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Foreword

By Carlos M. Brown

When I first encountered the phrase *Exponential Age*, I paused. It perfectly captures what so many of us in business are experiencing – a moment of breathtaking transformation where the pace of change is constant, technology is reshaping every dimension of business, and leadership itself is being redefined. Yet amid this acceleration, what remains most vital is not the technology, but our humanity.

That belief is why this book resonated so deeply with me. *The Exponential Age* is not simply a guide to innovation; it is a reminder that people – our capacity to connect, learn, and lead with purpose – are at the center of sustainable transformation. Catherine McGregor and Lloyd M. Johnson have built a framework that helps businesses and their lawyers and legal professionals strengthen the very qualities that make us distinctively human – curiosity, creativity, empathy, and courage. It echoes my own thinking: how do we provide a blueprint for leaders to lead authentically and effectively in a time of unprecedented change?

Leadership as a collective mindset

Across my career, leading legal and compliance teams and latterly a much broader range of business teams, one truth has remained constant – meaningful change begins with mindset. I’ve talked about that as “dreaming in color” and *The Exponential Age Mindset Attributes* that Catherine and Lloyd describe reflect this notion. This is the leadership shift the legal profession needs – from control to collaboration, from narrow legal analysis to broad enterprise perspective.

Concepts like *Zoom Master*, *Joyful Tightrope*, and *Agile Juggler* may sound poetic, but they capture the practical reality of what it means to lead today. I see this in my teams – when lawyers begin to think beyond legal risk and engage with business, community, and societal impact, everything changes. We move from asking, “Can we do this?” to “How can we make this work

responsibly, inclusively, and with integrity?” We become not only better lawyers, but more influential business leaders and trusted partners.

Reclaiming the human advantage

One of the most powerful insights in this work is that our greatest competitive advantage in an age of AI is not speed or scale – it is humanity. The lawyers who will thrive are those who combine analytical rigor with empathy, narrative, and connection.

I share this conviction that deep listening – to colleagues, clients, and communities – builds the foundation of trust and influence. The frameworks in this book give structure to that belief. They remind us that compassion and creativity are not “soft skills” but essential capabilities that power resilience and innovation.

The integration of neuroscience is especially resonant. It validates what I have seen as a leader – joy and curiosity are not luxuries, they are catalysts. They create the mental agility needed to lead with clarity and courage amid uncertainty.

From risk managers to strategic enablers

This book addresses one of the central challenges facing modern in-house counsel – the evolution from gatekeeper to growth partner. The *Six Dimensions of Business Risk and Opportunity*, *Four Zones of Curiosity*, and *Can If* frameworks equip legal teams to reframe how they engage with their organizations.

These tools encourage lawyers to translate complexity into clarity, and fear into forward motion. They help us guide our teams to anticipate where the business – and the world – is heading, and to shape that future with integrity and imagination.

At Dominion Energy, I have seen that the most effective leaders are those that unite technical excellence with a shared sense of purpose and service. We need subject matter expertise aligned with mindsets that allow us to think differently and keep learning. This book builds that capacity from the inside out.

The work of being human

Transformation is not merely procedural – it is deeply personal. True leadership is the work of being human – holding our values steady while stretching into new frontiers.

The Exponential Age offers tools and language for that journey. It challenges us to lead with presence rather than certainty, to stand with confidence amid ambiguity, and to help others find their footing there too.

In my work leading the services division at Dominion Energy, I have witnessed how these ideas can energize teams – unlocking not only performance but also optimism, creativity, and belonging. In a time when automation and algorithmic thinking dominate headlines, the courage to lead with heart is more essential than ever.

A call to courageous, human-centered leadership

This book is a call to action for our profession. It challenges every general counsel, legal leader, and aspiring professional to redefine success – not by output alone, but by impact, inclusion, and humanity.

We cannot slow the pace of the Exponential Age, but we can choose how we meet it. If we lead with empathy, curiosity, and courage, we will not only keep pace with change – we will help shape a more just, creative, and connected future.

Carlos M. Brown

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chief administrative and projects officer and corporate secretary,
Dominion Energy, Inc.

Acknowledgments

This book is the result of many conversations, collaborations, and moments of insight along the way. While I cannot name everyone who has influenced this work, I want to acknowledge those whose contributions were fundamental to shaping the thinking behind it.

My co-author and creative partner, Lloyd M. Johnson, has been on this journey with me from the beginning. Bringing these ideas to life together – through countless coaching engagements, workshops, and experiments – has been both intellectually stretching and deeply rewarding. Our shared curiosity and commitment to impact sit at the heart of this book.

My husband, Andrew, unknowingly set this entire project in motion. After reviewing the Exponential Age Mindset Attributes, he remarked – entirely unprompted – that these ideas were strong and worth writing about. Sometimes the clearest signals come from those closest to us. I must also mention my son Matthew and the dog, Peter – both are less interested in what this book is about but provide valuable emotional support!

Carlos Brown at Dominion Energy continues to be a powerful source of inspiration. His innovative mindset and constant encouragement to “dream in color” have influenced not just this work, but how I think about possibility more broadly.

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Dominique Ashby of Neuro at Work played a critical role in sharpening my thinking on the connection between neuroscience and the Exponential Age Mindset Attributes. Beyond her intellectual contributions, Dominique has been an unwavering supporter and champion of this work.

Larry Stubbings generously shared his deep expertise in the craft of storytelling. Having taught Larry many years ago, it was a particular privilege to learn from him in return.

Kenny Robertson, head of innovation and technology, legal and regulatory affairs at NatWest Group, has been an invaluable sounding board on how

innovation and creativity can genuinely take root within the legal profession. He exemplifies what it means to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

Similarly, Kevin Van Tonder, director of consulting at Consilio, has been a consistent source of insight and inspiration in both the development and application of these ideas.

My fellow University of Huddersfield alum, Chris Fowler, chief operating officer legal, governance and corporate affairs, Rio Tinto has also been a steady source of encouragement and support.

Lesley Wan, founder of the Eagle Club, has always had my back. Her belief in this work – and her partnership in developing programs and training that further shaped my thinking – has meant more than she knows.

Somewhat fittingly, the concept of Bias Jiu Jitsu emerged just as I began my own Jiu Jitsu journey. Becoming a beginner again – embracing humility, discipline, and continuous learning – proved to be the perfect mindset while writing about technological change in a world where we are all learning in real time. My thanks to Sensei Anthony Billings and my fellow students at Tiger Schulmann's Martial Arts in Princeton, who remind me of the power of progress over perfection.

Above all, my deepest thanks go to the participants and clients in our coaching and training programs. They brought these ideas to life, stress-tested them in real-world contexts, and revealed possibilities for application far beyond what Lloyd and I initially imagined.

Finally, this book is dedicated to the memory of my dear friend Lawson Crawford, who left us far too soon. His support, curiosity, and thoughtful conversations consistently helped expand my thinking while keeping me grounded. He is deeply missed.

Dr Catherine McGregor

February 2026

About the authors

Catherine McGregor is an author, executive coach, and management consultant. She has worked for a range of legal publications and now coaches and consults for legal departments and law firms around the world. She is the author of the successful book focused on the business of law for legal departments, *Business Thinking in Practice for In-House Counsel: Taking Your Seat at The Table* (Globe Law & Business 2020). The book focuses on the application of human-centred business skills by legal departments and has received numerous accolades.

Catherine spends most of her time working with executive leadership and chief legal executives, where she leads professional and executive development and executive coaching efforts, working with many Global 100 and Fortune 500 legal departments. Much of her work in talent development is now focused on developing the skills that professionals will need to master opportunities in the Exponential Age in blending human work with AI and other technologies. Together with her colleague, Lloyd M Johnson Jr, she has developed the nine Exponential Age mindset attributes and uses these as the basis for her leadership development and training programs.

After running 60+ leadership workshops over the past six years, executive coach **Lloyd M. Johnson** has developed a 360-degree view on the specific leadership development challenges faced by top legal department leaders – and those who would aspire to such positions. These insights – as well as others built over a career publishing magazines and running leadership conferences for general counsel and other law department leaders – inform Lloyd's work with clients as he provides them with integrated talent development, leadership development, and succession strategies through both group and individual coaching. His goal: building trust and rapport that allows his clients to be more open throughout the process, giving the work they do together more impact – not only on the executives themselves, but throughout the organizations they serve.

Introduction

The meeting

Interior boardroom; daytime; a group of executives sit around a table. One of them looks uncomfortable. It is the general counsel – who is not meant to be the most anxious person in the room.

Yet here they are, seated at the executive table, listening carefully while the conversation accelerates around them. The CEO is enthusiastic. The chief technology officer is already several steps ahead, outlining how a new AI-enabled platform will transform decision-making, compress timelines, and unlock value across the business. The CFO wants to know when the benefits will show up on the balance sheet. Someone mentions a competitor who has already moved.

Then the room turns – subtly, but unmistakably – towards the general counsel, towards legal.

Can we do this?

What's the risk?

What do you think?

The general counsel takes a breath.

There is no clear precedent. Regulation is evolving. The technology is advancing faster than guidance can be issued. The data inputs are imperfect. The ethical implications are real but not yet fully mapped. The business wants speed. The board wants assurance.

This is no longer a question of legal correctness.

It is a question of judgment.

In that moment, the general counsel is not being asked for a memo or a footnote. They are being asked to help the organization decide who it wants to be in a world where technology is reshaping power, responsibility, and risk. They are being asked to balance innovation with trust, ambition with accountability, and progress with principle – without the comfort of certainty.

This moment is now becoming routine.

Across boardrooms and executive meetings, legal leaders are finding themselves in similar positions. Not because they lack expertise, but because the nature of decision-making itself has changed. The questions arriving at Legal are broader, faster, and more strategic than before. They demand synthesis, not just analysis. Perspective, not just precision.

Welcome to the Exponential Age.

The rules have changed

The legal profession is facing a quiet reckoning.

Not because the law is disappearing.

Not because lawyers are no longer needed.

But because the way value is created – and recognized – has fundamentally shifted.

Technology is no longer knocking at the door of legal departments. It is already inside, embedded in workflows, shaping decisions, accelerating timelines, and exposing gaps in how lawyers think about risk, judgment, and leadership. Artificial intelligence, data-driven systems, and automation are not future concerns. They are present realities – often adopted faster than legal teams are prepared to understand, govern, or lead them.

And yet, much of the conversation in law remains strangely misplaced.

We debate tools instead of mindsets.

We focus on efficiency instead of judgment.

We talk about risk controls while ignoring the deeper question: what is the lawyer's role when technology changes the nature of thinking itself?

The uncomfortable truth is this: technical excellence alone is no longer enough.

In the Exponential Age, the lawyers who thrive will not be those who know the most, but those who can think most effectively under conditions of speed, uncertainty, and ambiguity. The ones who can zoom out as easily as they zoom in. Who can influence without defaulting to “no”. Who can balance innovation with ethics, and pace with trust. Who can lead when the answer is not obvious – and may not even yet exist.

This is not a skills gap.

It is a mindset gap.

Embracing the tension

The Exponential Age is defined by compounding change. Progress no longer moves in straight lines – it accelerates, amplifies, and cascades. Small decisions create large ripple effects. Systems are deeply interconnected. Feedback loops are shorter. The cost of hesitation is higher.

For lawyers, this creates a collision between how they were trained and how they are now expected to operate.

Legal training prizes certainty, precedent, and precision. The Exponential Age rewards adaptability, synthesis, and strategic judgment. The law evolves slowly; technology evolves at speed. Regulation lags innovation. Ethics are tested before frameworks are in place.

In this environment, waiting for clarity is not a neutral act – it is a strategic choice, and now it is often the wrong one.

General counsel and legal leaders know this instinctively. Many feel the pressure daily – faster decisions, broader stakeholder expectations, technology-led business strategies that raise questions the law has not yet answered. Teams are being asked to move quicker, think more commercially, and engage earlier – often without additional resources or guidance on how to do so.

At the same time, lawyers are rightly wary. Over-reliance on technology introduces new risks – hallucinations, bias, opacity, and ethical blind spots. The solution is not blind adoption – but nor is it resistance. The real work lies in learning how to stand confidently in the tension between progress and caution.

That tension is not a problem to be solved.

It is a capability to be developed.

This book is written for lawyers who sense that the ground beneath them is shifting – and who want to lead, not retreat. It is for those who recognize that influence now matters as much as expertise, and that human judgment is becoming more – not less – valuable as machines grow more capable.

The Exponential Age does not need lawyers who cling to certainty. It needs lawyers who can think expansively, decide wisely, and lead humanly in the face of accelerating change.

That requires a different mindset.

The chapters that follow introduce the Exponential Age Mindset Attributes and their related tools – practical, developable ways of thinking and behaving that enable legal professionals to operate credibly and confidently in this new reality. These have been tried and tested through training

we have undertaken with a range of general counsel and their legal teams. These are not theoretical ideals. They are patterns we have seen repeatedly in legal leaders who succeed at the enterprise level.

In our work with legal departments across industries, we have seen that the most effective legal leaders share a common set of mental habits. They are comfortable toggling between detail and strategy. They can sit in ambiguity without freezing. They tell compelling stories about risk and opportunity. They adapt their communication to the room. They recognize bias – both their own and others. They synthesize complexity into clarity.

But these are not personality traits. They are developable capabilities. This book takes you through them.

This is not about becoming more technical.

It is about becoming more strategic.

More influential.

More human.

The rules have changed.

The opportunity is deciding how you will play.