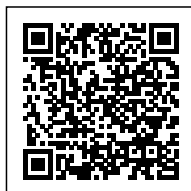


# THE PROFESSIONAL IMPERATIVE TO CREATE CHANGE

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## **It is not enough for lawyers to merely adapt to the changes around them, they must effect change for the better, says Miguel Roca, President of Roca Junyent**

The economic crisis is presenting new challenges to professional services firms across Europe and to which the legal services sector is no different. It means that we must rethink our paradigms and focus on different strengths, including the recognition that the future of the Spanish and European economies lies in the creation of new talent and innovation.

For many years, Spain benefited from northern European companies' relocation thanks to a relatively cheap labour force. Today, with the growing relevance of the emerging economies we are no longer attractive to companies in that sense. We therefore need to think of new ways to be competitive: we must give priority to education, training, research and development. If we make this effort, our chances of competing against these new markets will be much better. People in Spain are always talking about "adapting to change"; what we must do instead is to *create* that change. Fortunately, the services sector, and particularly the legal services sector is able to make that

change. I have a great trust in both our abilities and our possibilities.

Needless to say, the task will not be an easy one. The global market is creating more and more demands on our law firms and we will need to fulfil all of them.

The first of these demands is a desire for more security and certainty. Companies and citizens want to be well advised against any contingency that may affect the way they do business and the legal agreements they enter into. This is complicated for us to achieve, because certainty does not depend exclusively on our technical abilities or the levels of service we can offer. In spite of this, we must make an effort to look ahead and be as accurate as possible in our predictions.

This takes us to the second demand: excellence. We must work obsessively towards this goal in order to stand out from our competitors. But excellence may not mean higher profits. In light of the crisis, society and clients in particular are more cost aware and we need to adapt to this fact. There may be no other option than to lower our fees while at the same time having to maintain or even improve the quality of our services.

Furthermore, we need to make a greater effort to follow the client whatever his needs arise. This may be within Spain but increasingly it means outside of Spain, which means we must learn to work better through networks. Lawyers love to work in solitude but this is irrelevant to clients' practical needs. Our way of working must be compatible to the services they would receive anywhere else in the world.

Another essential point is to increase our investment in new technologies. We need better infrastructures within our own organisations in order to satisfy the client and earn his loyalty. It may seem a terrible time to carry out such an investment but trying to save costs in technology would be a serious mistake.

Training has to also be a priority. Young lawyers need a more comprehensive and practical education, but universities are not responding to that need, so law firms have to take over the preparation of future professionals. But we must be more proactive not only with regard to developing our young lawyers but also towards society: legislators do not always know what is best for the country. It is therefore our moral duty to generate new ideas and to be more ready to challenge decisions, as is common within Anglo-Saxon jurisdictions.

In our daily work we are constantly in touch with businesses and individuals' problems and concerns; instead of only looking to our clients' individual defence these concerns must be passed on to help develop public opinion and influence the decision-makers.

In conclusion, the future may still bring great opportunity for the legal services market if we make two strong commitments: one internal, to adapt our own firms, and the other external, to have a stronger voice in public matters.