How to Use This Book

This is a self-help book, but it is a different kind of self-help book. It is written specifically for you to find out how you are doing as a lawyer and what you might want to change, and then how to go about making those changes. This is done privately between you and the book. Please feel free to write in the book, tear out pages and post them on your bathroom mirror, copy exercises to use over again, and make it your very own reference manual. You will want to check back with the book from time to time and take the tests periodically throughout your career. Your goals will change as you grow and so will your ability to use the tools to evaluate and make significant behavioral changes.

Now let’s talk a little about change. There are changes of the mind and changes of behavior. In order to change your mind, you have to view your mind-set as one that needs changing. For instance, if you believe that you cannot speak publicly, but you think public speaking could benefit your career, you will need to do everything possible to change your mind-set before attempting to change the behavior, or you will face a real uphill battle.

Although it is possible to “Just do it,” and Alcoholics Anonymous tells us something like “Do it and the change will follow,” it is always better if you can first explore exactly why you don’t like public speaking. Sometimes the Myers-Briggs personality test is helpful to explore your values and proclivities. Maybe you are an introvert. Usually the reasons are even more subtle, such as you are afraid of not being perfect, of making a mistake, of people not liking you, or that you don’t have anything of real importance to say. Hopefully some of this can be refuted and you will notice your mind-set start to tell you that you really can do it, that it is foolish to try to be perfect, and that you have a wealth of knowledge that will help your future clients.

After investigating all the possibilities and deciding that you need to add public speaking to your repertoire, you may decide to take some baby
steps, like exploring your target market, then finding out things your target market is interested in. Then find a place where your target market gathers and talk to a few people one-on-one to find an interesting subject for your talk. If you are still paralyzed with fear about this, you might join a local Toastmasters club to get some limited experience. You are now taking steps to change your behavior. It is also helpful here to say to yourself, “I am a public speaker” several times a day. We have to get those little neurons to change!!

In this example, we explored both changing the mind and changing the behavior. As you can see, if you can convince yourself that public speaking isn’t all that bad, your behavior change will be much easier, so do this exercise before starting any attempt to change. Ask yourself “How can I change my mind about my belief that I cannot do public speaking or any other unreasonable, outdated, biased, or just plain stupid belief?” Sometimes friends or family can help to dispel the thoughts you have about your inability to do things that will take your life and career to the next level. Use whatever is available to you to find out why you have this mind-set and how to start the process of change. This book will help.

Hopefully, after doing the exercises and really taking an in-depth look at your career, you will create a plan that can be implemented immediately. However, this plan should not be written in stone. It is evolving and growing as you evolve and grow. If, after reading the first part of the book, you feel you are not quite ready to take on the assignment outlined, don’t give up. Keep thinking about the personal challenges set out in the book. Decide if they are something you see as worthwhile. Keep in touch with how happy or unhappy you are with your career. Go back and read just one of the chapters and think about it. Make additions to the exercises to create personal commitments that are right for you. Keep your mind open to trying new things. See if you can get a handle on what really brings you joy and what really is holding you back from being a better and more contented attorney.

The second part of the book takes a look at the trials and tribulations as well as the joys of the 21st-century. Obviously, there is no way that anyone can accurately predict exactly where the 21st-century will take us, but we can take a look at the obvious trends happening right now and also look at what is being developed by the brilliant visionaries in our society, as well as
outside factors that can be and will need to be considered by the successful future lawyer. It seems more advantageous at this point in your career to concentrate on the major challenges that might confront attorneys in the future and develop a plan to keep up with the events that will influence the practice of law at every stage of a career and in every kind of law. This again is an ongoing process and one that will need to be tended to.

The last chapter suggests some ways to keep tabs on important events that currently influence your practice or career or will in the next few years. Again, you will want to check back on these projections and see how accurate you have been. Also evaluate how effective your actions have been to not only meet the anticipated challenges but also to profit from the fact that you were prepared.

Law and legal practices are very slow to change. Lawyers like to evaluate and think over any new ideas. How many lawyers in 2014 are still using paper calendar books, don’t have a website, and have never blogged or texted? Probably a significant percentage. The problem is that many of their present and potential clients are getting their information in a different way than the attorney is communicating it. This is the heart of the change that many attorneys have to face and take significant steps to rectify. The secondary challenge is that the client will continue to get this information in a different way next week, next month, next year, in 50 years. We don’t know how this will be, but lawyers need to be open to what is inevitable.

I hope that this book will make you start thinking about the impact of everyday life on your practice in the future. It is not meant to make you paranoid about what might happen, but only to suggest that life will be less stressful if you do everything possible to increase your value right now and make a plan to continue increasing that value as you consider the future. This book will give you a lot to think about. It will dare you to make adjustments to your present and future goals and plans. It does not try to foresee every contingency, but does give you the tools and methods to increase your knowledge of the current state of law and how it can impact your career. This should decrease your stress and make you a not only a better but also a happier attorney. That’s my wish for you.