Grit, the Secret to Advancement: Stories of Successful Women Lawyers

American Bar Association
Midyear Meeting
Miami, Florida
February 3, 2017
1. Introductions & Welcome (Michele Coleman Mayes)
2. Research Overview (Milana Hogan)
3. Panel Q&A and Discussion (All Panelists)
4. Interactive Exercise (All)
5. Audience Q&A (All)
6. Evaluations (All Attendees)
Do You Have to Be Talented to Be Successful?

- Talent has traditionally been understood to be about inheritance
  - Meryl Streep has the acting gene
  - Serena Williams has the tennis gene
- Recent studies suggest that success is about much more than just talent:
  - Family, culture, and friendship
  - Environment and circumstance
  - Deliberate practice fueled by intrinsic motivation
The 10,000 Hour Rule

10,000 Hours of Practice
Those identified as most gifted were also most practiced

Cumulative Hours of Practice vs Age of Violinists

- Best
- Good
- Teachers
This Is Good News!

• Talent is only part of the story

• People of average intelligence/skill can become world class experts and performers

• You have to work hard to be successful
  • It’s not just: Talent=Success
  • It’s more like: Talent + Deliberate Practice + Motivation + Circumstance + Other Important Variables=Success
The Secrets of Success

Grit

Mindset

Success
Grit, Mindset & Success

Mindset

Grit

Deliberate Practice

Talent

Success!
What is Mindset?

- Mindsets are beliefs about yourself and your most basic qualities
  - Am I intelligent?
  - Am I a good lawyer?

- Fixed mindset vs. growth mindset
What does it mean to be gritty?

- *Behavioral persistence* in the face of adversity
- *Sustained, passionate* pursuit of goals
  - Passion doesn’t always precede grit
“Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress; working hard for something we love is called passion.”

- Simon Sinek
Duckworth & Grit Science

The Grit Project

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UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
WEST POINT®
• What Are the Non-Cognitive Traits that Impact Success in BigLaw?
  • Random sampling of AmLaw 200 Firms
  • Mixed methods approach
  • Limitations of the data
    • Self-report
    • Considers only those who are still in the game
    • Not longitudinal
    • Focused only on BigLaw
2016 Grit Study

• How Do Grit & Growth Mindset Impact Female Success in the Practice of Law?
  • 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
What We Learned

- There is a *statistically significant* relationship between grit, mindset and various measures of success for lawyers in all practices.

- Lawyers are pretty gritty (grit is monotonic).

- 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.
## Grit & Mindset Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Practice</th>
<th>Mindset Score</th>
<th>Grit Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non Profit</td>
<td>47.58</td>
<td>3.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>46.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-House</td>
<td>45.85</td>
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<td>Solo Practitioners</td>
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<td>Judges</td>
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<td>Law Firms</td>
<td>42.77</td>
<td>3.97</td>
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Some Key Findings

- Grit is closely related to the overall quality of the work that law firm lawyers and solo practitioners receive.

- Grit is strongly related to the messages in-house and law firm lawyers receive on formal performance evaluations.

- Grit influences the point at which in-house lawyers are brought into the decision-making process.

- Grit is a reliable indicator of how well a woman performs in a government or non-profit role.

- Grit influences tenure within an organization.

- Mindset predicts seniority within the organization.
Panel Discussion

- Roula Allouch, Attorney at Law Offices of Raymond H. Decker, Jr., Cincinnati, Kentucky
- Elaine Johnson James, Attorney/President of Elaine Johnson James, P.A., West Palm Beach, Florida
- Nancy Laben, Executive Vice President & General Counsel at Booz Allen Hamilton, Washington D.C.
- Patricia Seitz, Senior Judge, United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, Miami, Florida
Interactive Exercise

1. Organize yourselves into small groups

2. Read the relevant scenario

3. Discuss, with your group, the questions that follow the scenario

4. Designate a reporter who is willing to share some of what you discussed with the larger group
Questions?

• More information is available at www.ambar.org/grit

• Feel free to reach out with additional questions anytime!