



Franchise Law Firms and the Transformation of Personal Legal Services

Jerry Van Hoy

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As lawyers, legal scholars, and academics throughout the social sciences debate the future of legal work and the legal profession itself, they turn their attention inevitably to the rise of the franchise law firms. Founded in response to the changing market for legal services, franchise law firms have grown dramatically in recent years, but at what cost to clients and lawyers alike? This book focuses on how professional organizations (and the related work experience) are influenced by economics and the way various firms have excelled by mass producing a basic menu of services—by placing their offices at strategic locations, hiring inexperienced new law school graduates, and using television and other hard-sell means to attract clients. Van Hoy's impeccable sociological research, presented in a clear, readable, anecdotal style, will be fascinating and useful reading, not only for members of the legal profession and their academic colleagues, but also for aspiring lawyers and their future clients.

Van Hoy shows that franchise law firms are a competitive innovation in the market for personal legal services—an innovation that has served to standardize lawyers' work and to dehumanize lawyers themselves. Precisely because the work of attorneys can be standardized and mass produced, a finding that may astonish some and dismay others, attorneys may be even more alienated from their chosen profession than their clients suspect. Van Hoy analyzes these matters and captures the broader context in which prepackaged firms operate; indeed, he compares franchised attorneys to lawyers in different types of firms who are also competing for the same business. Van Hoy is convinced that many attorneys are not only alienated but are ripe for unionization. He shows that collegiality no longer insulates attorneys from the pressures and dissatisfactions of the outside world, a research finding that in itself may seriously challenge prevailing viewpoints and shake confidence in the belief that legal work is not just a profession, but also a calling.

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