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Fenwick & West founder mixes Zen into tech blog

The Zen philosopher Dogen famously wrote: "There is no beginning to practice nor end to enlightenment; There is no beginning to enlightenment nor end to practice."

In a revelation that may surprise scholars, the 13th century sage was actually talking about *law* practice — that is, if the founding father of Fenwick & West, William Fenwick,

has anything to say about it.

Sidebar

Fenwick, 69, recently launched a blog called ValleyZen, with artist Drue Kataoka, that riffs on the "intersection of Zen and technology." The veteran tech litigator — who took to the Eastern philosophy after reading the book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" — offered a Zen-like reflection on how the venerable philosophy applies to his own adversarial profession.

"You will not find anything in Zen that is built on an idea that you will use power to force people to do things they don't wish to do — that sounds contrary to what litigators do, but I think it is the essence to what litigators do," Fenwick said. "It points you to a positive resolution."

Fenwick also said that a still mind helps the lawyer to deal with the disputatious nature of litigation.

The blog got started after Kataoka, who specializes in the ancient Japanese art of brush painting, was commissioned by the firm to do a large-scale work commemorating its history. (Kataoka described herself as a longtime Fenwick client, saying that firm chairman Gordon Davidson "has always guided me very well.")

The artist met with Fenwick to discuss the firm's history and the two hit it off, talking for 2 1/2 hours instead of the scheduled 20 minutes. Next came the blog, a combination of the pairs' interests: technology and Zen.

"I've been thinking about these ideas side by side," Kataoka said. "Upon meeting Bill it was just instantaneous. Bill is like a Valley forefather — he has an extraordinary intuition." Since the launch at the end of January, Fen-



IN THE MIX:

William Fenwick, one of the founders of Fenwick & West, and Drue Kataoka, who's been both a client of, and an artist for, the firm, recently launched a blog together that's focused on both Zen and technology.

JASON DOY

wick has written posts with titles like, "What is the sound of one footprint disappearing?" in which he discusses how advances in technology have aided the "transformation of tangible to intangible." As an example he points to the fax machine, which, he writes, evolved from a huge resource hog worth \$100,000 or 1,000 of his billable hours back then (no doubt it was a long time ago, when an hour of a lawyer's time was worth just \$100), into a tiny box that consumes less natural resources and costs just \$125 or 1/5th of a billable hour today. (You do the math.)

On the blog, Kataoka writes, paints and also

goes around the Valley with a video camera talking with Silicon Valley celebrities. In an interview with famed venture capitalist Tim Draper, Kataoka serenades the Draper Fisher Jurvetson founder on the flute. Then Draper takes her outside where he gives her a "Samurai flip" — a move that looks like it belongs in "Dirty Dancing."

It's all about spontaneity, Kataoka says. Indeed, she and Fenwick spontaneously decided to incorporate this reporter's interview into the video they happened to be filming for their blog at the time.

— Zusha Elinson