



The Successful Lawyer: Powerful Strategies for Transforming Your Practice

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Gerry Riskin is a Canadian lawyer and business school graduate with a global reputation as a pioneer in the field of professional firm economics and marketing. He is also a leading expert on managing professional service firms.

He speaks with in-the-trenches experience. A practitioner since 1973, he has worked as a partner and managing partner at Canadian law firms. In 1983, he co-founded The Edge Group with another well-known law firm consultant and author, Patrick McKenna. Edge Group has evolved into Edge International, a global firm with clients in over 30 countries. Through Edge International, Gerry has become a popular facilitator, teacher, retreat speaker and trusted advisor to many of the world's largest and most prominent law firms.

Don't let Gerry's big firm credentials scare you away – this book is not just for big firm lawyers. It provides practical and helpful advice for lawyers at any size

of firm and any stage of practice.

In the book Gerry distills his knowledge on practice management and client development into a well-organized, practical and readable format. You'll learn how to re-plan your future and build skills in a wide arena, including areas such as: active listening, managing client relationships, building client rapport and long-term relationships, handling heavy workloads, effective delegation, dealing with complaints, running effective meetings, business development, firm management and leadership.

The book gives you new insights into delivering client value in an efficient and profitable manner. You'll also learn how to develop the more entrepreneurial approach that delivery of legal services in a competitive global economy demands.

The book resonates with common sense. But common sense is not always so obvious or common, especially when you are running at breakneck speed on

the treadmill of a busy practice. Through his comments and personal anecdotes, Gerry will get you to reflect on and critically analyze your firm, your practice, and what you want out of the practice of law. On top of learning the skills that you need to build a successful, personally rewarding and profitable practice, many will find the motivation and inspiration to increase their passion for what they are doing.

This publication is available as a 256-page book (US\$84.95), a 330-minute audio program on audio tapes or CDs (US\$149.95), or as a combination package of the audio CDs and the book together (US\$209.95). ABA LPM section members get a discount on these prices.

For more information on this book, and the other excellent ABA LPM Section publications go to www.abanet.org/lpm/catalog.

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tech tip

Work that never goes missing

We have all experienced the upset and frustration of losing work due to an unexpected computer crash.

Thankfully, there is a very simple and easy way to prevent this from ever happening to you again.

In most Windows programs, pressing Ctrl+S will save your work. This key combination is the same as clicking on

File, then Save, or clicking on the Save button (the floppy disc icon) on the toolbar.

In many e-mail programs Ctrl+S saves a copy of your message in the Drafts folder.

While it accomplishes the same thing, using Ctrl+S to save your work is much faster as you don't have to take your fingers off the keyboard and reach for the mouse.

Get into the habit of pressing Ctrl+S to save your document each time you finish a page or even a paragraph. If your computer crashes you will only lose the changes you made after you last saved the document.

Even lawyers sometimes need help

It may be simply the stress and burnout that comes with managing a busy practice. It may have escalated to depression, or a dependency on drugs or alcohol. Whatever the issue, lawyers – like other professionals – sometimes need the very special type of peer support that the Ontario Bar Assistance Program (OBAP) makes available – completely confidentially – to legal professionals (lawyers, law students and judges), and their families.

Because stress and related issues are often contributing factors to claims, LAWPRO supports the work of OBAP in many ways, including this new column that will highlight the type of support OBAP provides to Ontario's legal community. The columns by OBAP staff Leota Embleton and John Starzynski will provide practical tips to help lawyers manage balance and wellness in law practice. They are based on Leota and John's first-hand experiences in responding to calls to OBAP's help line.

Striking a balance between client service and self care

Bob is a conscientious lawyer. He tries to take care of his clients and give them optimal service for his fees. His clients can reach him by office phone, cellphone, fax, e-mail and Blackerry. He spends great amounts of his everyday practice listening, consoling and advising. He finds that his evenings are quite busy with volunteering for a few boards of directors and going to his kids' activities – hockey, soccer and dance lessons. His wife is understanding, but Bob is getting tired.

Eventually, things start to go off the rails. The policy of returning calls the same day just cannot be met. His court schedule is so busy that he is missing lunches. He is working full-out all the time. Finally, he realizes that he needs help.

Bob calls the Ontario Bar Assistance Program and speaks to Leota, who listens to his dilemma. He is hooked up with another lawyer in a similar kind of practice who acts as a daily peer support to listen and brainstorm possible solutions to the problem. The theory of “two heads are better than one” helps Bob better cope with the isolation and frantic nature of the practice. He learns to better prioritize, to manage expectations, to set aside time for himself. Hearing a friendly voice every day gives Bob encouragement. And slowly, things pick up and Bob is back on an even keel.

If this scenario sounds familiar – or if you have other concerns that lead you to believe you may benefit from peer

counselling and support – contact OBAP. Program Manager Leota Embleton can be reached at 1-877-576-6227 and Volunteer Executive Director John Starzynski is available at 1-877-584-6227.

New one-stop assistance program in the works

The Boards of Directors of OBAP and LINK – the Lawyers' Assistance Program – have agreed to merge the two organizations. The new organization will continue the work of OBAP and LINK – but will provide lawyers with one central contact point from which to access peer support and/or counselling services.

The new organization builds on the strength of its two predecessor organizations: OBAP's unique peer support services which link lawyers in distress or crisis with other lawyers who can listen, help them access appropriate resources, or even help them work through an issue; and LINK's access to professional counselling services, offered through an independent service provider.

Combining the two organizations eliminates the confusion created by having two services with overlapping mandates. A single call to one central intake number lets lawyers access assessment and referrals to peer support assistance or counselling or both. The result is a more streamlined, cost-effective organization that eliminates duplicate administration and can put more financial resources to work for lawyers in need.

More information on the merger and how to access services will be available later this spring.

Workshop: emotional intelligence

Module: #9 Taking initiative by ... turning barriers into stepping stones

Coaching

Lawyers who are good at taking the initiative don't let barriers stand in their way. They recognize barriers and understand how to overcome them.

Can you identify what is standing between you and what you want? For example, the following are common barriers that people note when explaining why they haven't gotten started or taken the initiative:

- lack of know how
- lack of permission to...
- a negative attitude
- not enough time to...
- don't know right people
- a missing skill
- one good relationship
- an unresolved issue

Taking the initiative to overcome barriers can be accomplished using the following four-step process.

1. Identify the barrier that is in your way and its relevance to you.
 - For example, lack of time is a common barrier, and the personal relevance is that you don't have time to do the things you want (complete work, exercise, build relationships, etc.).
2. Rephrase the barrier in its positive context as a stepping stone (your desired situation).
 - For example, if your barrier and personal relevance is a lack of time to finish your work, the restatement in a positive context is "I have enough time to finish my work."
3. Imagine looking backwards in time from your desired positive situation (imagining the stepping stone as having been achieved).
 - The way to do this is to visualize that it is one year in the future and

that the positive state (the stepping stone) is actually true.

4. With this positive outcome imagined and in mind, determine what steps were used to overcome the barrier.
 - This is creating a strategy by envisioning what was done to get to a

desired outcome. It is easier to develop strategy when you look back from success, even if that success is just imagined.

It is very helpful to be looking backwards from success. The positive imagery helps develop more creative ideas.

Mentoring

Work through the examples below to give yourself some practice in using stepping stones to help you take the initiative and overcome barriers.

1) Barrier/Personal Relevance	I don't have enough time/to read fiction
Stepping Stone (Opposite of Barrier / Personal Relevance)	I have enough time to read fiction
Initiatives taken to achieve Stepping Stone	What I did was, 1. cleaned up my time messes 2. woke up earlier 3. scheduled more in advance
2) Barrier / Personal Relevance	I don't have enough time to get the work done
Stepping Stone (Opposite of Barrier/Personal Relevance)	The files are up to date
Initiatives taken to Stepping Stone (stated in past tense)	What I did was, 1. Identified type of lawyer I needed to help 2. Considered collaborating with another lawyer who was not as busy 3. Worked longer hours

Your own example

3) Barrier/Personal Relevance	
Stepping Stone (Opposite of Barrier / Personal Relevance)	
Initiatives taken to achieve Stepping Stone	

About the OCC

The Online COACHING CENTRE (OCC) is LawPRO's innovative online education tool. It lets you quickly and easily enhance a variety of "soft skills" that not only help you survive and thrive, but also help reduce malpractice claims.

The OCC is entirely Web-based, allowing lawyers across Ontario to use it at a time and place convenient to them. It is organized into six workshops, each of which contains approximately 25 learning modules, such as the one profiled on this page. Modules encourage self-teaching and self-evaluation; answers you provide when working in the modules should be saved for review at a later time.

To access the OCC, go to www.practicepro.ca/occ