

TEXAS LAWYER

TEXAS LEGAL INNOVATOR:

TREY COX, GIBSON,
DUNN & CRUTCHER



Texas Lawyer is recognizing Trey Cox of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher as winner of the Texas Legal Innovator award. Read a Q&A with him below.

How do you foster a culture of innovation within your practice or organization?

Culture is created by what leaders do where people can see them. I did not announce an innovation initiative. I started building tools in my own cases and let the results recruit people.

That became the Texas Litigation Lab. Its first job was exposure by putting AI in front of every trial lawyer in our Dallas and Houston offices. Our goal was fluency. Lawyers who had never written a prompt were soon writing better ones than mine, and our library grew to 180 because they built it, not because I assigned it. When the work outgrew a side project, the firm backed us with engineers and we built our proprietary platform, Atlas, together.

The payoff was something I could never have ordered. Lab members now give TED-style talks

to our entire litigation practice group. They share their use cases, the prompts behind them, how they developed them, and what actually worked. That is not one partner leading. That is a whole team mobilized to lead, innovate, and win. Two rules hold it together. The machine handles the mechanical; the lawyer owns the decision. And we stay honest about failure. I talk openly about where AI fabricates and who it has burned, because a culture that only celebrates loses its sense of vigilance.

Innovation rewarded and vigilance always. Judgment over process. That is the culture

I work to build, and the Lab is how I encouraged it.

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What advice do you have for others looking to do the same?

Start with the work, not the technology. Most firms buy tools and then hunt for problems to justify them. Reverse it. Think from right to left. Find the task that consumes your best people's time but does not increase your judgment, and build something to eliminate that burden. Innovation should free lawyers to do what only lawyers can do.

Use it yourself before you ask anyone else to. Credibility here is not transferable. If you have not run the workflow in a real matter, you cannot teach it, and you certainly cannot lead it.

Verify everything. The single most dangerous quality of these tools is that wrong answers arrive in the same perfectly formatted prose as right ones. Build verification into the process

so it cannot be skipped. A workflow that does not force a check against the record is a liability waiting to happen.

Never outsource judgment. Automate the mechanical, never the decision. The moment a lawyer lets the machine decide what matters, the lawyer has stopped practicing law.

Pair every tool with teaching. Technology transfers tasks. Mentorship transfers judgment. You need both, and the second is harder and rarer than the first.

Finally, stay honest about the limits. Talk about the failures as openly as the wins. The lawyers and firms that endure will not be the ones with the flashiest tools. They will be the ones who built the discipline to use them well. Discipline is the real innovation.