

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Career Success and Life Fulfillment

By Cordell Parvin

I have always enjoyed trying to understand why some people are very successful and why others are not. Interestingly, I have found many of the most successful people also have greater fulfillment in their personal and family lives. How can this be so? Put simply, they understand both their career and life priorities, they develop a plan based on these priorities, and they use their time wisely. Most of us start our law careers with great enthusiasm and then, to borrow a phrase from a new Seth Godin book, “we hit the dip”. This clarity of career and life priorities helps successful lawyers get through the dips.

#### ATTITUDE

You must have the right attitude to succeed. We all talk to ourselves. What are you telling yourself? What are you telling others? What you say to yourself and others often conveys your attitude, the way you think about things. I listen to what young lawyers are saying so I can learn what they are likely saying to themselves. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, less successful lawyers see the problem in every opportunity, and successful lawyers see the opportunity in every problem. I have found that less successful lawyers frequently say: “Yes, but ... ” Successful lawyers say: “Sure, how?”

#### VISION

Second, successful lawyers have vision: They know what they want to accomplish this year. They know where they want to be five years from now. Many successful lawyers even have lifetime goals. Having a clear vision and a definite purpose for where you want to go in your career enables you to accomplish your career goals; it's also how you find more time for your family and those other areas of your life that are important to you.

#### WHAT TO DO

Do you want to feel in control of your career and focus on your priorities? Would you like this next year to be your best year ever? If your answer is “Sure, how?” then you will want to review, and even implement, the following tips. I created these tips from reflecting on what I have done over the years that helped me in my career, and by examining the lives of lawyers and others who found success in both their career and personal life.

#### TOP 10 TIPS FOR CAREER SUCCESS AND LIFE FULFILLMENT

1. Write down what you want to accomplish in this next year.
2. Prepare a plan so you use your non-billable time wisely.
3. Decide on one area to learn that will enable you to be a more effective lawyer in your field. One year, I decided to focus on communication to juries. I bought every book I could find, listened to every tape, and read every article on the subject.
4. Read or listen to one book a month on success, client development or other topics that will make you more effective. When reading the books, actually implement two-three things suggested.
5. Use your time more effectively. Time is our most valuable resource. Whether we care to admit it or not, our challenge is not that we do not have enough time. Instead, our challenge is that we do not use the time we have effectively. You can discover how to use your time more effectively by writing down things you do or do not do that waste your time.
6. Figure out ways to bolster your energy. It is our second most valuable resource. Someone once said to me that a law career is a marathon. I replied that to be successful, it is better if it is a series of sprints with time to recapture our energy in between.
7. Think of ways to apply the 80-20 rule. Let me give you examples so you can think about it. Twenty percent of the things we do create or cause eighty percent of our success. What is that twenty percent for you? Eighty percent of a typical lawyers business comes from twenty percent of his or her clients. Which of your clients generate eighty percent of your business?

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8. Decide how much non-billable time you plan to spend developing your career and client base in this next year and divide by 50. Each week, give yourself a report card on whether you spent the number of planned hours and how well you spent them.

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9. Get more face time with clients and prospective clients. One of the lawyers I coach has discovered that each and every time he meets with a client in person he comes away with a new matter either right then or shortly thereafter.

10. Write down a description of you that would tell me all I need to know about you to recommend that a potential client hire you. Why am I suggesting this? First, if you do not know why a client should hire you, the clients clearly won't know either. Second, this will cause you to think about your elevator speech. How many times have you met people who ask what you do? Telling them you are a litigator, or a corporate

lawyer, or a tax lawyer may be absolutely accurate, but it will not likely get you very far. You need to be remarkable.

### **ONE LAST THOUGHT**

There is something else I urge you to do this next year. Spend more time with your family without feeling guilty. When you are with your family, be in the moment with them. Turn your Blackberry off and do not let your mind wander.



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