Mindset Matters: How Mindset Impacts Your Performance and Steps You Can Take to Improve Both

ABA Legal Career Central
Career Advice Series
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Faculty
- Milana Hogan is the Chief Legal Talent Officer at Sullivan & Cromwell LLP. She is a liaison to the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession and the Co-Chair of the ABA’s Grit Project. She is also the Vice Chair, and Chair-Elect of the Professional Development Consortium (PDC).
- Judith Gordon is an attorney-coach, facilitator, and lecturer at UCLA School of Law, on a mission to equip lawyers with the tools and strategies they need to thrive in practice and in life. Judith serves on the board of the ABA Legal Career Central, and OOTify.com, a social enhancement platform.
Program Agenda

1. What science tells us about the factors that really contribute to success
2. The mindset spectrum
3. Why (and how) does mindset matter?
4. Interactive exercise
5. Response flexibility
6. What you can do to develop a growth mindset

Do You Have to Be Talented to Be Successful?

Success Is About More Than Just Talent

- Talent has traditionally been understood to be about inheritance
- Recent studies suggest it is also about:
  - Family, culture, and friendship
  - Environment and circumstance
  - Deliberate practice fueled by intrinsic motivation
This Is Good News!

• Talent is only part of the story
• People of average intelligence/skill can become world class experts and performers
• In most cases, you have to work hard (really hard) to achieve mastery
• The path to success is not linear
• You will make mistakes
• Sometimes you will try your very best and you will not get the result you set out to achieve

The Secret to Success

Mindset
Success

What is Mindset?

• Mindsets are beliefs about yourself and your most basic qualities
  • Am I good at math?
  • Am I good at public speaking?
  • Am I smart?
• Fixed mindset vs. growth mindset
The Mindset Spectrum

Grit & Growth Mindset

- What is grit?
  - Behavioral persistence in the face of adversity
  - Sustained, passionate pursuit of goals
  - Should not be confused with:
    - Self-discipline
    - Self-control
    - Hard work

2016 ABA Study

- How do grit and growth mindset impact female lawyer success measures?
- Mixed methods approach
  - Survey sent to all lawyers, including:
    - Solo practitioners
    - Lawyers practicing in-house
    - Lawyers in government
    - Judges
    - Lawyers in firms of all sizes
  - Different success measures for each subset
Mindset Matters

- There is a statistically significant relationship between grit, mindset and various measures of success for lawyers in all practices.
- Many highly successful lawyers display growth mindset characteristics when dealing with challenging situations, but there is significant room for improvement.
- Women lawyers believe—almost to a person—that grit and growth mindset are important contributors to success.
- Mindset predicts seniority within the organization.

Interactive Exercise: Developing Realistic Optimism

- What is the Event/Situation?
- What was your unhelpful thought?
- What is your emotion?
- Rate the experience (-5 to +5)

Gathering evidence

- Evidence that supports the thought
- Evidence that reverses/challenges the thought

Realistic thinking

- What is your alternative thought?
- What is your emotion now?
- What is your mood rating (-5 to +5)

Response Flexibility Enhances Resilience and Grit

- Response flexibility is the ability to pause, assess and respond deliberately rather than reflexively.
- Mental hijack occurs when the reactive part of our brain interferes with the thinking brain.
- Interrupt mental hijack in the face of a challenge with B.A.R.: breathe, accept, reframe.
- The ability to keep the thinking brain engaged and relaxed in the face of adversity forges resilience neural pathways.
- The more the brain is activated in this manner, the stronger the neural connections associated with resilience become.
- With training, we're able to remain engaged, observe and choreograph a fitting response.
What Can You Do To Develop a Growth Mindset?

• Start where you are: take the mindset quiz
  http://mindsetonline.com/
• Learn how to handle and learn from failure
• Learn how to receive (and even inspire) criticism
• Reward yourself for effort, not outcomes
• Be (realistically) optimistic
• Identify what you are passionate about—and then pursue it with zeal

What Can You Do To Develop a Growth Mindset?

• Seek out meaning and context
• Become an expert
• Don’t assume that you can’t do it
• Try on a growth mindset
  • “fake it until you make it”
• Spread the word/storytelling!

Questions?
Upcoming Programs

Webinars
• June 27th 1-2 PM — “How to Build a Modern and Competitive Legal Resume”
• July 13th 1-2 PM — Career Advice Series: “Millennials: Dispelling Myths, Leveraging Their Strengths, & Capturing Business Opportunities”

Podcast
• “A Conversation About Character and Fitness – Part 1 of 2”