

innovation



## Overcoming Barriers to Law Innovation:

Unlocking Performance and Potential to Drive Change in an Era of Disruption

*By Debra Baker*

*When it comes to innovation, 2018's most inspiring example was ripped from the headlines—the dramatic rescue of the young Thai soccer team from a cave in Tham Luang.*

*Elon Musk's announcement via Twitter that he had invented a kid-sized submarine and was flying it halfway around the globe had all the makings of a summer blockbuster.*

### IDEA IN BRIEF

The GrowthPlay Law Innovation Study sought to understand why lawyers struggle with innovation even though they are arguably the best-trained problem solvers of any profession.

The study yielded five powerful insights:

1. Clients are essential to innovation success.
2. Lawyers must collaborate to grow.
3. Law leaders must be Innovation Ambassadors.
4. Barriers to innovation are really human fear factors.
5. The legal profession must adapt to the Innovation Economy.

Analysis of the data uncovered three key findings:

- The DNA of an innovator has 11 essential elements (The Law Innovator's DNA) that can be measured using talent analytics.
- A lawyer's ability to sell is highly correlated to a lawyer's ability to innovate.
- With data, we can reduce the implicit bias that deters innovation.

*Only that's not what happened. At the end of the day, Musk's magical mini-sub was a flop.*

*The real innovation was less flashy but far more inspired. More than 2,000 experts from around the world came together and in a matter of days executed on one of the most remarkable rescues in history.*

*The result may have lacked Musk's fanfare, but it was no less innovative—plastic cocoons, floating stretchers, rope lines, and custom-fit masks. Without glitz or glamour, the self-led team combined their insights, brainstormed options, and meticulously tested their ideas until they came up with a workable solution. It was far from flawless. A Thai Navy Seal lost his life. But the team set out and achieved the goal, saving the lives of 14 children and their coach.*

*The Thai rescue mission is a reminder that innovation is rarely about bright shiny objects and one-size-fits-all solutions. Rather, impactful innovation is about finding new or better solutions to problems that need to be solved.*

*Nevertheless, this practical and achievable approach to adapting and responding to client needs seems to bedevil some of the best and most sophisticated problem solvers in the world—lawyers.*



Over the last decade, while lawyers have become increasingly attuned to the need for innovation, the extent of change has been limited to a handful of organizations. A recent Altman Weil study showed that only 5.6 percent of managing partners have a high degree of confidence in their firm's ability to innovate. The reason: an inability or unwillingness of lawyers to change.

To better understand the law innovation challenge and identify opportunities to move the needle, GrowthPlay brought together 54 law innovators from law firms, law departments, and alternative service providers for a deep dive into this subject.

We interviewed innovation-minded lawyers and legal professionals from organizations that recognize the need for change and those who avoid it, conducted comparative studies to see what we could learn from established innovation research in the B2B world, and leveraged talent analytics to uncover data-based insights to help law firms get smarter when making decisions about how to build higher-performing teams.

Through interviews and research, we compiled two sets of attributes: one set identifying factors affiliated with law innovation success and another set tied to competencies needed to overcome common barriers law innovators face.

We then drew upon predictive talent analytics, using the GrowthPlay Chally Assessment, comparing our Innovator Group to an existing database of hundreds of attorneys to uncover differences in natural strengths across 140 statistically valid performance competencies.

We found that, when it comes to innovation, the legal profession's struggle does not stem from a lack of expertise, business experience, or creativity. Rather, the biggest barrier legal faces is in how they are identifying talent, building collaborative teams, and developing their innovation skills.

The study resulted in three key findings:

- The DNA of an innovator has 11 essential elements (The Law Innovator's DNA).
- A lawyer's ability to sell is highly correlated to a lawyer's ability to innovate.
- With data, we can reduce the implicit bias that deters innovation.

GrowthPlay hopes these findings will provide an important step forward in helping lawyers improve their confidence and success in adapting and responding to changing client needs in a profession under disruption.



Among the opportunities:

1. Increase awareness about the essential skills to overcome the most common barriers to innovation.
2. Provide insight into what those skills are and how to develop them to build more effective innovation teams.
3. Enable firms to be more proactive in uncovering and developing high-potential talent using talent analytics rather than gut feel to predict success.

Perhaps what's most exciting is that the study offers an evidence-based approach for unlocking hidden innovation potential to reframe the way lawyers approach, build, and develop their innovation talent.

The following report details our results:

**Part 1:** Sets the groundwork, outlining our hypothesis and approach.

**Part 2:** Discusses key insights that came out of our research.

**Part 3:** Details our analysis and key findings.

**Part 4:** Looks at the Innovation Opportunity created by the findings.

## Part 1: Setting the Groundwork

Lawyers are equipped better than most for innovation. After all, innovation, at its core, is about client-centered problem solving. And legal training, at its core, is all about analyzing problems, applying rules, and identifying solutions that are in the best interest of clients.

Yet law innovation occurs at a slow pace and the number of law innovators is relatively low.

According to a recent Altman Weil [study](#), less than six percent of managing partners have a high degree of confidence in their firm's ability to adapt to change. The number-one reason, cited by 68.6 percent of leaders, is that partners resist change. In all, the report showed that only about a third of firms are truly committed to pursuing new ideas despite a rapidly changing market, with innovations widely available to firms of all sizes.

We wanted to better understand why. Our premise was that law innovation is less about knowing what to do and more about figuring out how to do it.



## What do you mean by innovation?

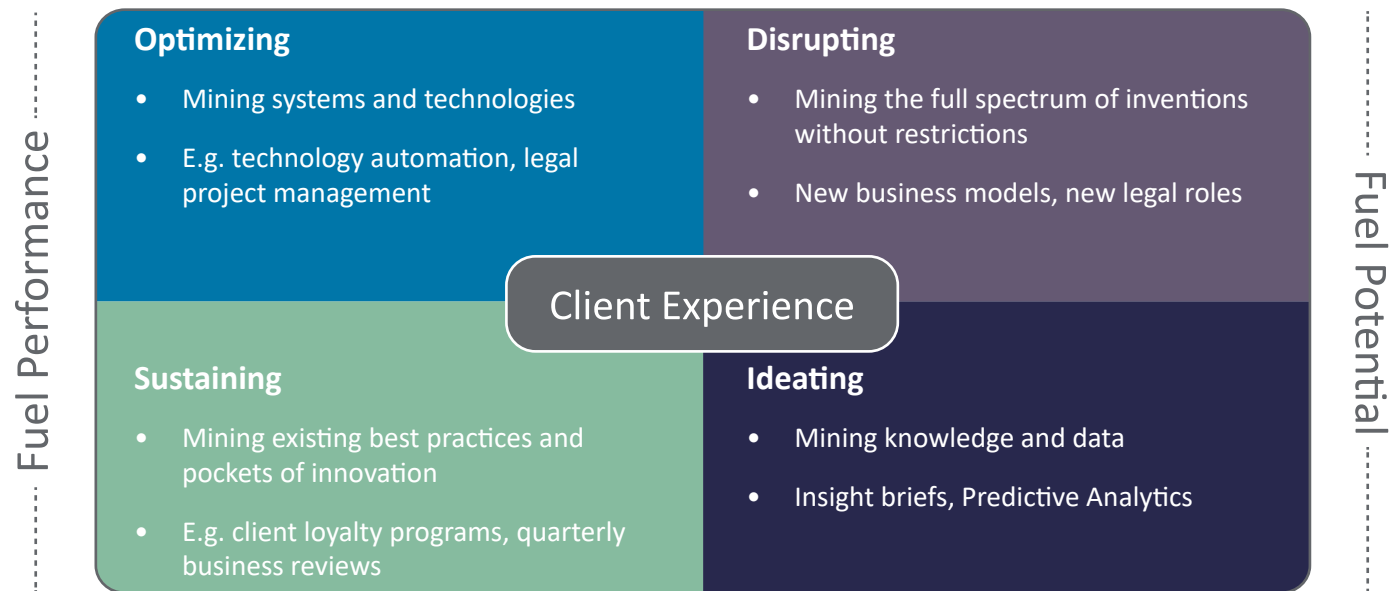
Ask anyone who works in or around lawyers and they will tell you innovation is a loaded term.

Simply defining innovation is harder than it sounds. While it is easy to distinguish a genuine breakthrough, it is harder to agree upon the “innovativeness” of incremental change.

One in-house general counsel we talked to notes, “Five years ago innovation meant implementing technology to make us more efficient; today technology optimization is a requirement of our business. Yet we haven’t done a good job of defining what’s next for us and why.”

Recognizing the importance of a shared language, we started by defining innovation as: ***Mining value for sustainable growth.***

Within that broad definition, we distinguished four types of innovation:



This model recognizes that all organizations, regardless of size, sophistication, or access to resources, have the capacity to innovate—even if they reject the term itself. At the same time, the framework enables organizations invested in innovation as a formal business discipline a way to distinguish types of innovation when communicating and organizing themselves for success.

Regardless of type, innovation needs to be centered on the client experience. Innovating for the sake of innovation because it's cool or interesting may create buzz but won't move the needle if clients don't want or need what's invented.

## Our Innovator Group

We recruited a group of “innovation-minded” professionals from law firms, corporate law departments, and legal services providers. This Innovator Group included 54 people from organizations that embrace innovation and those that avoid it. The organizations ranged from law firms with thousands of lawyers and law departments with hundreds of lawyers to law firms with as few as seven lawyers and single person in-house counsel.

About 75 percent of the Innovator Group were lawyers and about 25 percent were legal professionals who were either non-practicing attorneys or professionals with business backgrounds. Some held innovation roles and had titles like Chief Innovation Officer. Others were also leaders, managers, and individual contributors engaged in some type of transformation initiative without expressly being titled as such.

In addition to interviews with our Innovator Group, we conducted comparative studies to see what we could learn from established innovation research in the B2B world, and leveraged talent analytics to uncover data-based insights to help law firms get smarter when making decisions about how to build higher performing teams. We also drew insights from GrowthPlay's previous work on the Law 2023 initiative, a 15-month study to reimagine the legal profession with a futurist's view.<sup>i</sup>

## Leveraging Talent Analytics

Talent analytics played an important role in our study as it provided a window into the natural wiring of our innovation-minded professionals and allowed us to see if there were meaningful distinctions between those who advocate for change and lawyers in general.

To do this, we used the GrowthPlay Chally Assessment, a 45-year-old talent-profiling tool that has been used on more than 750,000 people to measure skills and motivations attributed to success in high-performing organizations. With its roots in the U.S. Department of Justice—the assessment was originally designed to help predict success of FBI candidates—the assessment has statistically validated about 140 measurable performance-affiliated competencies and motivations.



The Chally Assessment provided two benefits:

1. The results identify competencies as opposed to personality or communication styles. Specifically, the data provided insights we couldn't get elsewhere around management strengths, sales strengths, and three types of work-related motivations (approaching tasks, influencing others, and relationship building).
2. The assessment measures capacity rather than performance. As a result, it identifies potential that may or may not have developed into something quantifiable or even observable. This adds a layer of data that is new to law innovation.

In many ways the talent analytics are like a DNA test for business. Comparing results of our Innovator Group to a Control Group, made up of hundreds of lawyers who have been assessed over the last two years, gave us a statistically meaningful way to evaluate whether differences in natural strengths could be tied to success with innovation. What's more, the findings are measurable and can be used to uncover potential that may predict success in the future.

For purposes of the study, we initially looked at the personal strengths of the individual participants of the Innovator Group to see what we could learn. We ran two standard reports, one that identified the top management strengths and one that identified the top sales strengths. We also ran Best Match reports that identified their fit to standard management and sales roles.

## Part 2: Data Collection and Insights

With a shared language around innovation, a set of participants, and a qualitative and quantitative methodology for collecting data, we started gathering data that we distilled into two lists—one of traits affiliated with law innovation success and another of requirements for overcoming innovation barriers.

Among the themes:

1. The rise of innovation economics
2. Collaboration as a value driver
3. Innovating around the client experience
4. Innovation as a strategic priority
5. Law innovation fear factors



## Theme 1: The Rise of Innovation Economics

The first insight came from the emerging theory of innovation economics, which looks at the impact of technology on economic value drivers. From the perspective of the legal profession, three principles stood out:

1. Technology has increased the interdependence of the communities in work.
2. Technology has fundamentally changed the way we communicate, resulting in larger, more interconnected networks.
3. Technology fuels and disrupts knowledge-based businesses.

|              | Traditional Law Economics | Innovation Economics |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Organization | Silos                     | Collaborative        |
| Metrics      | Productivity Oriented     | Results Oriented     |
| Services     | Customized                | Standardized         |

### Insights:

Innovation economics offers important insights for law organizations trying to adapt and change to stay competitive:

- Collaboration is a business requirement that will impact both how law organizations operate, and the skills lawyers and legal professionals need to be successful.
- Lawyers will need to adapt how they work in order to out-behave technology. As technology gets smarter and artificial intelligence continues to evolve, lawyers who rely on doing things the way they've always been done may find a computer can do their jobs better. At the same time, integrating technology into existing offerings can create conditions for premium billing.<sup>ii</sup>
- Lawyers need to get better at communicating the value of the outcomes they deliver rather than the amount of work they put in, regardless of whether they bill by the hour or use some other fee structure.

## Theme 2: Collaboration as a Value Driver

Collaboration was consistently cited as a requirement for innovation success. Interviews with our Innovator Group reinforced the themes of interdependence and interconnectedness defined by innovation economics. The group also identified the importance of collaboration across multiple fronts:





1. Collaboration during the R&D process to promote creativity and idea flow.
2. Collaboration among innovation teams, operations, and other business functions to balance conflicts between short and long-term interests.
3. Collaboration with internal and external clients, as well as third-party alliances and service partners.

In her book *Smart Collaboration*, Heidi Gardner details the conflict between the market demand for increasingly specialized services and the negative impact narrowly defined practices can have on profitability.<sup>iii</sup> Among her findings was that collaboration is both a driver of profitability and a driver of innovation.

From our Innovator Group, several related points emerged:

- The power of positivity. One innovator identified a combination of enthusiasm and buy-in as major contributors to keeping the innovation team focused on seeing its initiative through to completion.
- Inclusivity and empathy when gathering insights and listening to others.
- A natural curiosity in the ideas of others.
- Political astuteness and persuasiveness, particularly with partners who are not necessarily aligned with the desire to rethink the delivery of legal services.
- Patience and persistence in implementing ideas that change the status quo.
- Diplomacy and persuasiveness are key skills, but it is energy and enthusiasm that was essential to success. In other words, it was more important to try things, make mistakes and keep trying than to make perfect arguments/step gingerly around established norms.

## Insights:

Collaboration is not a concept new to law, but it is one that lawyers who grew up in an “eat what you kill” culture can struggle with. Most often, organizations define collaboration as a core value, not as a value driver. Increasingly, collaboration has both operational and professional development implications. Organizational shifts will clearly be needed to break down silos, but new skills unrelated to the practice of law will be required to develop effective teaming skills to innovation.



### Theme 3: Innovating around the Client Experience

A central tenet of innovation is the importance of engaging clients in the innovation process.

Across our Innovator Group and virtually every innovation study, innovating within the current state of the market to attract and retain top clients is considered the single biggest driver of law innovation success. Buyers of legal services are increasingly sophisticated and have more options. They see quality and technical expertise as a table stake, so it takes more than being the smartest lawyer in the room to create competitive differentiation.

If there is one common denominator among innovation research, it is the link between client experience and innovation success. This was perhaps best articulated in the findings of the Law 2023 work. Client experience was central to one of the seven design principles identified for building the law firm of the future. Specifically:

*User research and innovation will shape client experience of legal products.*

*Firms will fortify relationships with clients not only through great customer service, but by using everything they know about them to anticipate their future needs. The firms that are best at this will build innovation pipelines around their understanding of entire industries, approaching their clients with new opportunities instead of simply reacting to their problems.*

[www.law2023.org](http://www.law2023.org)

Yet we were surprised during our interviews that proactive client engagement was not universally identified as a driver of success.

Hallmarks of successful innovation include activities like voice-of-client feedback, future-casting assessments, and formal R&D labs. Yet these best practices were missing from a large portion of our innovator group. This adds a layer of guesswork into innovation that is not needed or valuable.

One director of legal operations expressed frustration at his company's unwillingness to make the changes required to execute on a cost-reducing innovation that had the dual benefit of closing the gap on the one of the company's highest risk-exposure areas. Yet that director had never conducted any research into why the business side of the house was unwilling to change.

Another law firm chief innovation officer said he was given free rein to innovate, so long as he didn't take up any attorney time because they needed to be billing hours.



## Insights:

Law organizations are missing an opportunity to capture new revenue in the fastest and lowest-cost way possible by failing to engage clients in the R&D process. This is particularly important for law organizations that are struggling to kick-start innovation, as evidence suggests that as much as 70 percent of revenue from innovation comes from sustaining innovations. This is a powerful data point because sustaining innovation is both the easiest and most cost-effective way to innovate. But it requires deep client involvement.

## Theme 4: Innovation as a Strategic Imperative

Participants succeeding with innovation most commonly attributed that success to a commitment from the top. Organizations whose top leaders serve as innovation ambassadors or have innovation as an integral part of the strategic plan were far more successful than those who did not.

One in-house counsel from a financial services company cited a culture of innovation inside her broader organization that translated into the law department in terms of evaluating regulatory activities, using technology to run the business, and managing outside counsel costs.

A chief innovation officer from a full-service law firm cited the firm's strategic focus driving innovation through multiple channels, including knowledge management, legal project management, pricing strategies, and non-traditional attorney job functions.

## Insights:

Innovation can't happen in a silo. You can't hire an "innovator" or appoint an innovation task force and call it a day. Leaders and executive teams play two important roles when it comes to innovation. The first is recognizing that the need to adapt and change to meet client needs is an ongoing process that should be integrated into business strategy. The second is in evangelizing those who drive the efforts and helping them balance the inherent conflicts that arise.

### INNOVATION INSIGHTS

1. Innovation economics will mandate shifts in the traditional law firm business model
2. Collaboration is more than a core value. It is an operational requirement.
3. Law innovators are not investing as deeply as they should when it comes to engaging clients in innovation.
4. High performing law organizations make innovation a top-down priority.
5. Because lawyers are both the innovator and the innovated, barriers to innovation are primarily human fear factors.



## Theme 5: Law Innovation Fear Factors

The barriers to innovation make the strongest case for why law innovation is a how vs. what problem.

A wide body of research exists around barriers to innovation. In the law context, we found these barriers were not different but are more pervasive.

In their profession, lawyers must help clients anticipate and avoid risk. And they are expected to be right with no margin for error. Innovation requires risk, and failure is built into the process.

What's more, innovation is far more personal in the services context than in a product-based environment. Lawyers face personal risk if they fail—money, time, ego. They also face risk if they are successful—potential elimination of their job, compensation implications, new skill requirements. So, while it is easy to understand the rational reason to buy in to innovation, it is equally rational to want to protect the status quo.

Organizations that want to successfully drive change must do a better job of anticipating these barriers and of developing the skills of innovators to overcome these challenges and create conditions around which those impacted by change will buy into doing something different.

The chart below compares the most commonly documented barriers to innovation to the more personal fear factors we identified.

| Barrier to Innovation <sup>iv</sup>   | Law Innovation Fear Factor  |
|---|---|
| Cannibalization of the existing business  | Elimination of their role   |
| Lack of demand from clients   | Fear of negative feedback   |
| Orientation to risk reduction and variability                                     | Risk aversion is a job requirement  |
| Complacency after years of success  | Compensation model doesn't support  |
| Desire to retain power by remaining focused on areas of their greatest competence | Top-line revenue generators aren't incentivized by investment in long-term growth |

Out of the findings around overcoming these barriers—the power of quick wins, building trust and loyalty, and engaging personalities who could motivate and engage—a related theme emerged: Sales.

In his book *To Sell Is Human*, Daniel Pink talks about how everyone sells, whether as a professional seller or as a “non-sales” seller—where at least 40 percent of time is spent persuading others to do something you want them to do.



At its core, the change-management dilemma is nothing more than an inability to persuade others to do something different.

### Insights:

Law innovators have a sales problem.

Lawyers are both the innovator and the innovated. Behavior science tell us that buyers buy emotionally and justify rationally. Despite all the rational reasons for innovation, law innovators are not focusing enough on the human component. When sellers focus all their efforts on the rational reason why someone should buy, they risk losing the sale. In the innovation context, the skills needed to overcome the barriers to innovation are essentially sales skills. Fortunately, law firm innovators leading the charge inside firms can be trained to use these skills.

## PART 3: The Analysis and Key Findings

Drawing on the insights, we identified three areas for further testing:

1. The meaningfulness of the 80 innovation-oriented attributes we identified
2. The impact of innovation economics on how organizations innovate
3. Whether sales strengths are relevant to innovation success

To do this we reran the data to compare the Innovator Group to the Control Group from these perspectives.



### Finding #1: The Law Innovator's DNA

To determine whether meaningful difference existed between our Innovator Group and our larger attorney Control Group, we compared their Chally results against the master set of competencies.

In all, we collected more than 7,500 data points that we weighted by importance and distilled to a list of 80 innovation attributes. We were able to map 76 of them to equivalent Chally competencies, enabling us to measure and compare the results of our two groups. Out of this work, we identified 11 measurable innovation competencies as most significant.



We honed in on the attributes where there were meaningful differences between the Innovator Group and the larger database of attorneys and professionals. The result was a set of measurable law innovation competencies making up the Law Innovator's DNA.

We named these traits the Law Innovator's DNA. They are:

1. Navigates the tension between the status quo and long-term relevance
2. Demonstrates other-centered problem solving
3. Assertive in the face of challenges and obstacles
4. Oriented toward team success over individual success
5. Tries new things so that opportunities will not slip away
6. Builds buy-in through empathy and trust
7. Anticipates and navigates obstacles by adapting to stakeholder needs
8. Promotes growth through innovation
9. Positive and optimistic
10. Exhibits a collaborative decision-making style
11. Demonstrates intellectual curiosity

These essential elements add an important layer of criteria for building effective innovation teams that have the skills to accelerate innovation success and overcome the barriers that innovators inevitably will face. Moreover, using talent analytics, it provides a measurable way to find these high-potential innovators inside an organization.

This is an important finding given that innovation teams are typically comprised of individuals selected for some type of subject-matter expertise or objective criteria. While expertise is important, that criterion alone does not provide any measurable way to determine potential for success. When building teams, leaders need to be looking at a different set of competencies.

The chart below shows the results. The scores to the right compare the Attorney Control Group to the Innovator Group. A score of 50 or higher (highlighted in green) indicates a natural strength. Scores less than 50 indicate the strength is not a fit. Competencies are considered highly coachable, moderately coachable, and not coachable. All the attributes identified on this list fell into the category of moderately coachable except for "Ability to adapt and be flexible to changing circumstances," which is considered a trait that a person either has or does not.



| Law Innovator Attribute  | Scores        |                 |            |
|--|---------------|-----------------|------------|
|  | Control Group | Innovator Group | Difference |
| Navigates the tension between the status quo and long-term relevance | 49            | 58              | 9          |
| Demonstrates other-centered problem solving                          | 48            | 55              | 7          |
| Assertive in the face of challenges and obstacles                    | 49            | 56              | 7          |
| Oriented toward team success over individual success                 | 46            | 52              | 6          |
| Tries new things so that opportunities will not slip away            | 42            | 47              | 5          |
| Builds buy-in through empathy and trust                              | 59            | 64              | 5          |
| Anticipates and navigates obstacles by adapting to stakeholder needs | 60            | 64              | 4          |
| Promotes growth through innovation                                   | 53            | 57              | 4          |
| Positive and optimistic  | 47            | 51              | 4          |
| Exhibits a collaborative decision-making style                       | 42            | 46              | 4          |
| Demonstrates intellectual curiosity                                  | 50            | 50              | --         |

## The Law Innovator's DNA Corollary: Innovation Type Preferences

Recognizing that innovation can impact a business model in different ways, our second test focused on how the principles of innovation economics might influence the way in which an organization innovates.

For the purpose of our inquiry, we assumed sustaining innovation has the least impact on the traditional law business model, while disrupting innovation reflects what an optimized model looks like based on innovation economics—a full shift to a more collaborative organizational structure and a results-based delivery model.

Using Chally competencies, we devised a simple formula to test preferences for certain types of innovation. We looked specifically at preferences around managing people and approaching initiatives.

In Chally parlance these variables are Orientation (Line vs. Staff) and Approach (Production vs. Project). Line Orientation and Production Approach are indicative of a traditional law firm model where individual contribution and productivity are the norm. Comparatively, Staff Orientation and Project Approach are more indicative of innovation economy principles.



The chart below shows the formula for each innovation type and where the Innovator Group landed:

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Optimizing: Line + Project</b><br>85% Match    | <b>Disrupting: Staff + Project</b><br>50.9% Match  | <b>Innovation Type Preferences:</b><br><b>Matching 4 Types: 13%</b><br><b>Matching 3 Types: 47.2%</b><br><b>Matching 2 Types: 98.1%</b><br><b>Matching 1 Type: 100%</b> |
| <b>Sustaining: Line + Production</b><br>66% Match | <b>Creating: Staff + Production</b><br>56.6% Match |   |

As a group, these preferences don't tell us much. But the results were instructive to the individual participants as it gave them insight into how their natural orientations fit into the types of projects they were engaged in.

An organization's collective results could be used as a data point to determine what types of innovation initiatives might fit best with the culture of the firm.



## Finding #2: The Link Between Sales and Innovation

A second finding came from a more focused look at the most talked about barrier to innovation—resistance to change. Drawing on the insights around innovation fear factors, we looked closer at the role sales plays in innovation.

We matched our study participants to a set of sales role profiles GrowthPlay has validated specifically for professionals, like lawyers, whose jobs require them both to deliver services and generate business from clients (aka “doer-sellers”). The five “doer-seller” profiles are:







When we mapped our Innovator Group against these roles, we noticed measurable differences in the natural selling strengths of innovation-minded legal professionals and the broader attorney control group.

GrowthPlay's existing data on attorneys tells us that almost every lawyer—more than 98 percent—has natural strengths in at least one “doer-seller” sales profile. However, only a handful—less than 16 percent—are a match across all five roles.

In comparison, we found that more than 30 percent of the Innovator Group are a fit in five of five sales roles, indicating a strong correlation between an ability to sell and innovation mindedness.

The results suggest two things. First, sales-related skills have the dual benefit of supporting revenue growth and accelerating innovation effectiveness. Second, innovation execution requires more than a communication and implementation plan; it requires a sales strategy focused on authentic relationship building and other-centered problem solving.

That brings us to our final and unexpected finding: With data, we can reduce the implicit bias that can deter innovation.



### Finding #3: The Intersection of Innovation and Inclusion

Our third finding was unanticipated but equally significant.

Research shows that innovation is more likely when specialists team up. Yet teams comprised of legal and business experts alone are not moving the needle on law innovation. This, in part, is because there is no guarantee that a person with subject-matter expertise also has the Law Innovator's DNA. Teams might get lucky, but without data, "gut feel" ends up being the primary decision-making criterion.

It also misses the mark in another important way. Teams become subject to implicit bias when they rely on overt traits such as pedigree, performance, and personality to build their innovation teams. This is significant in any context but particularly with innovation because inherent, acquired, and gender diversity have all been shown to contribute to innovation success.

The Law Innovator's DNA alone provides more to look for when building teams, which promotes inclusivity. Using data to measure for capacity opens the doors to identifying high-potential talent that may not have had the same opportunity to perform.

The chart below shows the benefits of using objective competencies for team selection:

| BIASED COMPETENCIES   | OBJECTIVE COMPETENCIES  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE</li> <li>CREDENTIALS/PEDIGREE</li> <li>CONNECTIONS/NETWORK</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE</li> <li>NATURAL CAPACITY</li> <li>INHERENT AND ACQUIRED DIVERSITY</li> </ul> |
| LIMITS TALENT ECOSYSTEM   | BROADENS TALENT ECOSYSTEM   |

### Part 4: The Innovation Opportunity

At the end of the day, lawyers are human. They fear the personal impact of change like anyone else. They also are hungry for opportunities to create value for clients, achieve professional success, and maximize earning potential in a way that frees them from the billable-hour treadmill.

When it comes to these opportunities, the findings of this study are incredibly optimistic.



The Law Innovator's DNA provides an index for innovators to uncover skills to accelerate their progress. The Law Innovation Framework provides a talking stick for organizations to better understand what type of innovation might best fit within their cultures. Sales training provides practical skills innovators can use to build trust, engage, and motivate colleagues and end users to buy into a different way of doing things.

Perhaps most exciting is the potential to use talent analytics to build more diverse and inclusive teams to achieve better results. Using talent analytics, law organizations now have a powerful opportunity to uncover hidden potential and promote more inclusivity within innovation teams and across law organizations more generally.

For organizations that see the possibilities and potential of law innovation, we recommend the following:

1. Double down on sustaining innovation. Engage with clients to understand their changing business needs and invite them to co-design solutions with you.
2. Understand and develop the skills making up the Law Innovator's DNA.
3. Use data to make smarter decisions and broaden your talent ecosystem. The more skills you can access, the more innovative you can be.

Done right, innovation will transform the legal profession—creating conditions where organizations can move from defining success based solely on the bottom line to a model focused on Triple Bottom Line success metrics of people, profits, and planet:

- People: Attracting and retaining the best talent
- Profits: Creating more profitable, predictable, and sustainable revenues
- Planet: Building organizations that contribute to the greater good

The great news is that natural innovation potential exists in every law organization. Once you know how to find it, you can mine and develop it to better respond to changing client needs and create a more sustainable and thriving law businesses.



## Acknowledgments

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On the GrowthPlay side, this effort was a collaboration of many people, most notably Denise Terry, our manager of data analytics and customer insights.

## About the Author

Debra Baker is a journalist turned lawyer focused on helping lawyers create, deliver, and communicate client value through growth effectiveness and innovation coaching, training, and consulting.

She draws on 25 years of experience to help law firms and professional services organizations develop strategic growth plans, practice and industry team playbooks, and innovative ways to improve the value they deliver to clients. Her goal: to build better businesses, better understand and respond to client needs, and make the practice of law more enjoyable and fulfilling.

As Managing Director, she services on the GrowthPlay Strategic Leadership Team and leads the professional services team's Strategic Growth & Innovation Initiatives.

In 2014, she founded Law Leaders Lab and has previously served as Global Director of Marketing at Heller Ehrman and head of product marketing and a legal technology company. She also was a senior writer for the ABA Journal, where she received numerous awards for her coverage of issues related to law practice management, women in the law, and business ethics. She is licensed to practice law in Illinois and is based in San Diego.

She sits on the board of directors for the Northwestern Law School Center for Practice Engagement & Innovation and is a frequent speaker on the topic of law innovation and growth effectiveness.

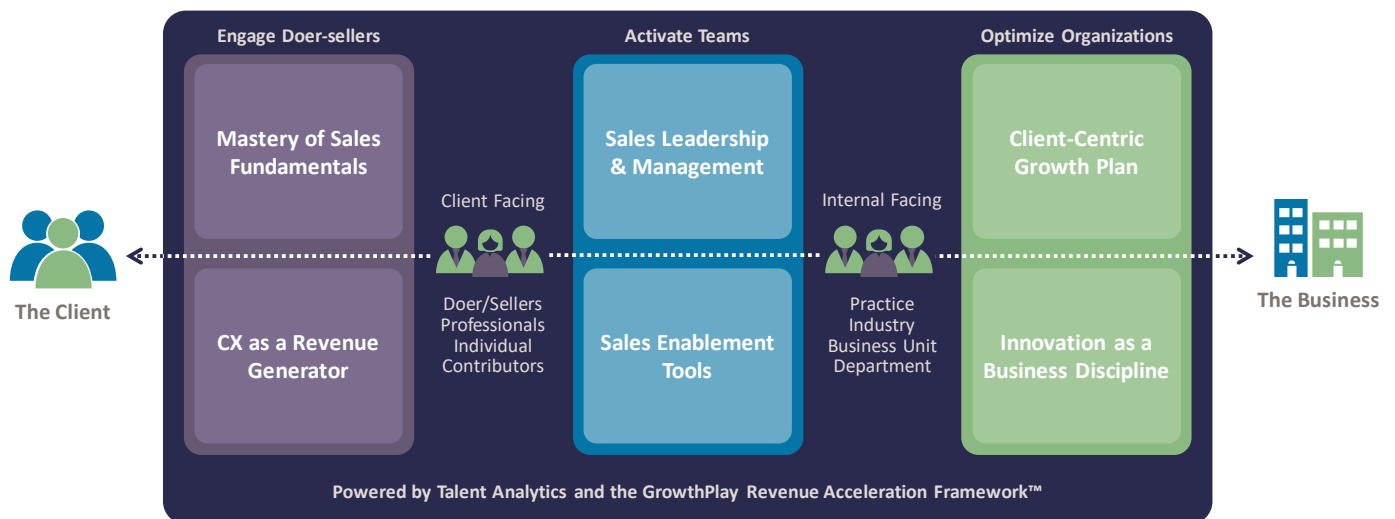


## About GrowthPlay

Created in 2014, GrowthPlay is the combination of best-in-class companies serving clients in multiple industries, including Akina, The Chally Group, and Law Leaders Lab. We offer clients:

- Deep expertise in business development strategy, go-to-market initiatives, sales coaching and training, and talent assessments
- Client perspective based on a deep bench of alumni of in-house professional services firm experience, either as practitioners, or in leadership roles in marketing, business development, or talent development
- Insights and perspectives on market trends and best practices from working with a wide range of professionals, including approximately 40 percent of the AmLaw 200, as clients.
- Holistic interventions to improve the mindset, behaviors, and performance of revenue-generating and client-facing team members

We align our services around the hallmarks of high-performing law firms:



i [www.law2023.org](http://www.law2023.org)

ii Id at <http://www.law2023.org/rule-1>

iii Gardner, Heidi K. *Smart Collaboration*, Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2016)

iv Trimble, Vijay Govindarajan and Chris, *The Other Side of Innovation*, p. 199, Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010)

