“Earning Your Lawyer Badge”: Mentoring Professional Identity To Improve Lawyer Well-Being

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Professional identity is defined as one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences.

- How does becoming a lawyer change you?

- Standard conception of lawyer identity is that it requires “thin professional identity,” whereby lawyers bifurcate between personal values and professional behavior.

**Arc of Lawyer Professional Identity**

- **Thin Identity**
  - “Bleached Out Professionalism”
  - Moral Neutrality

- **Thick Identity**
  - “Public Professionals”
  - “Cause Lawyers”
Why Professional Identity Matters?
Professional Identity is Crucial For Lawyer Success
Why so crucial?

More than 60 percent of lawyers rank above the standard on the UCLA loneliness scale.
Public Perception of Lawyers

• Only **21%** of the general public rate lawyers as having **high** honesty and ethical standards

• Only **18%** of the general public believe lawyers contribute “a lot” to society’s well-being
EARNING YOUR "LAWYER" BADGE: DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY....

YOU DO HERE?
Lawyers Are All The Same

• Logical
• Confident
• Competitive
• Analytical
• Effective communicators
• Diligent
A professional identity of “lawyer” simply embodies the core requirements for performance as a lawyer.

These performance requirements are NOT what actually define you as a professional.

Yet, these attributes shape our professional identities and in turn, limit perception of professional strengths.

Because we all have the same tools, we incorrectly assume that we will each use these tools in the same way to achieve the same level of professional success.
Consider how you as a lawyer

Identify the attributes that account for your professional success

&

Ultimately define yourself as a professional
Step #1: Defining Professional Success
Positive Client Outcomes

Extrinsic Rewards

Intrinsic Rewards
• What does success look like for you?

• Are leadership & community engagement a part of your answers?

• What are your personal core values?
Step #2: Identifying Indicators of Success
1. Substantive and transcend the practice of law.

2. Innate to You: Traits that don’t need to be learned, improved, or forced upon you.
My Style
- Personal presentation
- Communicating effectively
- Influencing key partners

My Career
- Planning career growth
- Navigating goals and strategies
- Honing organizational savvy

My World
- Awareness
- Involvement
- Sustaining commitment

My Craft
- Functional / technical skill
- Innovating and achieving excellence

My Life
- Maintaining work/life balance
- Managing life changes
- Dealing with competing demands
What About Our Differences Makes Us Successful?
What Do ALL Lawyers Have?

We were all able to check the right boxes to get ourselves into the profession

What Makes You Successful?

The ability to stay in the profession. You are still standing with the attrition dust clears

Indicator of Success: Resilience
### What Do ALL Lawyers Have?
- Ability to work in a rule-laden system
- We can all read and follow the rules of civil procedure

### What Makes You Successful?
The ability to:
- Adapt with little forewarning
- Revamp strategy on the eve of trial
- “Pull the trigger” at the right time
- Manage competing demands on time

**Indicator of Success: Agility, Flexibility, & Nimbleness**
• Map out a trajectory of your career
• Take a birds-eye conceptual view of each role and set of functions you perform
• What are the recurring themes?
• What sets you apart in the homogenous world of lawyering?
The Role of Mentoring in Earning Your Lawyer Badge

- Much professional identity development for lawyers occurs through observation of and discussion with good role models.

- Social science research suggests the importance of conversations in helping the professional development of the lawyer.

- Mentoring lawyers internalizes concepts of civility towards others in the profession.
Standards of Competency, Professionalism, & Well-Being are Learned Behaviors
CAMP is Colorado’s Only Statewide Mentoring Program For Lawyers

- Administered by the Colorado Supreme Court
- Programming & mentors in all Colorado judicial districts
- No cost to participate
- Voluntary program available at any time during career, as often as needed
Traditional One-on-One Mentoring

- Structured & facilitated mentoring plans
- Contain relevant well-being objectives & activities
- 6-12 months to complete
- Flexible & Modifiable
- CLE accredited
Informal Coffee Mentoring

- A “starting place” for networking
- A resource for practice area specific questions
- Connections for solo practitioners
- Find a friend to accompany you to a bar association or legal organization event
- Pursue available leadership opportunities within the legal community
- Resume review
- Informational interviews
- Professionalism resources
- Well-being resources
Mentoring Circles

• A group of 5-10 lawyers with shared interests and professional objectives
• Entirely peer led
• Circles last 6 to 12 months and meet once a month
• Focus on “soft skills” issues such as leadership, well-being, resilience, & diversity
Collaboration with COLAP on Professional Identity & Well-Being

- Utilize matching process to identify lawyers in need of well-being support
- Serve as ambassadors for well-being & lawyer support across Colorado
- Provide dual support approach to lawyers in transition
- Champion COLAP & its services
• About COLAP
• COLAP referrals to CAMP
• How CAMP & COLAP collaborate
• Science of mentoring and well-being
What Prevents Lawyer Well-Being?
Secondary & Vicarious Trauma

MIRROR & AUDITORY NEURONS
The Social Nervous System

Telomeres & telomerase
Oxytocin & heart
Caring resilience
Stress & isolation
Stress management plans
Considerations and Questions

• Unique collaboration considerations for mandatory mentoring jurisdictions

Audience
Over engineering
Capacity & Resources

• Professional/required supervision

• Framing” lawyer well-being through a mentoring lens:
  Structures that work
Contact Information

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