing talent that we attract to the profession in the first place. I think this like fluidity now with careers generally means I remember having a conversation with a friend a few years ago who was thinking about taking on a cheap AI role at a big firm. And our conversation was sort of I and again, this was like 2024. So this was earlier days. But it was sort of like, is it risky to have a title with AI and it if AI ends up being like a fad and, you know, now I'm known as the AI person and AI is not even relevant anymore. And we were both sort of like I don't know. And I think the answer now is I don't think it matters as much, you know, that you're taking a risk with the title now because if you're developing the skills that make you able to solve big problems at scale across a system like a law firm, you can adapt your title as conditions change, but your value will be inherent in the work and value you provide in this first role.

Jennifer Leonard

So I just feel like there's a lot more control that people have over their career evolution. And I'm less concerned about the specific titles people have anymore. And I think that's a good thing. But I don't know your thoughts, either or both of you, whether you would agree or you think I'm being too reckless in my advice or thoughts.

Kevin Young

For me, I mean, I've taught three years now at UGA, and so I've gotten a chance to see twenty students a year who are entering the market. And it's a self selecting group who picks a class with their three all time that has the board innovation in it. So I'll share that point. But the range of jobs that they look at and think about and just try to ideate on their own, kind of like what if this existed, that sort of thing, from my experience or from my perspective, has broadened quickly in a way that I think is fantastic. And it's also like so many things, I think the last, you know, three, four years, they've brought and talked about opportunities that five or six years ago, I would have said, what are you even talking about? You know, you should go to a firm. Yeah, that kind of thing. And there's so much, there's such a broader range of what seems to have real opportunity to it, a real excitement and potential. And to your point, less than ever before feels

It's not confined by title or by a role or any or any sort of tradition. I have one student a couple of years ago who joined a legal tech startup and I followed them on LinkedIn and they're doing awesome, you know, and and it's just the sort of thing that it feels like there's so many different areas of opportunity. And to your point, like as someone who now also gets to you know be involved in hiring for my team here in Atlanta, I would look with excitement upon someone who came with that student's background even if it flamed out and they were looking for a job after a year, because it shows some level of curiosity, which we value so much. It shows, you know, some comfort playing with emerging technology and trends, which we value so much. Whereas, you know, five years ago, to your point, jumping around would have been, my gosh, that's a red flag. You why are we gonna hire someone who who jumps around and it just feels different.

Jennifer Leonard

Totally. And I've had the same experience you've had in teaching students is that one of the most depressing parts of the semester would be I like you, I taught innovation courses. So it's self-selecting. And you get students so excited about redesigning systems and thinking about design thinking and innovation. And then they come up to you at the end of the semester and they're like, I really want to do this for a career. Like, what should I do? And twenty fifteen, like I really had no answers for that.

It was sort of like, I really wish I could tell you there's a legal tech startup you should join or roles in firms for things like this, but there really aren't. And now, because my network is changing so much, because people are taking on all these cool roles, now I would be able to say, you should talk to my friend here. They went to a legal tech company, or my friend Zaynep is focused on innovation in firms and design thinking, like.

The whole world has changed in ways that I think are really exciting for new students. And I think like so much of the fear-based conversation is adding to their anxiety at a time when they can be more valuable and more fulfilled than ever before. But our messaging really has to be much different. And we need to be more open-minded and

flexible ourselves. Like people talk about like we need to attract more entrepreneurial students to go to law school.

I would agree, except that I'm worried that when they meet reality in law school, they're gonna drop out because it's like, well, why would I go through this program? It doesn't help me be entrepreneurial at all. So I think it all feeds into each other. You wanna attract those kinds of students, but then you have to give them an environment in which they can flourish and then find those careers on the other side. And that like break point there concerns me.

Zeynep Ersin

To talk about something that is also exciting and kind of talking about people who are curious and wanting to do things and leaning in. So, Jen, congratulations again on publishing your book *Unprecedented*. I would love it if you could tell us and our listeners a bit about the book, how it came to fruition, what you learned along the way, if we could talk a little bit about that.

Jennifer Leonard

Yeah, absolutely. First of all, thank you so much. That's so kind of you. It still feels like surreal to have it out there in the world. So the book, and I'm gonna quote, I know you know Jay, Zeynep, and Jay has always said that her favorite word in the English language is encourage to give courage to somebody else. And I have to give credit to Alexa Robertson at Practicing Law Institute. I ran a workshop for their leadership team focused on another innovation book. And she's like, You should write a book about this stuff.

I'm like, I'm not a writer. I can't write a book. But she encouraged me to do it. And I went through a lot of inter iterations of the book. Like the first version was a very, very dry business book about the state of the legal market and change management. And I got to like chapter four. And I was like, this is the most boring book I've ever read. Like I I wouldn't even ask my mother to read this book. But then my colleague and I were preparing a proposal for a firm for a weekend retreat, and we don't usually do programs that long because they're law firms, like retreat programs are a few hours. But we started putting together this whole program. And even after two days of programming, we were like, we would need more time. Like we would need like a whole week, but you never get that. So the story was sort of like, what if we had a whole week to design a law firm retreat? And there had to be an inciting event to actually make partners make time for that. So in the book, the book is a business fable. So it's not a straight

Textbook. It's a story about a fictional midsized law firm that is about to be acquired by a mega global firm and really wants to try to retain the culture that makes it what it is. And so the managing partner calls all of their leaders together for a week long retreat to think about all the things that our team thinks about. How did we get here as a profession to this business model?

Kevin to our conversation, how has legal education sort of not supported innovation and entrepreneurship? And what's the history of legal education? And then we move into design thinking activities through empathy interviews in the book with client panels and associates about their career development. And then the overlay, there are like a few frameworks in it. The overlay has the ad car framing for change management, which is from Jeffrey Hyatt how you move through change through five steps. They move through those. And then at the end we use I use innovation tournaments, which is a framework from Carl Ulrich and Christian Turwich at Wharton about how to bring good ideas into a voluminous environment and then whittle them through to promising ideas. But I bacon like a lot of the frameworks that we teach in our programming into a story format so people can be more entertained than my first version.

Kevin Young

Love it.

Zeynep Ersin

I have my copy.

Jennifer Leonard

That's so lovely. my gosh, it's so weird. It's so weird.

Zeynep Ersin

Yeah.

Jennifer Leonard

That's right. You have a limited one of a limited series of autograph unprecedented.

Kevin Young

Jen is that available what through PLI, Amazon, your website?

Jennifer Leonard

Through both. So actually through all three. You can get it at Practicing Law Institute, Amazon and our website, which is creative lawyers dot net.

Kevin Young

Jen, that's fantastic. This has been great. For one question though, I mean, what has your interest right now? You know something new emerging that listeners should know about? You know, any new stories, any new trends that you're seeing?

Jennifer Leonard

Like to follow the broad AI landscape even more than the legal one. And there are so many interesting things happening in AI. I'm really curious about sort of these rogue agents that are starting to come out of the Frontier Labs and what it means for AI governance in firms and corporate legal departments. And we work with several teams in-house that have like really strong approaches to AI governance and what does it mean in an era where it seems like increasingly we're working with systems that can escape even their sandboxes that they're supposed to stay in and take actions on the internet? I think for lawyers, again, like I think this has never been a more interesting time to practice law. The issues that your clients are going to be facing across almost every practice area as a result of things like this are gonna be so interesting, whether you're litigating or you're in IP or cybersecurity - super interesting trend lines. And then I just like to follow the business of these frontier labs generally and like how they're trying to differentiate in a world where their models increasingly have the same capabilities because their engineers are just like moving back and forth from one organization to the other constantly. So what is their business play to differentiate themselves? And in the global competition for AI dominance, will these American companies that are trying to make profit be completely upended by Chinese companies that are offering free models to the marketplace.

Kevin Young

Jennifer, it's super insightful and we really appreciate you joining us today. Thanks so much.

Zeynep Ersin

Thanks for spending time with us today on Pioneers and Pathfinders. I'm Zeynep Ersin.

Kevin Young

And I'm Kevin Young. We'll see you next time.