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We asked six of BLG's up-and-coming associates for their take on the lawyer of tomorrow: the skills they'll need to succeed in their practice area, contribute to the profession and offer value to clients, given the pace of change in the law and the world around us. Their answers provide a glimpse into the topics that are top of mind for the next generation of law firm partners and in-house counsel.

"As business becomes increasingly global, we're going to see legal issues continue to transcend national boundaries. It will be crucial for future lawyers to have cross-cultural competence—an understanding of diverse cultural norms, customs and legal systems—so we can negotiate well, resolve disputes and build successful partnerships across borders. To provide strategic legal counsel to multinational corporations and entrepreneurs operating in diverse markets, we'll need to understand global business trends, market dynamics and regulatory frameworks. A global perspective will also help us promote international cooperation and foster peace and justice beyond our backyards, at the same time as we're representing the interests of our clients."

Sinem Ersoy, Associate, Corporate and Capital Markets, BLG's Calgary office

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"Lawyers of the future will need to have the same skills as the lawyers of today. If I had to choose one skill to highlight it would be adaptability. We're hearing a lot about how advancing technologies — especially the current buzzword, AI — will affect lawyering in the future. The reality is that many law firms have been using AI for years, from spellcheck to e-discovery. The technologies are becoming more sophisticated, of course, but I think this is an issue of degree, not kind. We must be willing to change and use these technologies in a way that benefits our clients, but we must also know our limits. Recent examples of lawyers relying in court on 'hallucinated' cases generated by AI are the current cautionary tale."

Paige Burnham, Senior Associate, Commercial Litigation and Arbitration, BLG's Vancouver office

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"Hybrid working offers so much in terms of flexibility and efficiency for both lawyers and clients, but it can also pose challenges for building rapport and trust. Future lawyers will need to push themselves to engage with others, whether they're in person or online, by being personable, listening attentively, asking thoughtful questions and taking initiative to build rapport. In a hybrid environment, it's even more important to find innovative ways to engage. For example, I set up an NCAA March Madness pool for our group that is open to friends, family and clients. It has generated a lot of participation, even from people not interested in basketball, and has opened the door to learning about one another. Conversation leads to collaboration, which will ultimately benefit our team and our clients."

Shereen Khalfan, Associate, Commercial Litigation, BLG's Toronto office

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"Alongside traditional legal expertise, tomorrow's lawyer will need business-friendly skills. Clients increasingly expect their legal counsel to keep pace with their business goals—they're looking for engagement and real-time feedback—which means we need to integrate technology and data analytics into our legal practices. We must be adept at project management to handle important deliverables efficiently. And we need to align our solutions with our client's business ambitions. In the best law firms, teamwork is replacing the traditional model of a single partner handling client interactions. Collaboration requires a different set of interpersonal and organizational skills, including open-mindedness and emotional intelligence."

Francis Lussier, Senior Associate, Corporate Commercial, BLG's Montréal office

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"The successful lawyer of tomorrow will value diversity, equity and inclusion. Lawyers work with diverse clients, whose needs are shaped by their backgrounds and experiences, and we must embrace DEI to truly understand those needs—otherwise we can't fulfil our professional duty to advance our client's cause. For example, to develop an Islamic finance structure that meets the needs of some clients, we add value by understanding both applicable Canadian laws and the importance the client places on compliance with Sharia law. If our legal teams are themselves diverse, we'll understand these needs better. Plus, research shows we'll be more innovative, effective at problem solving and make better decisions."

Tony Zhang, Associate, Tax, BLG's Toronto office

"To support an increase in access to justice, future lawyers will need to stay on top of technology. Tomorrow's tech tools, in skillful and responsible hands, will create efficiencies, which may reduce one of the major obstacles to access to justice: cost. These tools will also help provide insight into likely outcomes, giving clients greater confidence when choosing how to proceed in a dispute. When combined with informed judgment from experienced advocates, tech tools will aid in alternate dispute resolution, which can be an

important component of a constructive approach to disagreements. All of this is particularly important if we're talking about increasing access to justice for everyday citizens and small organizations, but it can also help in an in-house counsel or large law firm context."

Natasha Gulati, Senior Associate, Intellectual Property, BLG's Ottawa office

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BLG's Future of Law series captures the perspectives of industry leaders on the biggest issues facing law and business over the next decade and beyond, with the goal of starting conversations and supporting action in organizations across Canada. The year-long series was created in honour of BLG's 200th anniversary in 2023-2024.

By: Paige Burnham, Sinem Ersoy, Natasha Gulati, Shereen Khalfan, Francis Lussier, Tony Zhang