

## Why Don't Law Schools Teach the #1 Factor for Success?

So, let me ask why did you want to become a lawyer? Do you want to be a “legal technician”, a superb “problem solver,” or an “artful litigator?” Maybe you want to be an advocate who can speak for others and make their causes heard. Perhaps you want to get people out of trouble, or enforce their rights or become a hired gun that will fight like hell for the client, irrespective of the cause. Or maybe you want to fight for justice and social change for issues that you are personally passionate about. Maybe you just want to make a lot of money. Or maybe, just maybe, you have no clue and went to law school because you majored in political science or watched too many episodes of *Ally Mc Beal* and became seduced by the apparent glamour of the profession. Whatever picture you hold of yourself as an aspiring attorney, knowing your passions, your “type,” and the “why” you are embarking on this very demanding job, will be the defining factor in devising a career that is effective, fun, and filled with meaning.

No matter what course you're career takes, I'm here to tell you that if you want to enjoy your practice, pick and choose the clients and cases you handle, and have total control of your legal career, you absolutely must be prepared to “market” yourself and the values and benefits you provide.

The fact is that law, like accounting, medicine, engineering, or any other enterprise, is a business. And businesses exist to make money. In the legal profession, revenues are derived from clients. So you need clients! If you want to avoid being pigeonholed early in your career as a “worker bee”, then understand that becoming a “rainmaker” early on is the only thing that will guaranty your financial and personal success as a lawyer.

They will not tell you or teach you this in law school, but for those of you who want to have a balanced and comfortable life, one filled with financial and personal freedom, and the time to do the things you want to do, having an easy and workable system to get and keep profitable clients is the key which will determine your overall professional success and impact.

Did you know that 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 *Lawyer 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 for many is 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 disenchanting professional life. 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. These are sobering facts but before you get up and leave law school, and drive a stake into your mother's heart, fear not because there is an answer and one I wish I knew when I was in law school.

First, you need to determine what it is you really want to be, do and have with respect to your legal career. In other words, what do you want to do with your legal career; where do you want to do it, and what do you want your professional life to look? The answers to these three important questions explores what inspires and motivates you, what it is you stand for, what activities you love to do, what environment you want to do them in, who you want to serve, and what you want your professional life to stand for.

Unfortunately, the majority of attorneys never address these issues. In addition, they assume that all they need in order to be successful in their practice is a high degree of expertise in their chosen area. But this is no longer true. The only factor that will ensure your continued success is having more knowledge about **marketing**.

But sadly, many of us are uncomfortable with the idea of having to “sell” or “market” ourselves. I suspect that many of you went to law school to avoid having to “market” or “sell” yourself. Many attorneys feel it is beneath their professional standing and, quite literally, a major pain in the ass. What's more, even if we wanted to, we were never taught “how to” market ourselves. We don't know how to address these issues, so we continue to plug along on the cases that are brought to us, and then move on to the next one.

Ask any successful businessperson what they believe is the key to success and they'll tell you “marketing” and “profitable customers.” You're no different and as you begin your career and prepare to market or brand yourself... make it creative and fun. If it doesn't feel that way, don't do it. But, understand that if at first it seems uncomfortable, you may have to alter your attitude a bit. And you should clearly understand right at the start that the road will be a little difficult and you will fail at certain tactics, which may require you to learn new lessons, develop new parts of yourself, and make difficult decisions. Yes, you will get rejected, discouraged, and doors will slam in your face. But as an attorney, dealing with abuse and rejection will be a relatively easy thing for you!

Client development can not be viewed as a waste of time or relegate it to the bottom of your “things to do” list. It has to become your number one professional goal. If you truly want a lifestyle of wealth, freedom and security, this has to be your dominant thought, focus and action. Approach “selling” from an angle that views it as helping, educating, serving and creating a network around you. It will then be seen as something valuable, enriching and enjoyable.

When viewed correctly, marketing your solutions and value is about serving more, solving more and helping more. It is financially rewarding and emotionally satisfying. And when you experience the success this type of marketing brings, you will have more of the things you want out of your practice. You'll be able to pick and choose the cases you want and fire the clients that are ungrateful, unprofitable or annoying. Trust me...you'll have plenty of them!

You'll be able to leave the blackberry and cell phone turned off, take more vacations, do more pro bono work and accomplish all the things that you planned to accomplish when you first entered law school. In short, client development and marketing will not only set you apart; it will set you free. So, don't think about it as marketing or selling.... start thinking about helping, educating, solving problems, and providing trusted solutions. Start now...even before you graduate!

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