
THE PRACTICE MANAGER

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Business Formation of Your Law Practice (webcast) – February 8, 2005
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The Technology Roundup

Gerry Morris, J.D.

Cameras & Printers



Electronic gadgets are evolving at the speed of thought. Every year computers are smaller, faster and cheaper by a power for dollar measure. Other devices are also moving forward at the same or an even faster speed. Just look at what's happened to Ipods in the last two years. Perhaps one of the fastest evolving products is the digital camera and the accompanying photo printing technology.

I use digital photos quite a bit in my practice. I take pictures to be used in evidence and then print them in my office. If I am going to use a photo taken with a traditional camera I often scan the photo into digital form. That way I can control the size of the finished print and enhance the image if appropriate to do so. Here's a tip. I find it useful to print photos I'm going to introduce into evidence in 4" X 6" format in the center of an 8 1/2" X 11" sheet of photo paper. That way there is at least a

See *Tech Roundup* on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Tech Roundup
- 1 The Coach's Corner
- 3 Kickstart to a More Productive Staff
- 3 Law Practice Management Update
- 4 Law Practice Management Tip
- 4 Upcoming Events
- 4 Law Practice Management Special Offers

The Coach's Corner

Debra Bruce, J.D.



What's Holding You Back

Last year I wrote about strategies for actually accomplishing the goals we set for ourselves at the beginning of the year. It's that time again, and you can read that article by going back to the January 2005 Issue of the **Practice Manager** or you can [view it on my website](#). If you implemented those ideas, I know you made a lot of progress. If you didn't make progress or didn't implement *any* strategy to achieve your goals, then some hidden factors may be influencing you.

Limiting Beliefs Hold Us Back

When we get stuck and just can't seem to do what we know we should do, that's a sign that we have some limiting beliefs holding us back. When I catch myself saying "I have to" or "I can't," unless someone has a gun to my head, the truth is more likely that I am *choosing* that result because of a limiting belief I hold. When I see only two conflicting and equally unappealing options, I'm stuck in either/or thinking. In reality there are probably many other options, but they are not apparent to me at that moment because limiting beliefs have hooked me again. When I use hyperbole and words like "always" or "never," I might as well start looking for the underlying limiting belief.

Common Lawyer Beliefs

Here are some limiting beliefs I hear from my clients:

- I don't have time for goal setting, and that never works for me anyway.
- I don't have time for vacation (or business development activity). I'm too busy.
- I can't take a vacation (or spend money on business development) now. Business is too slow.
- If I contact a client I represented 5 years ago, he'll think I'm desperate for work.
- I should have gotten up to speed on technology years ago, but now I'm just too far behind to catch up.
- I'm too old to learn to use all this technology.

See *Coach's Corner* on page 4

2" margin around the picture where the evidence sticker can be placed and the witness can write. That size is large enough to project with a digital document projector or for the jury to see fine detail upon examination.

My first digital camera was a Kodak 2.2 megapixel model with very few features by today's standards. I bought this unit about 3 years ago for around \$300. The thing is almost idiot proof having very few manually adjustable settings. Accordingly, the photo quality isn't great in unusual conditions but is certainly passable in the normal indoor flash and outdoor sunlight environment. It came bundled with Kodak's proprietary image management software that allows for fairly good manipulation of the pictures.

A USB cable allows for transfer of the images to a computer. The Kodak software allows for "One Touch" transfer, a process that makes transferring the pictures to the computer and into the software's directory system almost automatic. Printing is done from the software. A print size of 4" X 6" is about as large as one can go with a 2.2 megapixel image without losing resolution. Various enhancements to the images can also be made. In a Windows XP environment the camera appears as another drive so the images can be transferred manually to a directory on the computer. I have a 256 meg SD memory card (secure digital) that allows me to store about 50 pictures at maximum resolution.

The Kodak camera is about the size of the Kodak Brownie camera my sister had when we were kids. If you are too young to remember Brownies, it's about the size of a Scotch tape desktop dispenser. It's just a little too large to comfortably strap on your belt in a carrying case.

This Christmas my wife bought me a Casio EX-Z750. This model, also about \$300 on the Internet has a resolution of 7.2 megapixels. Prints of 8 1/2 X 11 are no problem. The camera has both a variety of automatic features for point and shoot operation as well as manual override for those that want to set the aperture, shutter speed and focus to achieve custom results. Powered off it is about the same size as a deck of cards. A 3X optical zoom lens emerges when the unit is powered on.

The Casio camera is very highly rated by the likes of CNET. A comparable competitor is the Canon PowerShot SD 550. This unit is of comparable size and features. According to the ratings in CNET, to get better performance than either of these cameras you have to sacrifice size. The highest rated non-SLR camera according to CNET is the Canon PowerShot S80, a somewhat larger model although still rather compact.

One area of digital photography that has evolved greatly over the last few years is digital image procession, or, simply put, converting the images into prints. All cameras have some means of transferring images to a computer where they can be manipulated and printed. However, technology has emerged to make the step of transferring the image to the computer unnecessary. The companies that manufacture printers capable

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of the resolution necessary to print photos have gotten together in varying degrees to create standardized formats through which images can be transferred directly from the camera to the printer with the particulars of the printing process controlled by the camera. Two of the more prevalent formats are PictBridge, established by the Cameral and Imaging Products Association (CIPA) and USB DIRECT-PRINT, a standard proposed by Seiko Epson Corporation. If you have a camera and printer that are compliant with the same format you're in business.

Both formats involve transfer of the images from the camera to the printer through a USB cable. Depending on the capabilities of the particular camera, the image can be enhanced, the print size determined and other features or the print controlled right from the camera. While loading the images on the computer might still be preferable if extensive editing is required, the direct print formats speed the printing operation up a lot. Also, any camera with a format compatible to the printer will allow instant printing, so you don't have to have the transfer software for each camera loaded on the computer.

My PictBridge compatible printer is a Hewlett Packard Office Jet 7410 multifunction model. HP makes quite a few models that support the PictBridge format. Some of the models, like my 7410, also have slots that accept memory cards. This allows you to remove the memory card from your camera, plug it in to the printer's slot, and print the photos directly from the card. This method is even less dependent on the type of digital camera you

See Tech Roundup on page 5

Kickstart To a More Productive Staff (Part I of III)

Nickie Freedman

In the ‘perfect world’, law firm staff is productive, cheerful, uses their time wisely, has flawless skills, and is always a team player. If anyone lives in a perfect world, please stand up... Okay, I’m just kidding here. But WHAT IF we could get closer to this ‘perfect world’? Would it be worth our time to make a little extra effort and give it a try?

Creating a high performing organization requires a relentless focus on ensuring a great work environment. When staff are enthusiastic about where they work and engaged in what they do, obstacles seem smaller, difficult problems give way to innovative solutions and exceeding expectations happens.

The 2005 “Best Places to Work” program study showed that, contrary to popular opinion, employee satisfaction didn’t depend on salary. The most given answer as to what makes a company a great place to work is employee empowerment.

And what constitutes employee empowerment? I believe it comes down to three basic principles:

- Encouraging an Ownership Attitude
- Coaching Management Style
- Freedom to Fail

Encouraging an Ownership Attitude

I train staff in practical working skills for a law firm: ethics, professionalism, attorney/staff communication, hard skills, etc. At the beginning of many seminars, staff come in discouraged: they feel that they have no power over their own work lives, are just ‘worker bees’, and that their talents are underutilized. They feel frustrated, underappreciated, and overworked.

I ask them about their role in the firm. Without fail, the answers are always based on what their position is – paralegal, legal secretary, receptionist, file clerks, etc. In my opinion, they’re wrong. That is their title, NOT their role. I see their role as much more than the title they’re given. I believe in the ownership attitude.

And what is that? To have an ownership attitude, one must think like an owner and take actions to fix problems.

How can legal staff (who will never be owners in a firm) start seeing themselves in this light and how can we encourage that? A few ideas:

- *Let them know their true value to the firm.*
Staff can make or break a firm. However, most firms rarely let them know their true value. Where would the firm be without them? Appreciation and acknowledgment of their worth goes a long way.
- *Encourage innovative thinking.*
What do you do when staff complains about a process or procedure? Do you ask them if they have a better idea? Ownership attitude means thinking like an owner and

taking actions to fix problems. Encourage that thinking. Maybe even come up with a new rule – no complaining unless a solution is also proposed.

- *Tell them the firm’s status, goals, and plans.*
Information is not only power, it’s necessary if you’re truly a part of the team – and staff is very aware of that. Does this mean that staff needs to know private information? Certainly not. But staff can be privy to the general financial picture, goals, ideas, and plans for the future. Is one goal to increase revenue 10%? Ask staff their ideas on cost-savings and reward the best ideas.
- *Treat staff as career professionals.*
Many times, attorneys assume that being a paralegal, legal secretary, or admin assistant isn’t a profession. Aren’t they educated in their field, many with special designations? In many people’s view, professionals always have business cards and the lack of one makes a statement. Not only would this small expense make a big difference in perception, but it’s also a great marketing tool – anyone giving out business cards automatically increases the firm’s exposure in the marketplace.

Next time, we’ll talk about using the management style of coaching to further employee empowerment.

Nickie Freedman, PHR, owns Legally Large, a training and consulting firm specializing in the BUSINESS of practicing law. To receive her “Work Smarter” tips, contact her via www.LegallyLarge.com, Nickie@LegallyLarge.com or directly at 512.791.9644.

Law Practice Management Update

Happy New Year, everyone! Hope your new year has started off on the right foot, and if it hasn’t, it’s still early enough in the year to make the necessary changes to do so!

That being said, be sure to sign up for our webcast, [Business Formation of Your Law Practice](#), taking place February 8, 2006. This webcast will address issues relating to the formation of your business such as the choice of business entities available to law practices. This promises to be a very informative and enlightening program, so don’t forget to register.

Also, don’t forget to periodically check our [Product Review](#) section, found at our website. If you’re wondering which high-tech gadget (PDA, Treo, Blackberry, etc.) to purchase, or which time and billing programs to look at for your practice – before you buy, check our Product Reviews to see what other Texas attorneys’ experiences have been with some of these products. You’ll be thankful that you did!

- I hate going to those social events because everyone there is so shallow.
- I'm not good at networking because I never have anything interesting to say.
- It doesn't do any good to get involved in bar activities. There aren't any clients there, only competitors.
- I can't go home just because I'm worn out. The partners will think I'm a slacker.
- I can do it faster and better, so I might as well do it myself.

Unrecognized Beliefs

The most insidious limiting beliefs operate beneath the surface, and we don't recognize they are influencing us. They keep us from having what we want. We don't get started, we don't risk new behavior, we don't ask for what we deserve, or when what we want comes our way, we step aside to let it pass.

Over ten years ago my then husband and I decided we wanted the dramatic decorating statement of black sheets in the master bedroom. To our disappointment, we had great difficulty finding the smooth, soft ebony sheets we had imagined. We found only course "fading-to-gray" sheets, if we found black at all. After weeks of searching in stores and mail order catalogues, we stumbled upon elegant Egyptian cotton sheets of black-on-black stripes that we both loved. Then we saw how elegant they were...one set alone would cost \$350. Even though we could afford them, the price seemed extravagant when compared to the quality sheets available in other colors for under \$75.

I waffled and hesitated. My husband, however, gestured decisively toward the sheets. They were just what we wanted, and we were unlikely to find a suitable alternative elsewhere. I agreed to buy the sheets, but I couldn't seem to get myself to the counter to pay for them. I turned to put them back. I turned back to the counter. I hesitated again. Finally my husband snapped at me, "Just buy the sheets!"

I bought the sheets, and on the way out of the store I complained about his words and tone. He told me he was tired and frustrated, and then asked, "What did you want me to say?" The question caught me by surprise, and when I searched within for the answer, I was even more surprised at what came up. I wanted him to say, "It's ok to buy those expensive sheets. *You deserve them.*"

I wished for beautiful, high quality black sheets, and when the opportunity came for my wish to be granted, I almost didn't accept it because I unconsciously didn't feel deserving of such luxury. What limiting beliefs about yourself are keeping you from receiving your wishes?

Here's what some of them may sound like:

- People won't like me if I'm too successful.
- If it's fun, I can't make a living at it.
- Struggle and suffering are more honorable than fun and joy.
- You have to work hard to earn money.
- I have enough. It is greedy and unspiritual to want more.
- It's vain to want to be acknowledged for my accomplishments and worth.

- I don't deserve to have everything I want.
- I'm not as good as the people I'm competing with.
- If I set a goal too high, it will hurt more if I fail.
- I need credentials to be credible.
- I can't afford to have what I want.
- I don't count around here.
- If I keep growing, I will find myself alone.
- If I get too happy, something will go wrong.
- It is shameful to make a mistake.
- I can't really change. I just am who I am.
- It is selfish to spend time, money or energy on myself.
- I wouldn't want to belong to a club that would have me as a member.
- Who do you think you are?
- It's not safe to make waves.

Antidotes to Limiting Beliefs

By now you may be recognizing that some of your limiting beliefs have been holding you back. Awareness is the first step to overcoming them. Here are some more steps:

- Make a list of all of your limiting beliefs that you can identify.
- Ask yourself some questions about them. Where did I learn this idea? Who says so? Has it ever been different? Does this make sense? How does believing this idea affect me? What would happen if I did something different? Try journaling about your beliefs to get to the bottom of them and decide whether you want to keep them.
- Write rebuttals to the limiting beliefs. For example, *Limiting belief:* Success has to come through hard work. *Rebuttal:* Don't confuse effort with value. My wisdom, experience, perceptiveness and ingenuity can produce a lot of value, and do it ethically. People are happy to pay for real value. I can leverage that value instead of working harder and longer. I can create passive income streams.
- Imagine yourself succeeding. Visualize yourself in the successful situation in great detail. Research shows that rehearsing in vivid visualization is almost as effective as physical rehearsal.
- Speak and write positive words to yourself about the subject. Listen to tapes and read books that uplift and encourage you, in order to forge new neural pathways in your brain. Every time you complain or disparage yourself or your situation, you shore up the old neural pathways connected to the limiting beliefs. If vestiges of the old belief still linger, just add, "but I'm improving."
- Don't give up. Limiting beliefs are habits. Repetition of a new habit is required to break an old habit.

I would love to hear from you about how you are achieving your goals this year. You can find a [goal setting tool](#) to help you on my homepage. Happy New Year!

Debra Bruce (www.lawyer-coach.com) practiced law for 18 years, before becoming a professionally trained Executive Coach for lawyers. She is a member of the Law Practice Management Committee of the State Bar of Texas, and the co-founder of Houston Coaching Network, the Houston Chapter of the International Coach Federation.

Law Practice Management Tip

All management tips are provided by State Bar of Texas and ABA Practice Management Advisors. The tips are not meant as legal advice, nor binding on the State Bar of Texas or the ABA.

Did you know that with the new year upon us, it may be perfect time for associate evaluations in your firm.? The process of evaluating associate performance should not be a one-time event. Hopefully, you have been communicating with your associates as to their strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures throughout the year. But, if you have not, be sure to be prepared to do so during a formal evaluation meeting with the associate and make a new year's resolution to provide informal feedback to your associates throughout the year beginning January 1. Be sure that your year-end evaluation is based upon performance criteria that has been established and communicated to the associates. An evaluation form which enumerates these criteria and provides a scale for rating performance might be a helpful aid to focus the evaluation on the established criteria. Associates should be evaluated only by those partners who have had significant direct contact and experience with the associate. The evaluation meeting should include those same partners. Finally, it might be wise to separate the formal evaluation meeting from the meeting where salary raises and bonuses are communicated. You don't want the associate to fail to hear your constructive criticisms because he or she is focused on the amount of raise and bonus they have received.

Tech Roundup continued from page 2

have than the transfer formats discussed above. The prints made directly from the memory card are more or less "as is" without any opportunity to enhance or resize the images.

If you're starting from scratch with digital photography or thinking about an upgrade, its worth considering selecting a printer at the same time that matches the image transfer capabilities of the camera. Matching those features will give you a lot more options for producing prints.

E. G. "Gerry" Morris is a solo practitioner and has practiced law for over 27 years in Austin, Texas. He is certified as a Criminal Law Specialist by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. His firm web site is at www.egmlaw.com. Email your comments and questions to Gerry at tech@egmlaw.com.

Law Practice Management Special Offers

Books of the Month

Law Office Procedures Manual for Solos and Small Firms

Retail - \$69.95

Sale Price - \$48.95

This new, revised edition of the *Law Office Procedures Manual for Solos and Small Firms* provides you with everything you need to establish an appropriate organizational structure to allow your firm to operate effectively, efficiently, and productively. It's a step-by-step guide offering advice and ideas for building and maintaining a thoroughly professional staff and practice.

Paralegals, Profitability, and the Future of Your Law Practice

Retail - \$69.95

Sale Price - \$48.95

This book provides valuable advice on how to use paralegals to achieve unparalleled success in providing clients with quality service. You'll learn how to create a paralegal model for use in your firm, how to recruit and hire top-notch paralegals, how to run an effective program, what ethical issues to be aware of when working with paralegals, and much more.

**TO ORDER EITHER OF THESE PUBLICATIONS,
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Upcoming Events

How to Organize and Manage Your Litigation Practice is scheduled for video replay in Austin on January 19, 2006. To register, call 800-204-2222, ext. 1574 or visit - <http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/AABuy1.asp?sProductType=EV&IID=55280>

Looking into the Future of Your Practice Breakfast Discussion is scheduled live for February 3, 2006 at the Hilton Austin. To register, call 800-204-2222, ext. 1574 or visit - <http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/AABuy1.asp?sProductType=EV&IID=5906>

New Law Practice Management Webcasts

Business Formation of Your Law Practice will be webcast on February 8, 2006. To register, call 800-204-2222, ext. 1574 or visit: <http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/AABuy1.asp?sProductType=EV&IID=5978>

Shaping the Future of Your Law Practice will be webcast on March 8, 2006. To register call, call 800-204-2222, ext. 1574 or visit: <http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/AABuy1.asp?sProductType=EV&IID=5981>