

Most Lawyers are Miserable...But You Don't Have to Be One of Them!

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that “Partnership is No Longer a Tenured Position” as partners who fail to maintain rich client lists and revenues are being demoted, fired or “de-equitized”. And a recent YouGov survey for The *Lanryer Magazine* reported that almost a quarter of lawyers want to leave the profession because of stress, lack of career prospects and long hours, confirming widespread dissatisfaction with the work-life balance in law, despite record levels of pay.

Law firm life is now defined by bureaucracy, alienation, billable hour demands, lack of input, mind-numbing nature of their work, negative work life balance and career prospects all causing frustration to an already disenchanted professional life. Drug and alcohol abuse is high. Whether it's because of ungrateful clients or the constant bickering involved with the adversarial legal process, the practice of law today represents a highly stressful career life.

According to author Douglas Litowitz, young lawyers are especially unhappy by every conceivable standard. They arrive at law school brimming with enthusiasm, but a decade later they are reporting staggering levels of anxiety, drug addiction, and depression. In legal circles, there is talk about a “crisis of professionalism” and a “decline in civility.” No longer can you trust another lawyer's word. These days, every consent, waiver or agreement of some sort has to be confirmed in writing.

For those of us who no longer qualify as members of the “young lawyers section” of the local bar association, the situation is not much better. Whether it's the long hours, the loss of control, or the lack of quality personal time, something is definitely wrong. Many feel trapped, but to keep up the lifestyle we've grown accustomed to, we just keep plugging along. Unfortunate, you'll get no sympathy from anyone...other than fellow lawyers. We have all come to the stark realization that law, like any other enterprise...is a business. And businesses exist to make money. In law, that means (PAYING) clients. Having a steady stream of new and existing clients is therefore the number one factor that determines your financial and professional success.

It's an all too familiar scene...you're working feverishly for a law firm, putting in over 2000 hours per year of grueling days and weekends, always on call subjected to annoying ring tones from your cell phone or blackberry unable to tell when work ends and your personal time begins. You work hard, make money for the firm and do everything you're supposed to do. Yet, something very important is missing. Whether it's the loss of control or the lack of quality time, something has gone wrong.

The fact is that law, like accounting, medicine, engineering, or any other enterprise is a business. And businesses exist to make money. They are driven by sales, revenues and profits. In

law, revenues are derived from clients. Therefore, having a steady stream of new and existing clients is the key to your financial success, as well as your professional happiness.

Sure, you could take a government or non-profit job and fight to address an injustice you're passionate about. But for those of us that are highly attached to a comfortable standard of living and don't relish the thought of eating macaroni and cheese 4 nights a week, let me offer another suggestion.

Create a career by design by putting in place a client development and retention plan that is uniquely tied to what you want to do, where you want to do it and whom you want to serve. Learn to make it rain so that you can create, blossom and grow, both personally and professionally. It may be hard to believe that one little aspect of your business can change your life that much, but let me assure you that marketing boils down to one word. **CONTROL!** When you can easily obtain and retain profitable clients, you can make more money, at any point in the economic cycle. And when you know you can make money, you have achieved complete control of the game. And total control equals total peace. Isn't the lack of peace of mind the real underlying cause of stress? Control is peace. And mastery of marketing is control. It's that simple.

So, if you are not making as much money as you want or are not pleased with the work that you do or who you do it for, learning to control your marketing is the same as controlling your life! The freedom you gain from being in charge is the best gift you can give yourself and your family.

And the ironic thing though about generating new business is that it could be the very activity that brings many attorneys back to the enjoyment of practicing law. The development of deep and rewarding client relationships, which are in alignment with your passions and interests, offers a solution for a less stressful, freedom-driven, and purposeful career as a lawyer. Done the right way, marketing your legal services can represent an opportunity to unlock your career happiness. When client development is approached as serving more clients, solving more problems and helping more people, it not only becomes more financially rewarding but also emotionally satisfying.

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