



## 5 Ways to Pivot to Legal Tech

### Skills and Professional Development



While many strive to be pioneers in their fields, few can say they are breaking new ground in not just one, but two industries. Linda Selker is one of those few. Selker is poised at the intersection of emerging technology and the frontiers of law.



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She is part engineer, part lawyer, but above all, she is an adaptive leader and inquisitive lifetime student. Currently vice president – head of legal at Quantstamp, Inc., Selker champions Quantstamp's mission to enable trust and security in the [blockchain and smart contract ecosystem](#).

Selker's road to the edge of tech and legal innovation has been years in the making. She most recently transitioned from being vice president and associate general counsel at Visa where she spent over a decade.

Although she's well versed in law (she has a JD from Georgetown University), she started off in science. She earned a BS in Electrical Engineering/Computer Science from the University of California, Berkeley and a Masters in engineering from Cornell University.

With such varied experience, Selker has valuable advice to share on career pivots, the blockchain industry, and everything in between.

## **1. Be curious and try the technology or talk to someone who knows the space**

This is especially applicable to the blockchain industry, says Selker. "I am passionate about technologies that can change how people interact on a daily basis. When I can, I like to experience using new technologies firsthand while analyzing how different areas of law may (or will) govern throughout the user experience, platform operation, or product lifecycle," she adds.

Selker analyzes the user experience from a consumer perspective. "I ask myself how I can use this technology in my everyday life and how can it be better to make my life better," she explains.

Over the last few years, she enjoyed working with payment form factors as they have transformed from plastic cards to mobile, e-commerce, and peer-to-peer platforms. Years prior, she was inspired by pioneers in integrated circuits and solid-state memory technologies. "These now allow each of us, and even our children, to harness computing power and memory in our backpacks, pockets, or wearables," she says.

What piques her curiosity now? "Today, I am excited about the potential of smart contracts and how blockchain technology can even further extend horizons for more convenient, personal, inclusive, portable, and expedient user experiences in virtual, decentralized commerce ecosystem without borders."

Curiosity is an important factor when you're trying to innovate on new ground. To learn more about blockchain from your legal tech peers, join ACC's [IT, Privacy & eCommerce Network](#) where you can ask them questions and participate in webcasts.

## **2. Keep an open mind and adapt**

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Selker recommends flexibility when it comes to pioneering new technologies. "Laws, regulations, and their enforcement often evolve at a delayed pace compared to technology," she explains. "Statutes written with brick and mortar business in mind do not apply in a straightforward manner to our evolving, virtual, decentralized operations and flows."

To keep up, Selker has learned to think — and ask questions — ahead of the game. "It's not an easy task to predict how laws will apply to an emerging technology," she says. "A perennial question is: What should I know that I have not thought to ask?"

### **3. Remember the underlying fundamentals and look toward the overall mission**

When you're working a new and rapidly evolving field, many uncertainties can make it difficult to understand the full picture — especially for risk-averse lawyers. Selker recommends prioritizing the overall long-term mission of your organization. "The future is uncertain but we cannot always wait to make decisions, provide counsel, or take action," she explains.

By viewing everything through the lens of an overall mission, you can ask yourself questions that matter. For example, Selker makes sure to ask herself: "Which interests are most critical to protect for long-term sustainability? How can we design a structure to protect those interests? Are we still achieving the original, or maybe an enhanced, goal?"

### **4. Life at the intersection of legal and blockchain requires many skills — but it's satisfying**

Selker has no lack of praise for daily life in her new role. "I am part of a close team. Given our size, many of us have unstructured roles and wear multiple hats. We are agile, thriving, and learning as we go," she says. She finds the work unpredictable, but highly satisfying.

Blockchain is a young field, which means that those who enter now have the opportunity to make an early, lasting impact on the entire industry. "I never know what each day or week will bring in terms of the business opportunity, product sprint, problem to solve, or legal areas to consider," Selker adds. "Each project is concentrated and fast-paced but I can see my direct impact."

Ultimately, however, she credits her team for their part in her new role. "It is an ongoing adventure and growth opportunity with compatriots sharing the experience," she explains. "When we all pull our oars together, the result is magical!"

### **5. Go ahead and make the jump to blockchain!**

Ultimately, Selker definitely recommends the jump to the blockchain industry. When asked to distill her advice into five points, she shared: "Be inquisitive. Embrace the unexpected. Be resilient and constant to a purpose. Enjoy the journey. Be yourself."

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These five principles are key to anyone seeking to join the exciting blockchain industry, but they also apply to anyone daring to make a career pivot, as Selker did.

## Olga V. Mack



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Olga V. Mack is a fellow at CodeX, The Stanford Center for Legal Informatics, and a Generative AI Editor at law.MIT. Mack shares her views in her columns on ACC Docket, Newsweek, Bloomberg, VentureBeat, Above the Law, and many other publications.

Mack is also an award-winning (such as the prestigious ACC 2018 Top 10 30-Somethings and ABA 2022 Women of Legal Tech) general counsel, operations professional, startup advisor, public speaker, adjunct professor, and entrepreneur. She co-founded SunLaw, an organization dedicated to preparing women in-house attorneys to become general counsels and legal leaders, and WISE to help female law firm partners become rainmakers.

She has authored numerous books, including *Get on Board: Earning Your Ticket to a Corporate Board Seat*, *Fundamentals of Smart Contract Security* and *Blockchain Value: Transforming Business Models, Society, and Communities*. She is working on her next books: *Visual IQ for Lawyers* (ABA 2024), *The Rise of Product Lawyers: An Analytical Framework to Systematically Advise Your Clients Throughout the Product Lifecycle* (Globe Law and Business 2024), and *Legal Operations in the Age of AI and Data* (Globe Law and Business 2024).