



# Go Motivate Yourself

Stop Chasing Gurus and Do the Hard Work

*By Frank Ramos*



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To Ana  
*My love*

To David and Michael  
*You're the reasons I write*

DRI  
55 West Monroe Street, Suite 2000  
Chicago, Illinois 60603  
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## About the Author



Francisco (“Frank”) Ramos, Jr. is the administrative partner of the Miami litigation boutique firm of Clarke Silverglate, P.A., where he practices in the areas of personal injury defense, product liability, employment and commercial litigation. He serves on the board of the Defense Research Institute (DRI), is a member of the Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel (FDCC), where he served as co-chair of the Deposition Boot Camp and serves as co-chair of the Art of Marketing Seminar. He is a Past President of the Florida Defense Lawyers Association and Past Chair of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Historical Society. He has served on the boards of the Miami-Dade County Defense Bar Association, FIU Honors’ Alumni Association, FIU Alumni Association, Parent to Parent of Miami, Miami Legal Services and Florida Christian School.

This is his fifth book. He previously wrote *From Law School to Litigator*, *The Associates’ Handbook*, *Attorney Marketing 101* and *Training Your Law Firm Associates*. He has written over 150 articles and has edited four books—*The Defense Speaks*, *The Trial Tactics Defense Manual*, *The Deposition Manual* and *Leadership for Lawyers*. Please follow him on LinkedIn, where he regularly posts, or feel free to e-mail him at [framos@cspalaw.com](mailto:framos@cspalaw.com).





# Foreword

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For those of us who have children, we want them to succeed at everything they do, but that's not possible for any of us. As we raised our two boys, David and Michael, my wife Ana and I realized that they were extraordinarily gifted in certain areas and were handicapped in others. They had limitless potential when pursuing certain activities and suffered nothing but defeat and frustration when pursuing others. Instead of focusing on what they lacked, we focused on what they had. Instead of despairing over the issues they faced, we embraced the gifts with which they were imbued. Today at 19 and 16, they are pursuing exactly what they were placed on this earth to do—music. David, a sophomore at FSU, plans on finishing his bachelor's in Music and pursuing a PhD in classical conducting. Michael, a junior in high school, will be studying jazz in college and pursuing post graduate studies in jazz performance. They were born to do this. Each of us is born with dreams and with the talents to pursue them. Each of us needs to find out for ourselves what our destiny is and pursue it wholeheartedly. As parents, we have to help our children discover their destiny. It is only by discovering what we were placed on this earth to do and by doing it that we will experience the joy and fulfillment each of us search for, each of us crave for. I hope this book helps you define your talents, passions and dreams, and guides you to develop and execute a plan to fulfill those dreams and fulfill your destiny. By doing this, you will be a better lawyer, spouse, parent, friend and leader.



# Seeking Motivation From Others

## So Much “Self-Help”

When I was younger, I spent a lot of time in the “self-help” aisle in bookstores (there were a lot more book store chains then, including Walden Books, B Dalton and Borders, and a lot more Barnes & Noble locations). I read books about relationships, communication, fitness, work, personal finance and motivation. With each book I thought, “aha, this is going to help me figure out what I want out of life and how to get it.” I read the classics—*How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *The Road Less Traveled*, *See You at the Top*, *I’m OK You’re OK*, *The Power of Positive Thinking* and *What to Say When You Talk to Yourself*. They all had something to offer and I applied their principles to my daily routine. I often found, though, that the results were fleeting or non-existent, which drove me back to the bookstore in search of the next best thing. Now for those of you who have read these books or others like them and found them to have changed your lives, I couldn’t be happier for you. They simply did not have that effect on me. I was trying to apply someone else’s paradigm to my life and despite best efforts, I wasn’t seeing any results. Perhaps I was reading the wrong books or asking the wrong questions, but these books didn’t help me figure out what I wanted from life and how to get it. Most of us have a desire to do great things with our lives—big, meaningful, amazing things—but we have a hard time getting from here to there. These books were not getting me from here to there, but that didn’t stop me from reading more and more of them. I was sure I was about to stumble onto something big. Just one more book. Just one more. That book never came.

## Rags to Riches

The Horatio Alger story—rags to riches. The story transforms the American Dream into dollars and cents. Work hard, think big and financial success is around the corner. So many “get rich quick” schemes. Real estate, inventions, sales, investments. So many opportunities to make money fast, without much thought given to how you’re making the money or to what end you’re making it. There are so many stories turned into books and seminars and study guides about folks who had nothing but who had a dream and gumption and some luck and made it big. And if you buy their book or attend their conference, you too can make it big. There’s no question that some of these stories are inspirational. They started with nothing, sometimes less than nothing, and they dug deep in themselves and pulled off what seems to be a



miracle. They struck it rich. I can strike it rich too. They overcame obstacles, much bigger ones than I'm facing—I can overcome them too. They're no superheroes. They're not other worldly. They're no better than me. They did it. I can too. But how? How do you translate their success into your success? How does their motivation become your motivation? How do their ideas become your ideas? And then there was the question of why they did. What made them get out of bed every morning to do it? I read a lot of their stories, and was moved by them, but I couldn't make their stories mine.

## Overcoming Failure

Motivational speakers love to say we should embrace failure. Edison didn't invent the light bulb on the first try. Abraham Lincoln had his share of disappointments before being elected President. And how are we supposed to learn and grow and tackle big ideas without failure? Big ideas require big risks and they're called risks because they, at times, have bad outcomes. Don't avoid failure, they would say. Shake its hand, sit down with it, get to know it and learn from it. Of course not fearing failure—believing in yourself and your talents and taking calculated risks—is healthy and necessary in life. Success is generally preceded by failure in some

form or manner. Some think the most important thing one can do is to embrace, not fear, failure. By doing so, one changes one's paradigm from risk adverse to risk taking. As Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet, "there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so." There are books simply dedicated to accepting and overcoming failure, because these authors believe so strongly and so deeply that by not doing so, achieving one's dreams is virtually impossible. There is no doubt that not succumbing to failure is integral to success. But simply knowing others had done so didn't translate into meaning I could do so. And sometimes failure does mean it's time to move on. Sometimes fear is the appropriate response. These were great stories of courage, strength and resilience but again they weren't my stories.

## Darkest Before the Dawn

We've all heard stories of those who had their back against the wall. They were broke or addicted or alone; they were anxious, depressed, even suicidal; they were at the end of their rope with no help, solace or escape in sight. Yet they reached deep inside themselves, found hope, trudged forward and came out the other end. And of course if they did it, so can you. Certainly I can make the most of my day if others have gone through so much more and didn't break under the weight of it all. If they can focus and believe the sun will come up again, then I can tackle anything that comes my way. If someone can survive cancer, the loss of a limb, loss of a loved one or even the Holocaust, then I can overcome whatever challenges come my way. Often I'm left with the feeling "Wow, this person is amazing! How courageous! Oh look, I got an e-mail." I may share their story with family and friends. I may try to emulate their bravery. But within a few days, it's another story cataloged in my mind, which makes an appearance now and then but leaves little lasting impact. I don't remember ever saying to myself, "That Olympic runner captured during WWII, the guy in Unbroken, what's his name? Oh yes, Zamperini. If he can survive a prison camp and forgive his captors, I can do this." I loved the movie and the book, but I'm not Zamperini. I love stories where through sheer will, others overcome the odds, but I don't generally find much application to my life. You need grit in this life. A whole lot of it. But how do you teach it? How do you develop it? How do you make it part of you?

## They Did It. So Can You.

Many motivational books and speeches share inspirational stories. The speaker may discuss the many obstacles she overcame to become a CEO, or an Olympian or a performing artist. The author may describe herself as an ordinary person who did extraordinary things. She overcame poverty, illness, lack of role models, abusive parents, addiction, bankruptcy, divorce—you name it—and despite it all, they did it. They really did it. They're great, beautiful, wonderful stories. But I always struggle finding the application to my life. What do I learn from a gold medal Olympian about being a better lawyer, husband or father? Work harder? Believe in myself? Ignore the naysayers? Do I need an internal dialogue based on someone else's accomplishments? Role models are important. Many of us had them growing up and some of us still have some. We have mentors and those we look toward for advice. But how many of us chart our course based on what they did? I love movies like *Rudy*, *The Rookie*, *Hoosiers*, *Rocky*, *The Blind Side*, *Friday Night Lights* (wow, so many inspirational sports movies), and they leave you pumped to tackle the world. But for me, those moments quickly dissipated and reality set back in and ideas such as teamwork, and leaving it all on the field and fighting for every inch, as noble as they are, did not provide me continued momentum to tackle whatever needed tackling.

## So They Did It? So What?

An athlete wins a race, a musician creates a new genre of music, an author makes it onto the *New York Times* bestseller list—each of them beat the odds and did it. So what? What does that mean for me? Yes, we're happy for them. Great stories. Great testimonies. We love the underdog. We love coming from behind, defying the odds, and winning when no one thought it was possible. But often these stories aren't simply feel good stories. They're shared with us to motivate us to do be like them. They're a mainstay of motivational speeches and books. If Helen Keller, Amelia Earhart and Thomas Edison did it, you can too. If others can climb Mount Everest, travel to space or win a gold medal, you can do whatever you want as well. Is that true? Is that how it works? Holding others up as heroes and trying to emulate them is noble, and that works for some, but for the rest of us, at least for me, I'm left figuring out how to translate their success into my own. I can't simply recreate their sheer will. I can't simply recreate their talent and drive. I can't recreate their upbringing, or their mentors or their challenges.

There's a lot to be learned from them, but simply looking to them as an inspiration for my own success, that's never done it for me. Maybe for you (which is great, by the way) but not for me. They changed the world. How do I do it? By reading or watching how they did it? Maybe. I'm not convinced.

## How Did They Do It?

I am a process guy. I believe everything we do—all successes and achievements—can be reduced to a process. You want to write a book. There's a process. You want to direct a documentary? There's a process. You want to become a killer deposition taker? There's a process. When we look at others who have accomplished great things, perhaps we shouldn't look at them as a fountain of motivation but rather study them to see how they accomplished what they did. Can we replicate it? Sometimes you can't. Some of the best musicians in the world are the worst teachers. Why? Because you can't teach talent. You can't teach being a virtuoso. That's not translatable. My younger son, Michael, plays the jazz bass guitar. He studies the music created by Jaco Pastorius. He revolutionized how the bass guitar is played. He was brilliant. And you can't teach brilliance. Someone like Jaco has a relationship with his instrument that few can have. Jaco hears music like few others do. Things that come naturally to him - that are hard to explain and harder to teach—those things are difficult to reduce to a process and replicate.

On the other end of the spectrum from talent comes passion. There are those who pour their lives and souls into an idea, a project or a dream because they couldn't imagine not pursuing that adventure. Like talent, I don't think you can teach passion either. Passion isn't something you create. You can't teach it. It's something you have for something you love. Michael Jordan can't teach me to be passionate about basketball. He can show me how to dribble, how to pass and how to shoot. But he can't teach me to fight and claw for every possession. So you can't reduce passion to a process either.

But there is good news. Each of us has at least one talent. Many of us have more than one. Each of us is passionate about something. Most of us are passionate about more than one thing. And we'll get into this more later, but invariably, and I do mean invariably, there is an overlap between our talents and our passions. The point of intersection, coincidentally, is where we find our dreams. You achieve your dreams by identifying your talents, matching them up

with your passions and devising and implementing a plan making the most of both. That's why being impressed with how others achieved a task isn't much help. Studying how they did it, and parceling out what you can replicate (without having their talents or passions), is what matters. Don't be motivated by what others do. Determine what you can learn from how they did what they did.

## What Can You Learn from What They Did?

When studying others' achievements, what can you learn from what they did? Forget the talent and the passion. Forget the daily mantras and inspirational quotes. Forget the "darkest before the dawn" and "you too can overcome anything life puts in your way if you just believe in yourself." None of this is process oriented. There are few takeaways here. If you're looking toward others as role models to emulate, you need to study what they do that you can do too. What's their routine? What's their schedule? What do they read? What are their hobbies? What organizations do they belong to? What do they do for those organizations? Being inspired by others is great. But without goals and a plan to achieve them, the inspiration won't take hold. We can learn the "how" from others. We can't learn the "why" from them. Why we want to do something—be a great trial lawyer, lead an organization, write a book—that comes from us. The Olympian wanted to be an Olympian. The war hero wanted to fight for his country. The musician wanted to play music. They had a "why." If you find your "why," you won't need motivation. Your "why" is the motivation.

## What Was Their Process?

Success is generally preceded with a process. It may be intentional or it may simply be a habit or something one has always done without much thought or planning. When reading or listening to a motivational story, listen for the process the person relied on for success. Let's take, for example, a speech by an inventor who secured a patent, started a business and now her products litter the aisles of Walmart and Target. Now, her story doesn't overlap our stories of being trial attorneys, but there is a lot to learn from her story. Yes, she believed in herself. Yes, she never stopped trying. Yes, she never gave up on her dream. But in the midst of all that, there was a process. For the inventor turned retail sales tycoon, there was a plan. There was a plan in designing and then securing patents for her products. There was a plan to market her products



to retailers. There was a plan to manufacture them for as little as possible while maintaining quality control. This isn't the sexy part of her story. Reading books on business and developing a business plan isn't as motivational as the self-help quotes she would repeat to herself every morning. "Nothing is 'impossible.' Look at the word differently. It's actually 'I'm possible.'" That's great, but I don't know if motivational quotes or posters I hang on my walls are going to get me from A to B. So let's look beyond those.

So, how did she do it? She mentioned seeking out mentors. Check. She read everything there was to read to securing and protecting a patent. Check. She prepared a business plan. Check. She kept a journal of her ups and downs and recalibrated when necessary. Check. Focus on process. Study process. What did she do that worked that I should do to pursue my objectives. Learning everything you can about what you want to do, seeking mentors who do what you want to do, and creating a plan on how to get from here to there are all important steps and part of a larger process. That's what you focus on. What she did that you can do—that's what you focus on. Always study process.

## What Attitude Did They Have?

There is a difference between motivational sayings and one's attitude. People who succeed believe in themselves. They believe in their ideas. They believe they can succeed. Do you need me to





share with you famous quotes, or inspirational songs or uplifting stories to get you to believe in yourself? To boost your confidence? To convince you to take the hill? You have to tackle any project as if you've already done it, done it a thousand times, and that you've already succeeded, but the circumstances simply have not caught up to the success yet. People who succeed share this attitude. You have to believe in yourself, in your idea, in your plan and in your process. Most every motivational book talks about this. How does the saying go—"It's not your aptitude, but your attitude, that determines your altitude." How often have you heard someone say that? Include it in a book? Reference it in a seminar? How about some permutation of that? But you say, "I don't have that attitude? How do I get it?" Believe me when I say that you have a gift, you have a passion about that gift and with the right plan, you can leverage that gift to fulfill a dream. Believe me when I say this. It's true. It's no less true than the law of gravity or that  $2 + 2$  is 4. Believe in this truth and you will have the attitude you need to succeed.

## What Talents Did They Have?

The sports, military, entertainment and business success stories all share something - a person with one or more talents who uses them to succeed. They identify their talents and work with and improve them to achieve their goals. Physical or performing arts talents likely aren't transferable to the practice of law or business. Being athletic or having a broad vocal range aren't going to help when trying a case or starting a business. Focus on those talents that would help you achieve your goals. Were they natural communicators? Leaders? Managers? Visionaries? What talents did they have that would help you? More importantly which of these talents are ones you have? Once you identify the talents, study how they used them, applied them and developed them. When did the talents come in handy? How were they leveraged? How did they make the difference? Some of us look at talents narrowly. In fact, there is a wide spectrum of talents that play a role in helping you achieve your goals. A great memory is a talent. Humor is a talent. Empathy can be a talent. Networking. Critical thinking. Planning. Creativity. Imagination. Listening. These are all talents. Playing by ear and having a killer hook shot are not the only talents. When reading others' stories, identify all the talents, not just the obvious ones, determine if you have any of them, and see how others developed them so you can too.

## What Were Their Goals?

When reading or listening to motivational stories, study the individuals' goals:

- What did they want to accomplish?
- How reasonable were their goals?
- How attainable were they?
- When did they think of their goals?
- How did they decide upon those specific goals?
- Why not other goals?
- What was the purpose behind those goals?
- Why those goals?
- Why were those goals important to them?

They sat down, thought through what they wanted to achieve and wrote one or more goals on paper, typed them into their phones or on their computers or simply committed them to their heart and their memory. Why we do what we do—that's influenced by our talents and passions. Do any of their goals resonate with you? Are any of their goals your goals? Are any of their goals similar to yours? Any plan starts with a goal. You decide what outcome you want and create a plan on how to get there. So goal setting is the beginning of achieving your dreams. When reading motivational books, go beyond the person's sayings and focus on what the person wanted to achieve. What did she consider a win? What was the ideal outcome? Focus on the goals and everything that went into deciding upon them, shaping and molding them and finally deciding—this is it. This is what I want hell or high water. This is what I'm going to sacrifice for, take risks for and stake my time and resources on. This is where it all begins.

## What Was Their Plan?

Goals without plans are just dreams. They're pleasant thoughts of what I may do some day when I have more time, or energy, or money or desire. Goals are the target. Without them, you never have a target to shoot at. But without a plan, you may have a target, but the odds of hitting it are low. To get from here and there, you need a map. Otherwise you're wasting time, energy and money. When reading about others' accomplishments, study what their plans were. After they defined their goals, what plan did they create for themselves to achieve them? Before starting a business, you develop a business plan. You spell out how your business is going to

succeed. When you embark on a personal goal—being an effective trial lawyer, developing a book of business, becoming an author or meeting a need in your community—you need to create a step by step plan on achieving that goal. Study others' plans. Sometimes they get lost in all the motivational quotes and sayings, because to be blunt, plans aren't sexy. They take time and hard work and a lot of thinking and talking through and revisions—they generally get little attention in the biopics. But they're there. If you look carefully, they're there. It usually involved a routine—something they did every day to get closer to their goals. It usually involved a mentor—someone to help them realize their goals. It usually involved planned setbacks—they knew they would face obstacles, and planned on moving forward despite them. There was a road they laid out for themselves to get to the destination. Study those roads. You may need to take similar ones on the way to your destinations.

## What Was Their Process?

I'm a process person. I believe everything we do—take an effective deposition, learn to play an instrument, becoming a leader—can be reduced to a process that can be followed by others to achieve the same outcomes. All my books (including this one) presume that goal X is simply made up a series of steps, and my objective is to define each and every step and explain how to do them. You do A, B and C and you will achieve goal X. Whether it's teaching associates how to take a deposition, teaching firms how to implement an associate training program, or teaching you how to achieve your dreams, everything involves a process. Sometimes it's obvious. Sometimes it's not. But when studying how others do what they do and how they do it well, look closely at all the barely visible steps that when done together achieve the goal. Henry Ford transformed the craft of making a car into a series of steps on an assembly line, turning a craft into a semi-skilled job. Be Henry Ford when looking at others' stories and spell out for yourself the steps they took. If you can identify all the steps in the correct order, you should be able achieve similar results (assuming of course you have the skills and passion. More on that later).

## Don't Seek Motivation from Others. Seek What Can Be Reproduced.

If you love inspirational stories, watch them, read them and listen to them. I love them too. But don't seek motivation from them. Don't

say to yourself, “He did it. I can too.” Don’t memorize their quotes or sayings. The character Rocky Balboa gave some inspirational speeches in his six plus movies (seven, including Creed). His inspirational speech to his son in *Rocky Balboa* has close to 10 million downloads. He tells his son life is hard. That’s it’s not “all sunshine and rainbows.” That life hits hard. Life hits all us hard. And what separates winners is their ability to get hit and keep getting hit and keep going. If you’re familiar with the Rocky movies, you remember what a beating he took at the hands of Apollo Creed, Clubber Lang and Ivan Drago, among others. He took hit after hit and overcame them. So the speech to his son is grounded in the character’s own experience. Great story. Great speech. But when you’re questioning your goals and your plan, when you’re wondering if you can fulfill the dreams you set out to achieve, are you going to be relying on Rocky Balboa to get you through? What can we learn from that character? He always out trained, outworked and outsmarted his opponents. If you want to take anything from inspirational stories, take what you can reproduce (*i.e.*, outwork your competition) and apply it to your circumstances. You can replicate that. Replicating another’s motivation is much more difficult to do.



# The Gurus

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## You Can Do It!

Type “motivational speakers” on Google, and you get a flood of entries. Type in “motivational speaker” on LinkedIn and you get over 100,000 results. Motivational speakers, books, conferences, speeches—there are so many people who want to motivate you. Motivate you to exercise, diet, start a business, become rich, take risks. Their mantra to you is that “you can do it.” They did. You can do it. They share stories of others who did it. You can too. The thing is, motivation from a book or seminar isn’t permanent. You read a book, you get out of your seat, you run out and start chasing a dream and soon life gets in the way and the book is forgotten. You go to a seminar, you write a bunch of notes, you tape up motivational sayings and quotes around your bedroom and office, and soon you ignore them, eventually take them down, and move on. Can you do it? Yes, you can do it. I said it. Does that make it more likely that you will? No. External motivators help some, but not everyone, and most external motivators are temporary, and soon wear off. I think that’s why motivational speakers are so popular. We need the regular fix of others encouraging us, pushing us and believing in us to accomplish our goals. Getting others to encourage you is time consuming and expensive. If you can figure out your role in this world (we’ll talk about this later), you’ll develop a wellspring of motivation inside yourself. No, this isn’t one of those inspirational quotes. This is the truth.

## The Inspirational Stories

There are so many anecdotes out there. Motivational speakers talk about how they started with nothing (or less than nothing) and achieved everything. So many self-help books are chocked full of stories of famous and some not so famous individuals who overcame overwhelming odds and fulfilled their dreams. They did it. They’re not any better than you. You can too. That’s what it comes down to. Others telling you that the only thing stopping you is you. Of course, you have what it takes to make it. You just have to commit to doing what it takes and then do it. The commitment is the hard part. Setting aside time each day to advance toward your goal is hard. But if you’re doing what you were meant to do—if your talents and passions are aligned—you’ll generate your own inspiration. If you’re chasing down your dreams and have a plan to achieve them, you won’t need someone else to inspire you. Now of course there are a lot of things we need to do that we don’t want to. As lawyers, who likes preparing discovery or responding to it?

Who likes going through e-discovery? Who likes the overbearing opposing counsel? From a personal perspective, who wants to eat healthy all the time? Or run on the treadmill? Or lift weights? I suppose a life coach could coax you through the tedious aspects of our profession. I suppose a physical trainer could get another five pushups out of you. The thing is, we're grown men and women. You want inspiration? Don't do your job well, and there will be consequences. Don't eat well and exercise and there will be consequences. We're all adults here. My dad was a meatpacker for decades. It's one of the most dangerous jobs in America. He didn't do it because it was glamorous. He did it because he needed to feed a family. He never listened to Zig Zigler on a Walkman or read Norman Vincent Peale. He never looked to anyone to inspire him to get up at 5 am and stay in a meat locker until well past 7. You want an inspirational story? Ok, here it is. You have a job. Get off your butt and do it better than everyone else. And don't complain to me. I don't care, and I don't want to hear it. How's that for inspiration?

## The Inspirational Quotes and Sayings

Maybe it's because I've always struggled with memorization (memorizing Mercutio's monologue from *Romeo & Juliet* in 9th grade was tough), and having the right quotes at my fingertips at the right moments has never worked for me. I don't remember ever teaching my boys a life lesson through a famous quote. I don't ever remember using a famous quote when offering advice. There're those who do and do it well. But when I'm the recipient of that advice, I quickly forget it (that bad memory thing). If I have



a goal I want to accomplish, I'll ask you how to accomplish it. I don't want a quotation about chasing my dreams. The problem with inspirational quotes is that they're generally not process oriented. They tell you why you should do something, not how. The "why" has to come from you. The urgency, the drive, the grit—that's all you. Those are the product of pursuing something you're passionate about. If you need someone to tell you to do something, you may be doing the wrong thing, or doing the right thing in the wrong way. All these quotes come down to this—do what you're passionate about and have the skills for, outwork everyone else and never give up. Not very flowery or inspirational, but that's it in a nutshell.

## They Make Money Telling You to Get off Your Butts

I've helped various voluntary bar associations over the years find speakers for their events. Individuals who have compelling life stories and put themselves out as motivational speakers are always in demand. Their speaking fees can be quite high. It's a huge expenditure by organizations to shell out thousands and thousands of dollars to share their inspirational story and motivate the crowd. Sometimes they offer detailed plans on how to achieve their goals—that's great. That's what to look for. But other times it's them being up their being our cheerleader. The platitudes generally don't have a long term effect on us. We pay them money to have them tell us what we already know—our dreams aren't going to happen on their own. If we don't get off our butts and pursue them wholeheartedly, they'll never become a reality. They're your dreams—chase them down and make them a reality. We pay them to tell us what we already know. Business, leadership, goal setting books tell us the virtues, talents, habits and plans necessary to succeed. Those are worth our time. And there are motivational speakers who quickly pivot from inspiration to real life advice. They're great too. But spending money on those who are only offering a halftime speech probably isn't the best use of your resources.

## The Sales Pitch

If you follow motivational speakers on social media or on their websites, you may come across promos for their upcoming events, generally a seminar at a city near you that promises to help you

achieve your dreams. The seminar generally goes for X, but for a limited time, they are offering it for Y. They generally only provide manual A, but for you, they'll throw in manual B. They tell you how much a life coach would charge for the same services and what a great bargain their program is. I'm sure there are a lot of folks who attend these seminars who find them life changing. I've been to a few. Maybe it's my cynicism, or maybe I wasn't "all in," or a "true believer," but I never found them to be life changing. I found them to be time consuming and expensive and left me little practical advice on how to define my goals and achieve them. But man, did they have a great sales pitch. I'm sure it worked for some. But it didn't work for me. The programs simply didn't live up to the hype.

## So Many Books, So Many Programs

I believe in bookstores. I like walking down the aisles, pulling out books, reading the book jackets, the table of contents, skimming the chapters. I'm an avid reader, so I've read my share of self-help books and business books and leadership books. What I'm looking for is a central idea that resonates with me and a plan related to that idea. For example, it can be as simple as "What question do I ask myself when faced with a life changing decision?" There's a book addressing that—*Ask It* by Andy Stanley. Quick read. He tells you that it is important to ask the right question when making important decisions and tells you what the question is and why that is the question you have to ask yourself. Great "self-help" books have a simple yet important idea and the rest of the book explains the idea and tells you how to use it in your life. In five minutes you can look at any book and determine if it can help you. Look for the idea. Often the idea itself captures you. You know just based on the idea itself that you've found a book worth reading. Now here's the thing. If you take five minutes flitting through the book, you'll see how to apply that idea to your life. The best books tell you in five minutes how to do something that will change how you work, how you relate to others, how you lead, etc. It takes five minutes to determine if a book has something to say that's worth saying and another five to learn how to apply it to your life. The great non-fiction books can be consumed in 10 minutes. My book? This book you're reading? I'll reduce it to a few declaratory sentences:

- Define your talents and your passions.
- Where they intersect is where you will find your dreams.



- By pursuing your dreams, you're pursuing your purpose.
- Define and implement a plan that makes the most of your talents and passions.
- Work hard to fulfill your plan.
- Do these things and you will achieve your dreams.

This formula isn't meant to be motivational. I'm not telling you that you have talents to motivate you. The fact is each of us has talents. I'm not telling you to be passionate. You're already passionate about certain things. I'm not telling you all your dreams will come true. I'm telling you what to do to make them come true. It's a process. You define terms—What are your talents? Your passions? Your dreams? Then you devise a plan that makes the most of your talents (your skill set) and your passions (your personal motivators) to achieve your goals (your dreams). Will it be hard? Yes. Will it require work and sacrifice? Yes. Will it work? Yes. That's my book. Look for other books you can reduce to a few sentences and see if those few sentences work for you. If so, buy the book. You don't have to buy this one. It's free.

## Why Does Motivation Cost So Much?

Motivation can be expensive, right? Someone recommends you buy their book, and at the end of the book they recommend more books. You buy those. Then they recommend a series on DVD. You buy that. And then they recommend a weekend conference. You pay for that. Seems like a lot to pay to get you off your butt and better yourself. If you're not motivated, spending a lot of money isn't likely to help. Now you're unmotivated and you've spent your vacation money. A lot of folks achieved their dreams without spending a small fortune on figuring out how to do it. I wonder what Abraham Lincoln would think about how often he's used by motivational speakers who charge thousands of dollars to tell his story to people who can simply read about him in a book? How often have I heard about all the failures in his life—personal, business, political—and despite them all he went on to be arguably the best president ever. I don't want to pay anyone to hear about Lincoln anymore. Before you commit to a seminar or a life coach or personal guru, take the time to think about what you want—what you really want—and devise a plan to get there. I'll discuss how to do this later. Hint—it doesn't take a three day seminar at a posh resort to figure it out.

## Why Are You Listening to Them?

Why do we listen to the gurus? Are we looking for motivation? Are we looking for a great idea? Are we looking for a plan? Seek out teachers, not motivators. Listen to those who have a process for you to follow to reach your goals, as opposed to those who are little more than cheerleaders. Anyone you follow should help you with the following:

- Identifying your purpose
- Identifying your dreams
- Identifying your passions
- Identifying your talents
- Creating a plan that takes all this into consideration
- Implementing a plan
- Sticking with the plan

To enable you to do these things, a book or a speaker should guide you as you ask questions to find out what you want, what you truly want, and evaluate the skills and resources and passions you have to make what you want a reality. Yes, you have to believe in yourself. Yes, you need to be motivated. But these things don't happen at the beginning. You don't start off believing in yourself and being motivated by others and then proceed onto developing a plan to make the most of this new found confidence. You sit down, you evaluate yourself, you realize you have a lot to offer your family, your firm or company and the world, you develop a plan to leverage this, and by thinking through all this, you realize just how much value you have to offer. Doing so boosts your confidence and motivates you. Motivation doesn't precede creating your personal plan. Your personal plan creates the motivation. You see all you can do—big things, exciting things—and you can't help but follow through. Look for writers and speakers who help you see the world this way.

## Cutting Through the Noise

There's no easy way to accomplish your goals. The bigger the goal, the more robust the dream, the more work, investment and time it will require. Success stories are not more common because they require a vision, plan, hard work and faith. Search out those who walk you through this process—defining a vision, creating a plan to accomplish the visions and implementing the plan. There are different approaches to this process and you should find the one that works for you. You may find my process works for you. You may prefer someone else's process. But whatever process you

follow, remember this is a process—it doesn't just happen. You can't simply will success into existence. You can't simply repeat positive statements to yourself every morning and expect your goals to come to fruition. Believing in yourself is necessary. Accepting risks is necessary. Overcoming failure is necessary. But sometimes you need success, even if it's a little success, to believe in yourself. Sometimes you need to achieve something small before you believe you can achieve something bigger. And you do that by creating a plan that has both short term goals and long term goals. A plan that enables you to achieve small successes and use them to springboard to larger successes. Look for books, speakers, leaders and mentors who have this world view. They're the ones who can help.

## Be Your Own Guru

Getting help defining your goals and creating and implementing a plan is laudable. Creating a roadmap for your destiny doesn't come second nature to most. You need help with that? That's understandable. But getting up in the morning and implementing your plan—doing the hard work day in and day out—that's all you. No one knows you better than you. No one knows what motivates you, exasperates you, angers you, scares you, and inspires you better than you. You don't need others to drive you. No one knows what drives you better than you. Maybe some of you do need that daily, sometimes hourly, reminder from someone else that you can do it. But when you sit down and write out a life plan, many of you will realize that the only one that can get you to accomplish your goals is you. Others can show you the way by telling you how they did. But only you can make your dreams come true. You need to figure out for yourself how to motivate yourself. That will come with knowing that taking steps each day toward your goal brings you closer to achieving it. Once you have a specific goal with well thought out steps on how to achieve it, the motivation should come. If it doesn't, ask yourself what's missing. Why are you pursuing a goal? What will you accomplish once you achieve it? How does accomplishing that goal fulfill your purpose on this earth? Answering the big questions will help you motivate yourself.

## Create Your Own Motivation

The right goal with the right plan often generates its own motivation. No matter how big your ultimate goals are, they are comprised of smaller goals that are manageable and easier to tackle. Treat yourself each time you reach one of these goals. It may be movie

night at home, or a meal at your favorite restaurant, or reading a new bestseller. Sometimes achieving these smaller, short term goals are all the motivation you need to start working toward the next short term goals. But sometimes you need additional incentive to stay on track. When achieving a goal isn't enough motivation in and of itself, tie a reward to achieving the goal. Treat yourself to a new book, a night out or watch a favorite movie on Netflix for the 10th time. Accomplishing a small goal deserves a small reward. Accomplishing a large one deserves a large reward. You have an article published in a voluntary bar association e-newsletter. Treat yourself to a movie. You're appointed to a committee chair or to a board of an organization. That deserves a larger reward.

Journaling can be a source of motivation. Get used to carrying a small journal that fits in your pocket. If you prefer, you can journal on your phone. The benefit of a journal is that you can track your progress toward your various goals. Flipping through the last few weeks will remind you of all you've done and will motivate you to stay on course. Right there in writing is a list of the articles you've written, events you've attended, and leads you've pursued. We can be hard on ourselves for not achieving enough quickly enough. The journal, in black and white, reminds us how far we have come and what we have already achieved. Success breeds success, and accomplishments breed the desire to achieve more.

## Only You Can Inspire You

Each of us needs to be the source of our own inspiration. Life's too short and there is too much we want to accomplish to constantly be running back to books, seminars, CDs or downloads to reinforce to ourselves that we can accomplish what we set our minds and hearts to. If you're a lawyer reading this book, you've already accomplished a lot. College. Law School. Bar Exam. Job. You've already done a lot. Reflect on these past successes as you work toward new ones. And if you've stumbled along the way, even fallen on your face, you've managed to get up and move forward. Win, lose or draw, you're still at it. You're still getting up every morning and facing the day. Life hasn't gotten the best of you. Focus on what you've done. If you've done it before you can do it again, even if you're facing different challenges, bigger challenges. You have the talent and the passions and the dreams. Find where they intersect and create a plan to leverage them and your urge to visit the self-help aisle in the book store will subside.



# Chasing Others' Dreams

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## Athletes

Most of us have one or more favorite teams, collegiate and professional. Most of us have athletics we follow and cheer for. Some of us, even at my age, seek glory on the field or court. Maybe it's the immediacy of victory—you play and you win or lose. Maybe it's having fans watch and scream for you. For some of us, even though our athletic days are behind us, we try to have that dream live on through our children. Who hasn't been at a youth game and seen one or more parents get overly involved or too boisterous. There is something visceral about sports—fighting for every inch as Pacino says in *Any Given Sunday*, making the winning shot like *Hoosiers*, or going the distance like *Rocky*. There are real life equivalencies for each of these Hollywood films. Sports get your adrenaline pumping, your excitement up and your fight or flight reaction heightened. And there's room in our lives to play competitively—an attorney basketball league, a foursome on Saturdays mornings, triathlons. That's great. Exercise should be part of your routine, and if you need to be competitive to keep exercising, races, pickup games and tournaments are all ways to keep yourself engaged. But at the end of the day, we're not professional athletes who have dedicated out entire lives to master a sport. We are lawyers who have focused our talents and energies into our profession. Following sports and participating in them is great. Living vicariously through athletics or chasing that dream only takes time away from chasing your dreams. Let LeBron be LeBron and you be you.

## Celebrities

Actors and actresses, singers, musicians, reality TV stars - a lot of money, travel, attention and influence. We hold them up on pedestals. Watch them on the big and small screens, listen to their music, follow their lives on gossip shows and magazines and websites. It seems glamorous, doesn't it? Having no privacy. Having others judge you constantly on your weight, appearance and dress. Being careful about every word you use and every public (and sometimes private) action you take. Sometimes we want a bit of celebrity in our life. We want others to notice and pay attention. But celebrity isn't all it's cracked up to be. There is a high incidence of alcohol and drug abuse, divorce, depression and suicide. It's tough being "on" 24/7, with all eyes on you. Whatever your dreams are, wanting to be the next big star shouldn't be your focus. There may be things you do that bring you attention, even

fame. But you do those things because they're part of your plan to achieve your goals. You don't do them to garner the spotlight. Self-aggrandizement should never be a goal.

## Wealth

So many self-help books on becoming rich. Many don't bother explaining the purpose behind becoming rich. According to them, it's self-evident. Who doesn't want to be rich? Of course, many pursue a career in law because of its financial rewards. The American Dream has, in some respects, become synonymous with wealth. America—where anyone can start as working class and through their entrepreneurial spirit, hard work and some luck climb the socioeconomic ladder to the very top. There's nothing wrong with pursuing a better financial life for you and your family. Houses, cars, college education, clothes, food, entertainment—they all cost money. In pursuing your goals, including your legal career, setting benchmarks for expected earnings is not only appropriate, it's necessary. Any budget is comprised primarily of two line items—what comes in and what goes out—what you earn and what you spend. So making money should be part of anyone's plan. Becoming wealthy for the sake of becoming wealthy, though, shouldn't be the focus. Making more and more money to have more and more toys shouldn't be the focus. Money should be a means to an end—supporting a family, helping friends, charity—money shouldn't be the end.

## Keeping Up with the Joneses

We all know someone who takes every opportunity to talk about his stuff—his new car, his recent European vacation, his larger than life television, his new golf clubs. These folks are toxic. Their lives revolve around things, and they want to have more things than you. They regularly compare what they have to what you have, and make a point to argue they have more. It's easy to get caught up in a game of who has more. It's easy to show off your latest toys and gadgets. But keeping up with the Joneses isn't healthy. First of all, it's not good for your mental health. When your focus is on accumulating more and nicer things than the next guy, then you're overlooking what's really important in your life—your family, your faith and your friends. Everything becomes a competition. Do I drive a nicer car than him? Is my house bigger? Do I make more? Your dreams shouldn't depend on outshining your neighbors and

friends. In fact, focusing on stuff gets in the way of focusing on the more salient and more deserving goals that require your attention, time and energy. The person who dies with the most toys doesn't win. He's just a dead guy with a lot of regrets.

## Professionals

We all have professional friends—other lawyers, doctors, accountants and engineers. Each person has her own dreams and goals. Each defines success differently. Each wants something different out of life, out of their career and for their future. Discussing with others their dreams and how they are achieving them is a fruitful exercise because they offer you insight and ideas on how to achieve your own goals. How a doctor developed a successful practice or an engineer invented a new product can enlighten you on how to achieve your goals. But never confuse learning from how others pursue their dreams to adopting their dreams as your own. It's tempting to look at other successful professionals and go from wanting to emulate them to being them. But their dreams are theirs and yours are yours. Their dreams work for them, not you. And vice versa. Each professional has her own course. Each works for a given company or firm with its own vision and values. Each specializes in her own area. Each has her own family, friends, hobbies, interests and goals. Each has her own struggles, challenges, issues and concerns. Each of us has a purpose. Chasing someone else's purpose impedes chasing yours.

## Family Expectations

Even as adults, we feel the pressure from family to live up to their expectations. They had dreams for us (still do). They wanted us to attend certain schools, pursue certain careers, work for specific firms or companies, earn a certain amount in salary, and overall make them proud so they can brag about us to others and live vicariously through us. Parents mean well (usually), but your life is your life. Chasing their dreams for you may please them, but it prevents you from achieving your full potential and only creates animosity and strain in your relationships with them. If you're a parent, don't be that parent who tells your kids what their dreams should be. Certainly don't be that parent who lives his dreams through his children. And as an adult child, you can't succumb to your parents' desires for your life. You can't kowtow to older siblings telling you what to do with your life. You can't always

please your aunts, uncles or grandparents. You want to make your parents proud? I get it. They sacrificed so much for you and you want to show them you appreciate them for that? Been there. Chasing their dreams builds resentment. You may avoid the comments about what you're doing with your life, but you've placed yourself in a much worse position by not doing what you really want to do with your life. Each of us has to figure out for ourselves how to deal with family members who think they know better than us regarding what's best for us. But figure it out you must, or you'll spend the rest of your life living someone else's life.

## Friends' Expectations

Some folks love reunions—high school, college and law school reunions. Others hate them. They don't want to be judged by former friends (or so-called friends) asking us what we do, where we live, what vacations we've been on—so many questions directed to estimate our financial success “Are you married? Oh, divorced. Kids? Just one, really? Where do you work? Oh that mid-tier firm, that handle all the fungible work? You haven't been to Europe yet? Oh, you must go. Maybe after a promotion or something.” Many folks are just glad to see you after 10, 20 or 30 years. But some are sizing you and everyone else in the room up, making mental notes about how much better their lives are compared to everyone else's. Quite petty. And if you fall for it, if you become concerned with living up to friends' expectations, or focus on goals you think they want to achieve, then you've lost focus on who you are and what you should become. You can't base your life decisions on what others think. You don't have anything to prove to anyone. And friends, real friends, aren't going to judge you based on the size of your house or your bank account. Friends shouldn't have expectations of what you do, what you earn or what you spend money on. Those aren't friends. Real friends aren't going to care what you do or judge you for it.

## Your Company's or Law Firm's Expectations

Every company and firm has expectations of their employees. You need to learn what these are early and decide whether they're your expectations. They want you to become an effective trial lawyer. Is that what you want? They want you to become an inverse condemnation expert. Is that what you want? Do you want something different, something your employer hasn't conceived?



Maybe create a new practice group? Lead an organization? Speak at events? Your employer wants you to do certain things, accomplish certain things, and distinguish yourself in certain ways. If your plan for yourself at your company or firm doesn't quite match up with their plan for you, you need to explain why your way, your plans, are even better for them than their plans for you. The fact is that we do our best when we coordinate our passions and talents, and plans based on this nexus are better both for you and your employer. Maybe they had Plan A in mind for you. You need to show them why plan B is better for everyone involved. Employers want their companies and firms to succeed. They want you to succeed because your success is tied into theirs. So sometimes what they think is best for them isn't best for you. You have to show them that what's best for you is also best for them. Think of it like a Venn Diagram. There's what they want, there's what you want, and there is some intersection between the two. Focus on that and pitch that.

## Someone Else's Star

There are so many folks out there to emulate. So many who have achieved success in a plethora of fields. It's easy to look at them and say you want to be like them. You want to achieve what they did. You want to share their spotlight. But their achievements are interwoven with who they are—their talents, their dreams, their ambitions, their goals. The problem with hitching your wagon to someone else's star—trying to be like them and think like them and act like them—is that you're missing the boat on your own star. Wanting someone else's life deprives you of enjoying yours. Living another's dream precludes you from living yours to the fullest. Each of us has a unique role to fill in this world that only each of us can accomplish. You live someone else's life and you deprive the world of what you were supposed to do to change the world one person at a time in a way only you can do. You have to start with the premise that you have a role in this world, you have talents and passions to fulfill that role and with the right plan and follow through, you'll do just that. You can learn from others' success, experiences and failures, but apply what you learned to your own dreams. Don't simply chase theirs.

## Each of Us Has a Star to Chase

We've always had dreams. We dreamed as kids, as teens, as college students, as law students, as lawyers, as spouses and as

parents. Isn't that curious? No matter what our interests or desires, our background or upbringing, each of us dreamt of something more, something else, something bigger. We wanted to be lawyers, doctors, scientists and engineers. We wanted to be singers, musicians, athletes and movie stars. We wanted to be Perry Mason and Atticus Finch. We wanted to do big things, huge things, and wanted to leave a legacy. There is a desire in each of us that has manifested itself throughout our lives, to dream and dream big. That's not an accident. That's not a coincidence. Each of us has a dream to chase. Sometimes more than one. Sometimes those dreams change as we grow up. Sometimes they remain. Wouldn't it be a perverse joke if we had this desire but couldn't satisfy it? Wouldn't it be cruel to have this innate wish to reach for our own personal star and never be able to reach it? There's often an overlap between the big things we want to do with the talents and passions we have. Let's start with thinking about what our dreams are, how they've changed over the years, and what we still want to do. Let's turn the page and talk about our dreams.



# Motivating Yourself

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## Your Dreams

### *What Did You Want to Do as a Kid?*

Let's take a walk down memory lane. Let's go back to when you were a kid. And when I say a kid, I mean your first memories of what you wanted to be when you grew up. Let's go back to those days when everything seemed possible and your parents or a teacher told you (hopefully) you can be whatever you want to be. How did you respond to that question? Or perhaps your parents made their own suggestions. My parents told me I would be President one day. They really did. My parents, immigrants from Cuba, my dad a meatpacker and my mom a maid, who couldn't speak English and barely got by working double shifts, told me I would be President one day. I must have been six. Maybe five. They said this was America, and I could grow up to be President. That's why they encouraged me to become a lawyer. They assumed most politicians were lawyers. I never wanted to be President, but I didn't have the heart to tell them that. But hey, if I could be President, I could be anything, right? I did have some interest in politics, but behind the scenes. I also loved art and writing stories. Ultimately, I became a lawyer but never walked away from politics and writing. I'm still a political junkie and as displayed by this book, my fifth, I never abandoned my dream of writing.

What did you want to do when you were a child? What career? What field? What did you daydream about? Where did your imagination take you? You had big dreams because that's what kids have. We don't know any better. Reality and life's obligations haven't set in yet. We assume now that we let our imaginations get the best of us, that we had no idea how many responsibilities we would have as adults. But what if we were onto something then? Maybe we were right then as kids and wrong now as adults. Is that so crazy? Reflect on what you wanted when you were 6 and 8 and 10. Reflect when you were a tween and later a teen. What hobbies did you have? What sports, if any, did you play? What shows and movies did you watch? What did you read? No matter how crazy, or silly, or impossible, think through your dreams as a child. They'll shed a lot of light on what you should be doing as an adult.

### *What Did You Want to Do in College?*

Remember those late nights when you should have been cramming with your study group and instead everyone went around sharing what they wanted to do after graduation and made it into the real world? In college you still felt like you could take on the world.

You didn't just want to be a lawyer, you wanted to be a star trial attorney like the ones on television or in the movies. You didn't just want to volunteer for the College Democrats or College Republicans—you saw yourself running for Senate one day. You envisioned heading your own company, starting your own law firm, working for a mega firm or starting your own 501C3. We shared a wide eyed optimism that life should watch out because we were coming for it right out of the gate.

I don't know when we started settling for less, when we started putting away our oversized dreams in exchange for safety, security and reliability. But for most of us, that hadn't happened yet in college. What did you want to be when you were in college? What were your favorite classes? Which college groups did you belong to? What internships, jobs, exchange trips and other experiences left a lasting impression on you? The reason I ask isn't to suggest you shouldn't have gone to law school. I'm not recommending you go back and take that fork in the road and become a psychologist, an engineer or a computer programmer. The reason I ask is that in college, sooner or later, you decided to pursue a career in law. It excited you. It captured your imagination. Think back and ask yourself why? Why, in college, were you set on being a lawyer? Forget the money or the status or the security. What seemed exciting about it? If right now, as you read this, you've hit a wall at your company or firm, go back and think why you're here. You had a reason. You had several. Reflect on them. They'll help you define your dreams as a lawyer.

### *What Are Your Dreams as a Lawyer?*

Between the depositions and the hearings, between the memos of law and e-mails with the client, what big things do you want to accomplish as a lawyer? Let's start with your practice. Do you want to become an expert in a field? Which field? Doing what? Don't ask yourself "how" (not yet, anyway), ask yourself "what." Do you want to become a rainmaker? Do you want to become a trial lawyer? Do you want to become a social activist? Give that some thought. Nothing wrong with wanting to be the next great trial lawyer, or next great criminal defense lawyer. Does your dream involve you being the best in a legal field, becoming the go-to attorney for cyber security, for example? That's great. Don't think small. Dreams are called dreams because they are inherently larger than life. And how about going beyond the practice of law? Do you want to lead a voluntary bar association? A charity? Do you want to speak? Write? Possibly write a book? As lawyers, there



are a lot of activities we pursue that go beyond or day to day cases. Do you want to become President of a state bar? Become a national (possibly international) speaker on a given topic? Assess the following for yourself:

- What is your desired legal specialty?
- What clients do you want to represent?
- What type of cases do you want to handle?
- How do you want to use your law degree outside your job?
- Do you want to lead an organization? Which one?
- Do you want to become a renowned speaker? On what?
- Do you want to write articles? A book? A treatise? On what?
- How do you want to be remembered as a lawyer after you pass?
- What legacy do you want to leave as a lawyer?

Ask yourself the big questions. Your answers will help you steer the proper course for your future.

### *What Are Your Dreams Outside the Law?*

We are so much more than lawyers. We are also parents and spouses. Sons and daughters. Friends and confidants. Servants and leaders. Dreamers and doers. Put aside for a minute what you want to accomplish as a lawyer. What else do you want to achieve? Is there a charity near and dear your heart you want to volunteer for? Is there a charity you want to start yourself? Do you want to perform stand up? Theater? Sing? Compose? Write a novel? Start a self-help group? Become a mentor? Be a sports coach? A thought leader? A social media phenom? Did you want to speak at TED Talks? Run a marathon? Do a triathlon? Start a business? A restaurant? Sometimes your dreams outside the law advance your law-related dreams. They don't have to be mutually exclusive. They often involve the same talents you use for your practice and draw from the same passions that drive you to excel at your profession. If you take a close look, your career dreams and your other dreams often share things in common. So take the time and reflect upon what you want beyond being a great lawyer. It may seem daunting. At times it may feel like you're balancing two jobs and chasing two dreams (your professional and your personal), but take a chance on yourself and let your talents, passions and dreams drive you to tackle dreams outside the courtroom.

### *What Are Your Dreams for Your Family?*

If you're married, what are your dreams for you and your spouse? What do you want to do together? Is there a local charity you two volunteer at and you both want to assume a larger role? Possibly plan additional events? Join the board? Create a related charity to serve those not currently served? Do you want to travel? Write a book together? Speak together on family-related topics like raising children or tackling depression? Get involved in politics? What does retirement look like? What do you two want to do when you walk away from the legal profession after 30 or 40 years? What foundation do you want to lay down now for a joyous, challenging retirement, where you take your skill set and apply it elsewhere, either in a business, a charity or writing a book?

Do you have kids? Have you helped them discover their talents, passions and dreams? What plans do you have to help them define and achieve their goals? How can you help them decide upon careers and pursue them wholeheartedly? Maybe you want to do something with your kids that's bigger than all of you. Perhaps fundraising for a charity, getting physically fit together, or coaching their teams? Help your budding musician record his

music? Help your young artist sell her work? Perhaps your children have extraordinary talents and need help developing them? Helping your kids fulfill their dreams is one of the most rewarding things we can do as parents.

### ***What Have You Told Others About Your Dreams?***

If you've gone to the trouble of sharing your dreams with others then you're serious about them. What have you told your spouse about them? Your kids? Your colleagues? Friends? It takes courage to share your dreams with others. When we do that, we risk being ridiculed, undermined or dismissed. Despite that, what we want to do has become so important to us, so much a part of us, that we can't help but share our ideas and our plans to make them a reality. What do you tell your spouse when you're lying in bed at night, with the house finally quiet and dark, reflecting on what big things you want to do with your life? By giving a voice to your dreams, by articulating them out loud to others, you're acknowledging to yourself that they're worth pursuing and you're taking a step toward making them a reality. Do you keep a journal? Do you write down your long term goals? That's a good place to look for dreams waiting to be actualized. I have dozens of journals with ideas—some I've followed through on and others I haven't. Just because some of those dreams have been dormant doesn't mean they can't be woken up and pursued.

### ***What Do You Do with Your Free Time?***

What are your hobbies? Other than watching television, or going to the movies or golfing, what are some of the other things you do? Let's start with what you read. You can learn a lot about a person from what she reads? Fiction vs nonfiction? Literary vs pulp fiction? Biographies? Self-help? Business? Marketing and sales? Maybe you have a conscious plan about what you read and when you read it? Many of us simply pick up books because they speak to us, catch our fancy somehow. Whether we realize it or not, we're drawn to books that support our world view and values and provide some guidance, either directly or not, about pursuits we want to chase. Do you find yourself reading books by great orators who've reduced their speeches and presentations to writing? Maybe you want to emulate them in the courtroom or before large audiences? Maybe you read biographies about athletics or musicians? These are folks who made it to the top of their demanding professions where very few make it. Maybe there's something you want to pursue that everyone has told you

is impossible and you're looking for folks in other fields who faced and overcame similar odds?

Other than reading, what do you do? Do you serve on any boards? Volunteer? Coach? Play in a band? Are you writing the great American novel? Taking improv classes? Maybe these hobbies are a window into something bigger, some greater dream you want to pursue? Maybe you have some moonlighting in your future. What we do for fun, for pleasure, for free—these provide us insight as to what we want to do with our future.

### ***What Do You Daydream About?***

When driving to and from work, depositions or hearings, when you have the radio on, but let your mind wander—what are you thinking about? What do you imagine yourself doing? Do you think about a book you want to write? A song you want to compose? The biography of someone you want to emulate? Despite being surrounded by media 24/7, whether in our cars, offices or at home, we still find time to zone out and day dream. We still play the role of hero, or leader or thought leader in our thoughts as we're stuck in traffic. We play a role in our minds of someone we want to be or something we want to do. We rarely share our day dreams with others because first, we believe adults shouldn't day dream, and second, they often involve us doing bigger than life things. But even if we would never do the things we day dream about, there is something to learn from them. What we imagine ourselves doing provides us insight into what we want to do with our lives. Maybe we can't be a hero, but there may be avenues where we can positively affect others' lives as if we were heroes. Analyze your day dreams and draw a line from them to concrete goals you can pursue in your life.

### ***Write It Down***

If you don't have a journal, stop reading this book, login into your Amazon account, and order one. You want to write down your dreams, your talents, your passions, your goals and your plans. You're creating a blueprint for your life. If you were to prepare a business plan, you would write it down. The same goes for your life plan. Brainstorm, and write down your dreams, from your youth until now, for your profession, for you personally and for your family. You want to reduce your dreams to writing. First, seeing it in black and white makes them more real. It's just not in your mind anymore. You wrote them down. The big things you want to do with your life are now in your journal for you to refer back to, think



about and reflect upon. Writing down all your dreams from all the stages in your life will reveal a pattern to you of what you want most out of life. Our dreams, even if fanciful and meant only to pass the time inform us of our desires, wishes and our personality. Our minds wander to where we want to be and what we want to do. In those quiet moments when you raise your head from a book or look aside from the television, and let your imagination get the best of you, where do you go? Write it down. Write down any and all dreams, no matter how surreal or unrealistic they may seem. You will see patterns. There will be repetition. Don't ignore them. They're going to help you plot the rest of your life.



# Your Passions

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## What Gets You Excited?

After you've identified your dreams, identify your passions. They're interrelated, but distinct. A dream is something you want to accomplish. It's bigger than life, and requires talent, hard work and dedication. It also requires passion. Passion is what gets you out of the bed earlier than most to prepare for a marathon, write a book like this, go to night school for another degree, and any host of other tasks that require drive, grit and heart. You can have a dream, a very modest and manageable one, but without passion—without the urge to convert your idea into a reality—it's not going anywhere. It's dead on arrival. That's why identifying your passions is so important. If you're not passionate about health, if you're not competitive, if exercise is the last thing you want to do—you're not going to have the passion to train for a marathon. Now, you can develop a passion for running, but accomplishing such a dream will be more realistic if you start with a passion to run and to win. You can develop a passion for a task or goal, but the likelihood of success of achieving your dreams improves if we work with our existing passions, as opposed to developing new ones. (Of course, you may have passions you haven't discovered yet. These are different from developing passions from whole cloth).

So let's start with a direct question—What gets you excited? What aspects of your job get you excited? What aspects of belonging to a voluntary bar association get you excited? What books? Television programs and movies? What type of news stories? What volunteer work? Hobbies? What conversations do you jump into? What do you post about? Your excitement level and what causes it to rise reveals your passions. Passions are your internal motivators. Discover what yours are and you'll discover a wellspring of motivation.

## What Do You Do with Your Free Time?

Free time—for lawyers, that's often in short supply. But let's assume we have our share of free time. What do you do with it? Read? Exercise? Watch television? Travel? Volunteer? Write? Family time? Sports? I'm not concerned what you do. I'm curious about why you do it? Let's say you watch television. With on demand programming, where we can watch what we want when we want, why are you watching the shows or movies you're watching? Let's say, you watch science fiction. You watch the old *Twilight Zone* episodes like me, you watch the sci-fi movies once they hit Amazon Prime, and you highly anticipate the new *Blade*

*Runner* movie. I watch these shows because I love to see how technology affects us—at work, at home and in our relationships. So I take that “why” and think to myself how I can apply that to work. Maybe I want to pursue a legal career in cyber security or assume administrative responsibilities at my firm addressing how we can make the most of technology and stay ahead of changes that will alter how we provide legal services. So at first glance loving sci-fi doesn’t translate into improving my career. But by taking a closer look, I can start seeing the connections. Why do you participate in a softball league? Coach little league? Are you a natural competitor? Trial lawyers are natural competitors. They argue to win. Maybe that’s you. Maybe that drive provides you the constitution to fight in every case and fight to win. Often, what we’re doing when we’re not working provides us insight into what work best suits us.

## What Are Your Hobbies?

As a young lawyer, I was told to pursue at least one hobby to help me disconnect from the practice. Hobbies weren’t my thing and I didn’t heed the advice. Eventually, I settled on writing. It was mostly writing legal articles because that’s what I knew, but soon that branched out into parenting and family advice, motivational pieces and short stories—parables disguised as science fiction. When we think of hobbies we think of golf, working out, hunting, reading or movies, not so much writing. I mean as lawyers, that’s most of what we do. Why would we want to use our free time to do more of it? But that was my hobby. As you can guess, there’s a clear nexus between enjoying writing and using that hobby to advance your legal career. I’ve blogged, I’ve written books for lawyers (like this one), I post regularly on LinkedIn and write articles. All of this increases my exposure in the legal community.

What if writing isn’t your hobby? How does golf or hunting advance your legal career? Well, you do these activities with others, often other lawyers or business people. You get to network while doing something you enjoy. Love reading? Start a book club with other lawyers. Love movies? Sponsor a movie night at your house with other business professionals. You love entertaining? Create networking events. Analyze how your hobbies can help you advance your career. Sometime your hobbies will reveal to you that you’re pursuing the wrong career. You pursue certain hobbies because you love them. Study why you love them, and doing so will help you identify your passions. I write because I



feel others can learn from my life experiences—whether it's how to be a better lawyer, or better father or better leader. I'm driven by an altruistic need to help others avoid the mistakes I've made, and learn from both my failures and successes. Maybe you enjoy playing basketball at your local Y on Saturdays because you love competing. That urge to win can serve you well as a trial attorney. Connect the dots between your hobbies and your profession and see how you can apply your passions to your job.

## What Do You Read?

What a person reads says a lot about her. First, please tell me you read for pleasure. You need to read, like how you need to breathe, eat and relieve yourself. It is a necessity. If you haven't picked up a book in a while, find a short business book or novel and read it. See, that wasn't so bad. Better than television, right? It may take a few more books, but you'll come to agree it's better than T.V.

Ok, as to the rest of you who do read for pleasure, what are you reading now? Fiction or nonfiction? Biography or self-help? Reading takes time. First you have to decide on a book. Then you have to find the time to read it. It's not like watching a drama on television or a movie on Netflix. You've decided that despite what else you have going on in your life, reading a given book

is more important. Think about why you read the books you read. Self-improvement? Learning? Entertainment? To spur your imagination? Reflect on the topics and issues you read about, the ideas you pursue while reading and what you learn from it. If you keep reading biographies about musicians, why? Is it your love for their music? Is it to learn their creative process? Is it to apply their creative process to your own job? There are multiple reasons that draw us to certain books. Think through all the reasons that motivate you to read certain types of books. If you can identify why you read what you do, you can isolate the passions that make you turn page after page and which will serve you at work and at home.

## What News Do You Follow?

I'm a political junkie. I consume articles and television programs on politics. I love the strategy (and at times lack thereof) political parties and politicians employ to promote their messages, agenda and themselves. There is the stated reason politicians do what they do, and then there are the real reasons. Figuring out where someone is really coming from is a great skill to have in a society where everyone is trying to sell us something, including opposing counsel and his client. Getting past the messaging and the branding and the hard sell to the truth is invigorating. It's pulling back the curtain and finding there's not much to Oz. Whether you enjoy being informed or entertained, write down what you enjoy learning about and what you find entertaining. Do you follow an issue that is near and dear to you? Perhaps a cause with which you want to get more involved? Maybe there is a legal angle to the technology news you follow? Defining your passions and the applicability of them to your career and family is crucial, because these passions are going to motivate you to be better lawyers, spouses and parents. Identifying the underlying reasons you read the *Washington Post* or watch Anderson Cooper will guide you on finding what at work and at home you want to pour your heart into.

## What Conversations with Friends Get You Excited?

What do you enjoy discussing with family and friends? Do you talk about work? If so, what aspect of it? A challenging case? A novel legal theory? Perhaps it has nothing to do with the cases you're handling. Office politics? Office gossip? Do you have political debates? Deconstruct a favorite movie? Brag about your kids?

Discuss stocks? Share your next big idea? What gets you excited reveals your passions. And as with books or news, there is not always a direct line between your conversational topics and your passions, but there is one if you look closely enough. Sometimes it is self-evident, when you always find yourself discussing certain cases you handle—maybe every noncompete agreement case you handle is exciting to you and you want to share that with others. Sometimes, there may be an aspect of litigation you enjoy, like taking depositions, and you want to share how you secured admissions that pave the way for a summary judgment. These conversations provide a clear message as to the overlap of your passions and your career. Sometimes the nexus is a bit more tenuous, but there nonetheless. Regular discussions about pets may reveal an interest in getting involved with the local humane society, to volunteer and possibly join their board, wherein you'll meet other professionals from the community who one day may refer you business. Often our passions, even if they're not directly tied to our career, tend to boost it. No one says you can't do good and get business at the same time.

## What Gets You Animated?

We just talked about what gets you excited. Let's take that a step further. What gets you animated? What gets you angry? Gets your blood boiling? Makes you say, "That's just not right?" Do you just say these things, or do you take action? Do you ever address the issue? Write the powers that be? Protest? Volunteer? Do pro bono? Perhaps you have a child with special needs? My older son was diagnosed with Sensory Integration Dysfunction as a toddler. I read everything there was about the disease and was frustrated with our medical carrier who refused to pay for most of the services he needed. I soon realized that there were a lot of other children with David's condition and many other families whose insurance didn't cover treatment. So I got involved. I joined a nonprofit that helps parents with special needs children. I represented families pro bono to help them secure services through the public school system. I wrote about it. I spoke out about it. I tried to change things because the status quo wasn't fair and compassionate. There are a lot of wrongs in the world, and your law degree, along with your writing and oratory skills, can go a long way to address them. And again, in the process of doing so, you meet other professionals along the way, who are like-minded, and who may need an attorney (or know someone who needs one) and will think of you to address those needs.

## Write It Down

Figuring yourself out requires a fair share of self-exploration. Just as you wrote down your dreams, write down your passions. We just went through a series of exercises to identify what you're passionate about, what drives you. Put all your answers down in your journal, give it a day or two, go through your notes, and add some more thoughts you overlooked. Your passions are yours. Others' passions are theirs. Your passions drive you to action. Others' passions don't. That doesn't mean you can't develop new passions as you grow and mature. The passions of a law student are different from those of a young attorney with little kids, or a partner with teenage kids, or a partner who is an empty nester redefining his life and priorities with his spouse. But they have to be your passions. Not what others think your passions should be. We're all different. We were all born with different drives, motivators and passions. You have to tap into yours and work with them. If you are doing what you were placed on this earth to do, which only you can do (and only you can figure out what that is), then you've tapped into your passions and you're making them work for you (and for others too). Write it all down, study it, see where the connections are, and you will figure out not only what your passions are but why you have them and how they drive you.



# Your Talents

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## What Are You Good At?

So, ask yourself, what are you good at? I mean what comes naturally for you? I'm not asking for skills that you have developed over the years. I'm not asking about something you used to do poorly, and now, after years of effort and practice, you do well. I want to know your innate talents that were there with you at birth, lying dormant until the time came that you got to use them. Maybe from a young age you beat everyone at chess. You picked up the piano at nine and never looked back. You were the fastest student in your middle school track team. You were the captain of your brain bowl team in high school. You were easily elected president of the student body in college or advanced to the nationals in moot court in law school. I'm talking about that one thing (or more likely, several things) that you were simply better at than most others. Sure you practiced, or studied or did whatever else to improve your talents. But at the core, you simply did it better than most everyone else. You were better at math, or writing, or telling stories, or leading, or shooting a basketball, or running, or debating or at science. Are maybe you had a huge ego, and thought you were better at everything. Confidence is a talent too. The things you did as a child, teen and now as an adult that are second nature to you, write those down. It is not a coincidence you have those talents. You were meant to use them for your good and the good of others. You weren't meant to squander them. You have them for a reason. Write them all down - the little and big talents alike. You need to identify all of them before you can fully use them.

## What Have Others Complimented You For?

It's surprising how many of us do not even recognize our own talents. We need others to point them out to us. Has anyone ever told you you're great at something? They've never seen anyone take a deposition like you? Argue a motion like you? Write like you? Give a presentation like you? How about skills that aren't directly related to your practice? Ability to fundraise? To create consensus? To prioritize? To identify talent in others and develop it? Ask yourself the following:

- What does your spouse say you do well?
- What do your children enjoy most about you?
- What do your friends compliment you about?
- What does your firm rely upon you to do?



- When others talk about you at cocktail parties or conferences, what do they say about you?
- Has anyone ever written you an e-mail or a letter thanking you for something? If so, what did they thank you for?
- What awards have you received?
- What recognitions have you received?

Many of us don't give ourselves enough credit as to acknowledging what we do well. We either don't notice these skills ourselves or think it's untoward to acknowledge we're better than others when it comes to certain skills or talents. But the fact is we are better than others at certain things, just as we are worse than others (sometimes much worse) at other things. This isn't a question of arrogance or pride coming before the fall. It's an honest self-assessment of your talents. You were born with several. Figure out what they are.

## What Comes Easy for You?

What things do you do that require little preparation or effort? Preparing for a hearing? Preparing for a client meeting? Research? Organizing an event? Leading an organization? Writing an article? Preparing a speech? I have some quirky talents. First, I have an endless list of ideas for articles and books and once the idea strikes me I can reduce it to writing very quickly. The book you're reading now took me 4 weeks of nights and weekends to write. Two hours a night, several hours each weekend. That's it. I'm not bragging on myself. I'm just acknowledging that I have this talent of developing ideas and reducing them to writing. One can appreciate why this skill helps my career as a lawyer. I can write a lot, in a short period of time, and share my ideas with lawyers across the country who may need local counsel in Miami, where I live. So that talent is easily transferable to advancing my career.

I also have a unique talent to figure out the ending of a movie (most any movie) within 15 minutes of watching it. I often can even predict dialogue before it's spoken. Somewhere along the way, altogether unconsciously, I realized I knew where a movie was going based on what was said, what was done, the setting, the themes and the foreshadowing. By the way, I'm a terrible companion at the movies. Often I'll whisper in my wife's ear what I'm expecting to happen next. Luckily, she's a good sport about it (and to her credit, she has a similar talent and at times beats me

to the punch). So, how, exactly, does this “talent,” if you want to call it one, help with my career? As lawyers, we tell stories. We tell them to the judge in our motion practice, to the opposing party in mediation and to juries at trial. So if you know the elements of good story telling, and know intuitively where a story should go, who should say what and how it should end, you can translate that skill into better storytelling in your practice.

So take the time and ask yourself what comes easy for you? No skill is too small or too unique or even too silly to jot down. You just never know when it can come in handy. Often you hear you need to work on your weaknesses. I believe you need to identify your strengths and make them stronger. These strengths are what will distinguish you from the rest of the pack. These strengths are what are going to set you apart. Identify them.

## What Do You Find Intuitive?

Is there anything you do that is simply intuitive for you? There isn't a process you follow and when asked you have difficulty explaining how you did it? You simply respond, “I don't know. I just did. I can't explain how.” My sons are both musically gifted. There are things they do that amaze me. When I ask them how they did, they struggle explaining their process. It just happened. They just heard the notes in their head and they came to life on their instruments. When a music instructor explains to them a new concept, they just get it. And sometimes they get more than what the instructor was trying to convey. It's just natural for them. Each of us does at least one thing that is intuitive for us. When pressed to explain how we did it, we have a hard time providing a process we followed. We just did it. That's a gift, and each of us has that gift when it comes to something in our lives. Some of us are innately compassionate and empathetic and make great listeners (and amateur psychologists). Some of us can size up a problem and blurt out a solution. The solution makes perfect sense once it's out of our mouths, but we have a hard time explaining how we came up with it. Maybe you're a natural communicator, or problem-solver, or musician, or writer, or something else which you do with little or no preparation. That ability will serve you well when pursuing your dreams and goals.

## What Skills Have You Sharpened?

It's natural to gravitate toward one's talents and work to improve them. We're good at something and we want to get better at it.

Things we do well, that we're comfortable doing, that we enjoy doing—we tend to do them over and over and in the process, sharpen those talents. Why do we play to our strengths? Because we excel at them and we get satisfaction at excelling at them. There is a drive in us to make good even better. We tend to avoid activities which require skills we lack. If we lack good eye hand coordination, we're likely avoiding the attorney flag football league. If we don't have good extemporaneous speaking skills, we're avoiding speaking in public settings. Now as attorneys, we have to have a broad baseline skill set. But for now, let's focus on the talents you focus on. You enjoy cross examining witnesses at deposition and at trial. Even though you enjoy it and are good at it, you're likely reading articles and books on cross examination, because you want to get even better at it. You're not satisfied at being a good cross examiner, you want to be a great one. And if you're great at it, you want to be one of the best at it. As lawyers, we're competitive by nature, and wired that way, we want to be the best at something. Study what talents you've honed over the years. Those are the ones you want to continue focusing on and evaluating how best to use them to achieve your goals.

## What Do You Best at Your Job?

Do you always get sent to argue hearings? Take depositions? Take expert depositions? Meet clients? Speak at conferences? What do others at your firm say you do well, better than most? What comes easy for you at the office? What do other attorneys ask you for help with? Have you ever been asked to lead a discussion among those in your office on a given topic? Maybe you've been asked by other attorneys to proofread their writing? There are certain aspects of your job you do better than most, that you enjoy more than most and you gravitate towards, whether willingly or unconsciously. What are you most recognized at work for? Once you've defined what you do well at work, determine what skills you use to do those tasks well. Are you a good writer? Fast thinker? Good on your feet? Persuasive? Charming? Calm under pressure? There are certain skills you have that enable you to flourish at certain aspects of your job. Identify those skills and write them down.

I don't want to know, nor do I care, what at work you're not good at. We play to our strengths, not our weaknesses, and right now we're identifying those strengths. Yes, as lawyers we all need a baseline of skills. But the way we distinguish ourselves as lawyers is identifying and playing to our strengths. There are few lawyers who

are great at every aspect of their job. Your goal is not to be one of those lawyers. Your goal is to be extraordinary in some aspects of your job and good at the rest. That's how you distinguish yourself from the rest of the pack. That's how you maximize your talents and your passions. And quite frankly there aren't enough hours in the day to be great at every aspect of being a lawyer. You may end up achieving it, but you'll find yourself very alone when you do.

## What Have You Received Awards For?

Think back to school. What trophies, awards or certificates did you receive? I'm not asking about participation trophies. I'm not talking about an 8th place award. I'm asking about bigger than life trophies that your parents wondered where the heck are we going to keep that? I'm taking about awards that distinguished you from the rest. Think through elementary school, middle school, high school, college and law school. Any book awards in law school? Any leadership awards? Awards for projects, speeches or volunteer work? How about for athletics? Not just coming in first or second, but awards for teamwork, leadership or attitude? Sometimes, it takes others to recognize skills, traits and talents in you that you ignore. Sometimes others have to point out the obvious to you because you lack confidence to see it in yourself. Go beyond school. How about since becoming an attorney? Any awards? Have you distinguished yourself in a voluntary bar association? Have you received awards for your articles, blogs or books? For your presentations or leadership? Yes, there are too many awards handed out today. But some are quite meaningful and revelatory about who we are, what we're good at and how we can make an impact on others. Write down the awards you've received and look at the list for any patterns. They'll say a lot about your strengths.

## What Aren't You Good At?

Just as you should know what your strengths are, you should know what your weaknesses are. As lawyers, we can't get away with blind spots or a poor skill set. If you're a bad writer, you can't accept that. You have to work at it. You may never become an exceptional writer, but you have to become a good one. There are other skill sets that, depending on your practice, you rarely call upon. For those, you work on them but not overly focus on them. Knowing what you're not good at, what you don't enjoy, what you don't

particularly want to work on is important because you want to avoid practice areas where those talents play a central role. Being a transactional attorney is different from being a litigator. Handling trusts and estates is different from handling regulatory issues in house. Each requires its own set of skills. If what you're lacking is crucial for a given area of law, maybe you shouldn't pursue a career in that area. Of course if you have skills necessary for that area but lack other necessary skills, that's certainly something you can work on. Do an honest assessment of what skills you lack and what amount of time, work and energy will be required to improve them. If you tackle a practice area needing skills you lack, you need to ask yourself if you're committed to working on improving those skills. Remember that you're more motivated to work on skills you're already good at than tackle ones that you are poor at. That's just human nature.

## What Activities Do You Avoid?

What do you avoid? Cocktail receptions? You avoid crowds? Don't like mingling or networking? Volunteering to write an article or speak at a conference? Identify what activities you avoid and then ask yourself why. Maybe you have a good reason to avoid them. Conversely, maybe you're allowing fears, procrastination or laziness get the best of you. Whatever it is, jot down what you avoid and why you avoid it. Maybe you don't give presentations because you're scared to death of speaking in front of a crowd. You have something to say and can say it well, but all those people. That's not a lack of skill set. That's fear, and you need to get over that. Start small at a breakfast gathering, then maybe a lunch reception until you're not in Peoria anymore (yes, a dated reference, but that's my prerogative to use them). There are certain activities you avoid because you simply don't have the skill set to do them. For those, you have to ask yourself how important are those activities to my career, family and life and what's involved to developing the necessary skill set to do them and do them well? What we don't want to do often lines up with the skills we lack, and what we do want to do often lines up with the skill set we have. Therefore, take the time to evaluate what you don't do and why.

## Write It Down

I can't emphasize enough how important is to write all this down, especially your talents. Looking at them in black and white, you can see what practice areas and what aspects of those practice

areas suit you. You're looking to see what matches up between what you do well and what you do. Draw a line down the middle of a page in your journal. Title the left column "Talents" and the right column "What Talents I Need for My Job." On the left, having thought through all the questions I posed in this section, write down your talents. Don't put them down in any particular order. Just write them down. On the right column think about the skills you need to do your job well. Not just the big skills like "good orator" or "good writer," include all that come to mind. Now look at the two columns and see how much overlap there is. The greater the overlap, the more suited you are for the job you have. If there is little or no overlap, don't assume you're at the wrong company or law firm. There may be other practice areas at your firm with which you can get involved. There may be other skills that make up for the ones you lack. However the list looks, there is no cause for alarm. Yes, it is possible you're working at the wrong firm for you. And yes, it's possible you're in the wrong career altogether. But for now, these are only possibilities. You may discover you don't have the skills you believe you lack because fear or laziness is getting in the way of you developing them. There may be other skills your job requires that you have but you don't appreciate how those skills are applicable for the tasks at hand. But this exercise is necessary to make the most of your talents wherever you work. Without self-analysis, we'll never learn what we're meant to do and where we're meant to do it.



# Finding Your Purpose

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## What Do You Think You Should Be Doing with Your Life?

We've talked about your dreams, your passions and your talents. Let's go above these, and look at your life from a larger, grander scale. What do you think you should be doing with your life? Each of us is on this earth for a reason. We all have a purpose. You didn't become a lawyer by accident. Even if ultimately you change careers, you didn't become a lawyer by accident. I don't care what your religious or spiritual background is, what your beliefs are, or how random you think the world is. I'm telling you, I have a purpose, we all have a purpose, and most importantly to you, you have a purpose. This isn't a motivational speech. This is the truth. Look around. Don't take my word for it. Look at family and friends. Look at colleagues. Look at the news and biographies. Aren't you struck by what some of them are doing, by what they are accomplishing, by how they're changing lives? You know that they're fulfilling their purpose, and you're asking yourself, "What's my purpose?" When I ask you about your purpose the question resonates because you've asked yourself that before. We've all asked ourselves this question. Why am I here? What am I supposed to do with my life? What can I change? What will I be remembered for? How will my obituary read? You know you have a purpose because during your life, at least once, but probably multiple times, you've asked yourself, "What am I doing here, on this planet, with the time I have, to do something meaningful?" You have admitted by now that you have dreams, passions and talents. The natural next step is to ask, "What's my purpose?" Let's explore that.

## What Do Those Who Know You Think You Should Be Doing?

I would never suggest adopting someone's purpose as your own and deferring to them about what you should be doing with your life. What I'm recommending is asking yourself what others have told you about what you should be doing, what others think your purpose is. I'm talking about your close friends and family, those who know you, who have grown up with you, who have seen you at your best and worst, and sometimes know you better than you know you. First, did they see you as an attorney? If so, practicing what? Where? Doing what? Using your skills to do what? Saving the world? Saving it how? Have any of them said to you, "Hey, by the way, I totally see you doing X. Why aren't you doing X? Hey so-and-so, come over here, don't you see this person doing X?"

And they're like, "Absolutely, you're perfect for X." Think about the times others have seen your future when it remains blurry to you. Again, I'm not asking you to think about those times your mom insisted on you becoming a doctor or a lawyer because she wanted to brag about you (really, brag about her, and what a great job she did raising you). I'm asking about those moments when you did or said something, something that may have even surprised you when you said or did it, and others said, "You know, you were born to be X." Not to do X. But be X. I'm not talking about a job. I'm not talking even about a career. I'm talking about your destiny. Where who you are and what you do and what you say are all continuous and you can't tell where something ends and another begins. So, getting back to the question—what do those who know you think you should be doing?

## What Big Things Do You Want to Do?

What's on your wish list of things to do that you haven't done yet? I'm not asking about a trip you want to take or a vacation you want to go on. I'm talking about a big accomplishment you have in mind. As a lawyer, do you want to:

- Try a case?
- Try more cases?
- Try certain types of cases?
- Win more cases at trial?
- Argue before an appellate court?
- Argue before the Supreme Court?
- Become managing partner?
- Head a practice group?
- Start your own firm?
- Lead a voluntary bar association?
- Write a book for lawyers? Write several?
- Become a national, go-to speaker?

Go beyond your legal career. What else do you want to accomplish. Do you want to:

- Become a leader for a charity?
- Start your own charity?
- Lead an organization?
- Start your own?



- Start a separate business? A restaurant? A legal support company?
- Turn a hobby into a business—amateur photographer into a professional one?
- Turn a passion into a reality—becoming a high school coach, college referee or start a sports league for lawyers?

Both in your profession and beyond it, what are the bigger than life things you want to do? Start your own magazine? Brew your own beer? Do a documentary with your family? You've thought about this. Don't tell me you haven't. What are these things you've been thinking about?

## What One Dream Do You Want to Chase?

Let's go beyond the big things you want to do. Let's look bigger. Let's put all our cards on the table. What one big dream do



you have? How do you want to change the world? I ask that intentionally. Usually our big dreams aren't selfish. Yes, some of us have a dream of striking it rich. But for many of us, our big dream goes beyond amassing a lot of material goods. It's more than the big house or fancy car. I'm talking about chasing a game changer. What would be called in business as an industry disrupter. Maybe it's a product, or process or an idea that is related to the legal field that will change how we provide legal services, or train associates, or offer CLE or handle disputes between parties. Maybe it's more altruistic and it changes how we view, assist and empower the forgotten members of our community—the homeless, the elderly and the poor. This one big thing that will require all your imagination, heart and effort to make a reality, this potential game changer that no one has thought of or has thought of but failed to conquer it, this one big thing you want to embrace, pursue, wrestle with and subdue—that's your purpose. Affecting change for the benefit of many—that's a life filled and driven by purpose. I know I've asked you repeatedly to write whatever comes to mind down in your journal. But this, this takes time. This takes reflection and meditation. This one big idea has the potential to change the lives of so many. Something like this takes time to germinate in your mind and heart. Take that time. This one thing, if you make it a reality, may live on and be remembered for centuries.

## **Purpose Is Where Your Dreams, Passions and Talents Intersect**

This book can be reduced to the bold title above. If you are searching for your purpose you will find it where your dreams, passions and talents intersect. I cannot say this enough so I will repeat it because it bears repeating—you will find your purpose in life where your dreams, passions and talents intersect. Each of us is imbued with talents, dreams and passions. It is not a coincidence that your talents, dreams and passions overlap. It is not simply by chance that your passions need your talents or that your talents instruct your dreams. If we drew a Venn diagram here, and you drew three circles, that common area where your talents, passions and dreams overlap—that's where your focus should be, that's where you expend your energies, that's where you will find joy, and meaning and fulfillment. Go back through your journal and study the overlaps where you wrote about your dreams, talents and passions. See what talents feed which passions. See what passions direct which dreams. You cannot take too much time to do this exercise.

If you've been honest with yourself, if you've reflected and jotted down what's in your mind and heart, you will see the three pieces of the puzzle—dreams, passions and talents—interlock and everything will become clear to you—perhaps little by little, perhaps all at once, an epiphany of sorts—and you will see your purpose. This exercise is likely to create this aha moment—eureka! This is the career I should be pursuing, this is the legal field I should be tackling, this is how I should be raising my family, this is how I should be affecting change in my firm, my community, my voluntary bar association, my charity. Defining who you are and what you should be doing with your life, that's the precursor to changing you and everything around you for the better. Stay on this page. Reread it again and again. Read through your journal again and again. Where everything intersects—that's where you need to be.

## We All Have a Purpose

To find our purpose we must start with the premise that we all have one. We all have a purpose on this earth. At any given moment on any given day we are where we are to impact someone else's life for the better. That's a big statement and some of you will disregard it, but whether you believe it or not, whether you think our life is simply random loaded with coincidences, I am here to tell you that you are here just as I am here to do more than make a living. We are meant to do more than get up in the morning, shower and brush our teeth and go to work, spend the day at work, come home, watch television and eat dinner, go to sleep and do the exact same thing the next day, the next week, the next decade. We were meant for more than going through the motions. More than simply earning a paycheck. More than following the best new television series. More than comparing notes about the vacation we just came back from or the next one we're planning. I don't care what you do, what you earn, what you have, what you're worth, what your parents did, or whether they were even around, where you grew up, or what schools you attended or what you believe is holding you back from making big things happen in big ways. You have a purpose, and only you can determine what that purpose is, and only you can plan to make that purpose a reality, and only you can do the hard work to achieve that purpose. If you don't believe you have a purpose and I can't convince you otherwise, then you may as well put this book down. It's not for you. But if you want to give me and yourself the benefit of the doubt, keep reading. Because you were meant to do great things. Don't lose sight of that. Believe it, because it's true.

## We All Have a Big, Impactful Purpose

Let's graduate from the truth that we all have a purpose to the truth that we all have a big, impactful purpose. Yes, not only do you have a purpose which is your life's mission to fulfill, but that purpose is no small, inconsequential one. We weren't meant to do little things, to live lives, as Thoreau says, of quiet desperation. Think about your biggest ideas, your "impossible" goals and your greatest desires. Assume you have no limitations—none as it applies to time, resources and energy. You can do anything. Pursue anything. Make anything happen. What do you do? Become a premier trial lawyer? Become the go-to lawyer in a practice field? Become general counsel of a fortune 100 company? Create a process, product or company that becomes a market disrupter and changes how we provide and pay for legal services? Creating your pro bono clinic? Creating programs that cater to those who most need legal services but are least able to pay for it? Maybe your big idea goes beyond the law. Maybe you have an idea for a new start up, new product, novel, non-fiction book or something else entirely. Let your imagination wander, your dreams soar and give this some thought and write down what comes to mind. You were meant to do something bigger than yourself.

## Our Purpose Will Change Others

Our purpose is inherently unselfish. Our purpose isn't directed toward self-aggrandizement. Our purpose isn't to finish the race with the most toys. If you're struggling with defining your purpose, appreciate that it involves raising others up, encouraging and empowering them, and improving their lives. You're serving your clients, your colleagues, your friends and family and your community. We are all social creatures. We don't live on our own personal islands. We weren't meant to only advance our own self interests. Musicians don't create music to simply listen to it themselves. They don't compose and perform simply for the money. They believe their music will improve others' lives, will connect with others and affect them for the better. Those who just do it for the money, you can hear it in the music. There's nothing there to learn or experience or delve into. Whatever big thing you want to create, build, develop, lead or grow, you will see that others, and their needs, will be the starting and ending point of the discussion. Amassing toys is for small people with small minds. Think bigger.



## Plotting Your Purpose

We will discuss later how to plan to achieve your purpose, but for now let me make the point that without a plan you will never achieve your life's purpose. You may discover what it is, you may have the talent and passion to pursue it, but without sitting down and developing a plan to achieve it, you never will. It would be akin to starting a business without a business plan or writing a book without an outline. Knowing what you want to accomplish—reducing your purpose and dreams to goals—is necessary. You can't "win," if you haven't first defined what a "win" looks like. You can't achieve your dreams if you can't reduce those dreams to actual goals. For example, you want to become a fiction writer. What does that look like for you? Writing one novel? Several? Self-publishing? Securing an agent? Securing a multi-book contract with a publisher? What's your goal? So, as you keep reading I will be discussing writing out your goals and developing a plan to achieve them. Where many lose focus or interest is in the planning phase. Developing a plan takes time, patience, imagination, hard work and some external guidance. But you'll get there. More on that later.



## Getting Back to the Gurus

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### **Do You Wonder Why You Follow So Many of Them?**

There are so many motivational speakers on so many different platforms telling you how to be successful. You can search for them on Google, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, on radio, on television, on Amazon—the list is endless. They have books and plans and seminars and conferences all designed to help you do better. I've heard and seen and read my share of their advice. They're great storytellers, they're great speakers and granted, great motivators. For some, their approach works. Many swear by them. But for those who haven't had a life changing response listening to them, why keep chasing them? Perhaps they motivate you for a little while, but without going back to them (over and over), you don't follow through. Perhaps something they say resonates with you, but life gets in the way and you lose the impact of what they said (perhaps forgetting altogether what they said). Regularly going back to motivational speakers and writers for a monthly, weekly or possibly even a daily fix of motivation is probably not the best use of your time (and your money, considering how expensive some of these conferences and retreats are). What they say sounds great. And you want to go back to keep hearing it, but at some point you need to move beyond external motivators to internal motivators. If these folks aren't helping you develop your own motivators, ever reliant on their motivational saying or speech of the day, then you're not growing toward achieving your life's purpose. If you're going the motivational speaker/writer route, do it in moderation and develop your own motivators to become less reliant on what others say to motivate you.

### **Why Have You Read So Many of Their Books?**

If you've read a lot of motivational books, you're not alone. So have I. I don't remember most of what I've read in them. Mostly stories and anecdotes of others beating the odds, often later in their life well after most of us would have thrown in the towel, and reaching the pinnacle in something—acting, music, business, athletics. So many stories of so many people with not enough talent, money or connections achieving big dreams. The fact that others beat the odds is heartwarming but doesn't get you very far when you are trying to do the same. You want all these books summarized in a sentence? Others did it, others who had less than you, and therefore you can do it too. You're not interested in the



fact that others made it with less. You're interested in how they did. Invariably, they had a plan and pursued it wholeheartedly, to achieve their goals. If you want to read "motivational books," read books by other lawyers who made it to the top of their profession and explain how they did it. If you want to be a novelist, read how to books by successful novelists. If you want to lead an organization, read books by CEOs and coaches and religious leaders who have led companies, teams and houses of worship and read how they did it. If you love reading about the underdog, read about underdogs who pursued the same dreams you want to pursue and focus on their plain and their actions on achieving what they achieved.

## No One Can Tell You Who You Are Other than You

The problem with chasing gurus is that only you know who you are. Only you can figure out what your purpose is. Only you can identify your talents and develop them. Only you can identify your passions and use them to motivate you. Only you know what will get you out of bed earlier, or get you to turn off the television or stop procrastinating. The purpose of this book is to have you reflect on you. Study you. Investigate you. The journaling aids you in figuring out what you should be doing with your life because only you can figure that out. You can get thoughts and advice from others, including family and friends, but at the end of the day it's up to you to decide who you are and where you need to go and what you need to do to get there. Maybe you have issues to work out. If so, get help. Maybe you have addictions you struggle with. If so, get help. Maybe there are obstacles or challenges you need to tackle. If so, get help and tackle them. You need to work on you and you need to figure you out and you need to do the work to get from A to B, to get from where you are to where you want to be. Gurus can't help you with all this. That's on you. It's a journey you need to take. It's not easy, but it's necessary. You need to do this.

## Only You Can Figure Out Your Dreams, Passions and Talents

As you work your way through the exercises in this book, where you analyze your dreams, passions and talents and write them down and reflect upon them, you realize that only you can figure out your role as a lawyer, as a spouse, as a parent, as a friend and

as a colleague. Only you can come to understand what you should do with your life and what tools and motivators you have to make it happen. Self-discovery begins with you, asking yourself a lot of personal questions, requiring honesty and self-critical analysis. Maybe you don't have the skill set you believe you have. Maybe you're not passionate about the work you're doing and likely never will be. Maybe what you're destined to do requires risks you don't want to take. Perhaps you're afraid others will mock your dreams. The path we should take is not an easy one. It involves hard work, sacrifices, risks and temporary failures. You may figure out what you should be doing and decide it's not worth doing. You may come to terms with your purpose and choose not to pursue it. These are decisions each of us has to make for ourselves and only each of us can figure out the road we should follow and decide whether the sacrifices that come with it are worth it. We are all meant to do big things. It's up to each of us to discover what those big things are and commit to pursue them, or choose not to. There are consequences to not pursuing our purpose, never fulfilling our potential, but you don't need me to tell you that.

## Only You Can Plot a Course to Fulfill Your Dreams

Once you know where you have to go in life, you have to plot a course to get there. You can ask others for advice, you can read how others achieved similar dreams, you can seek all the input you want, but ultimately you get to decide how you're going to chase your dreams. You know you. If you're honest with yourself, you know what you can do, how to do it and how to motivate yourself to do it. Each of us is unique. We each have had our set of successes and failures, joys and tragedies, accomplishments and missed opportunities, goals and dreams. There are billions of people on this earth, but there is only one you. Your road is different from everyone else's. Where you're going and what you're supposed to accomplish is different from everyone else. Only you were meant to live your dreams and fulfill your purpose. Only you can plot a course to get there. No one can tell you what to do with your life. No one has a right to. It's yours. Figure out what you should do with it and do it.





# Self-Motivation

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## We Need Motivation to Do the Things We Don't Want to Do

Each of us has things we prefer not to do and we need motivation to do them. Some of us don't enjoy exercising. We haven't done it in a while or don't do it regularly. We seek out workout partners, group classes and trainers to encourage and motivate us. Each of us has tasks or projects we would rather not do. If you're at a law firm or legal department where they're making the most of your talents and you're practicing in an area that you enjoy and find rewarding, you don't need motivation to go to work, roll up your sleeves and tackle the tasks at hand. If this isn't your experience, then you need to explore what aspects of your job motivate you and spend more time focusing on those aspects. Maybe there are cases you're currently not handling that you would enjoy working on. Maybe a different practice group in the firm would be a better fit for both you and your firm. We do what we enjoy. We avoid what we don't. We don't need others to encourage us to do what we want. We need them to encourage us when we're at the wrong job, or handling the wrong cases. I understand with the present economy and the legal market being what it is, sometimes we have to take jobs we would rather not take to pay students loans and our other bills. But you must always be focused on seeking out work that aligns with your skills or passions. If you do, you won't need much, if any, external motivators.

## No One Needs to Tell Us to Do What We Enjoy

The flipside of needing motivation to do the things we prefer not to, is that we rarely need motivation to do the things we want to do. No one needs to tell us, "go read that new bestseller you've been waiting to be released," or "go write that article on that topic you love." The more motivation we need to do something the less likely it is aligned with our talents, passions and dreams. The less motivation we need, the more likely it is aligned with them. Seek out what you truly enjoy and you'll find less of a need (if any) to keep following motivators. At your job, chase the cases for which you have an aptitude and positive attitude. At your job, position yourself to work with the partners and practice groups who handle matters that highlight your talents and that you would enjoy tackling. It takes a lot of energy to make yourself do something you don't want to do. Why not direct that energy toward doing something you enjoy? The more you can direct

your time, resources and efforts to doing what you love, the less external motivators you'll need. The motivation will bubble up inside you like a wellspring.

## **No One Needs to Light a Fire Under Us to Chase Our Dreams**

We naturally want to chase our dreams and make them a reality. I think what stops most of us from doing so isn't a lack of motivation but a lack of knowledge of how to do so. We hear that some dreamers don't have the work ethic and don't want to make the sacrifices to make their dreams a reality. That's true for some, but for many it's not a lack of will but a lack of understanding how to transform their dreams into reality. Dreams have to be reduced to goals and a plan must be developed to fulfill those goals. This process is foreign to many and because it is, many dreams remain just that—dreams. Motivation isn't the issue. Planning is the issue. If folks are given the tools to pursue their dreams, many will do so. Yes, some, even if given the tools to chase their dreams, won't. But for most of us, motivation isn't what is keeping us from chasing out dreams. Target your dreams, and motivation will follow. Target someone else's dreams, someone else's life, and you'll never get your fill of external motivation.

## **If You're Chasing the Gurus, You're Seeking Their Help for the Wrong Things**

If you're chasing gurus, ask yourself, "Why?" Is it for motivation? Do you need someone to kick your proverbial rear end to do something? Is it because you don't really want to do that something and need someone to push and cajole you into doing it? If you need someone to make you do something you don't want to do, should you really pursue it? Let's put exercise and dieting aside, because granted, many of us hate to do both and simply because we hate it doesn't mean we should avoid doing them. We all need to get exercise and eat well, and I'll be the first to admit these things aren't easy to do, and motivation helps to do them. But let's move beyond maintaining our personal health and the obstacles to doing so. Let's talk about the dreams we want to accomplish (having a healthy lifestyle is something we should all do, and unless you're training for a marathon or Mr. Universe, it's not a "dream" you're pursuing). For chasing and fulfilling our purpose, we don't need gurus to cheer us on. If you need them to help you keep in

shape, I get it. But you likely don't need them to encourage you to chase your goals for your career, family and community. If you want to follow them, see what they say about defining goals, devising a plan to pursue them and implementing the plan. This process is something we can all use help with and to the extent the gurus can help you with it then yes, do chase them. Make sure you're seeking their help with the things you really need help with and not motivation for chasing someone else's dreams.

## **Start with Your Purpose and Motivation Will Follow**

For those who focus on the wrong goals for themselves, motivation does not come easy. They are chasing a dream that is not theirs and need someone else's motivation to help them achieve it. There are many who actually achieve greatness but achieve someone else's greatness and are left to wonder how they got there. For those keeping up with the Joneses, for those chasing a shadow of the "American Dream" heavy on accumulation and light on giving, those goals can be achieved but the destination is not what was meant for them. But for those of us who start with our purpose, start by taking the time to reflect upon why we are here and what we are meant to do with the large and small moments of our life, crystallizing for ourselves what a life well lived looks like for us, the motivation soon follows. Discover your purpose and unleash your motivation. Embrace your purpose and you will find the time, energy and resources to pursue it. Many of us chase after motivation first. Identify your purpose first and you won't have to seek out motivation.

## **Lack of Motivation Is a Strong Indicator that You're Chasing Someone Else's Dreams**

Are there any goals you're working towards now and have little if any motivation to pursue? Again, putting aside health related goals (which we should all pursue and for which many of us lack motivation), are there career or life goals that you set for yourself and you've struggled to pursue them—struggled to find the energy or time or effort? Let's say you have a plan to become the go-to lawyer in a niche practice area. You start strong but your interest soon fizzles out. You need to ask yourself whether you really thought through pursuing this practice area. Did you pursue

it because you were excited about becoming an expert in that area or did you do it because others were doing it? It was the new hot area and why not jump on the train? And of course, from everything you've read and heard, it's so lucrative. So why not pursue it? There are attorneys who are a good fit for that practice area, but you may not be one of them, not because you're not smart or hard working, but because you simply can't get excited about it. There are some attorneys meant to do insurance coverage. That may not include you. There are some attorneys meant to defend product liability cases. That may not be you. If you're pursuing a practice area for the wrong reasons, for reasons that have little or nothing to do with your talents and passions, you're probably not going to succeed, and even if you do, you're not likely to derive much pleasure from succeeding. If you need regular motivation to chase your dreams, you may be chasing someone else's.

## Let Your Passions Motivate You

Study your list of passions. They are motivators. They will get you off your butt, they will help you focus and they will be the engine that drives you. Do you love being a mentor? You can mentor other lawyers or law students and use your passion not only to help them but to build your brand as someone who understand the practice of law and can teach others about it, and in doing so, is well suited to represent clients, who knows how to serve their needs. You love being the center of attention, love having the spotlight on you but you don't get to try many, if any, cases (with fewer and fewer trials, that's true for most litigators these days) where you get to shine and be in the middle of it all. How about public speaking? More to the point, speaking on issues relevant to your practice area, where other attorneys who can refer you cases can listen to you and see for themselves that you're a go-to lawyer who can handle their matters. Passions can open our eyes to opportunities that others don't see. You love writing science fiction. How can you direct that passion in your legal practice? Where the practice of law is going and what it will look like a few years from now (even a few months from now) sounds a lot like sci-fi. What if you blogged about existing and coming legal trends and interspersed science fiction vignettes into your discussion about the evolution of the practice and how companies and firms can prepare for it and better use existing and upcoming technology? You can exploit your passion for writing science fiction where storytelling and the future of the practice intersect. There is even a name for such folks—they're called legal futurists and they're in high demand both for speaking

engagements (where you can meet and develop relationships with referral sources) and for writing. And if this example seems too farfetched, let me tell you that I love writing science fiction and had some of my short stories published in legal publications and one of my future projects is a book about where science fiction and the law have and will intersect. Play to your passions and let them motivate you.

## Let Your Dreams Motivate You

Just as you should let your passions motivate you, let your dreams motivate you. Go through your list of dreams you jotted down and how they've evolved since you were a child. What dreams are you still hanging on to and which ones had you forgotten about or ignored and want to revive? Doing something big, creating something of your own, starting over, making a splash—that's exciting. Those sort of things keep your mind moving and your heart pumping. You don't need coffee to pursue your dreams—the adrenaline is built into them. Think about how excited you get thinking or talking about them, planning to achieve them, working toward them. If you identify your dreams, and you are certain they are yours and not someone else's, and that by pursuing them you're pursuing your purpose, then you won't need external motivators to chase them down. Dreams are inherently inspirational. Draw your inspiration and motivation from them.

## The Values of a Self-Motivator

Once you know the goals you're aiming for, because you've sat down with your journal and jotted everything down and thought everything through, you'll be motivated to achieve them. When it comes to self-motivation, keep the following values at the forefront of your mind and everything you do:

- You're autonomous. You prefer to make your own plans and pursue them on your own terms. You're your own motivator.
- You're creative. You're focused on accomplishing the goals you set out for yourself, so when one door closes you look for the nearest window.
- You believe in hard work. You understand identifying your goals and planning to achieve them is only the start. Executing that plan is hard work and you're up for it.



- You don't accept "No" as an answer. You have an idea, you pitch it, you get turned down, and you ask again. Or you ask others. Or you tweak your ask. Failure is not an option.
- You have character and integrity. You understand there are rules, you play within the confines of those rules and you make your living within those confines.
- And of course, you're responsible. You're responsible for yourself, your job and your family. You don't blame others or situations when things go awry. You don't blame others for your failures and you don't put your success in others' hands. You don't need someone else to tell you what to do, what to think or what to pursue. You're responsible for your own life and you direct it where it should go.

This is what it takes and these are the values that will sustain you. Hold onto them. You will need them.

## The Paradigm of a Self-Motivator

How you see the world affects how you interact with it. If your paradigm is that you need others to motivate you, then you're dependent on them. You can't accomplish anything without them. If you need direction or advice, you're looking toward them. But

what if you shifted your paradigm from looking toward others to looking at yourself? What do you want? What are your plans to get it? What do you have to do to get from A to B? Self-motivation is taking responsibility for fulfilling your purpose in life. You have a purpose, it's big and important and will help others, and it's up to you to define it, plan to achieve it and pursue it. That's on you. You need motivation? Draw it from that. Draw it from pursuing your purpose, because both the journey and destination will provide you joy and fulfillment. Where others see the mountain and refrain from climbing, you assume the challenge. You understand that it involves time and sacrifice, obstacles and setbacks, and that there will be failures along the way. And you understand that each of us was meant for greatness, and that you don't pick your destiny but that it's already picked you, waiting on you to figure that out and pursue it. Most folks don't believe they have a destiny. You do and you know it's waiting for you. That's the paradigm of a self-motivator.



# Don't Settle for Being a Dreamer

## Dreams Don't Become Reality on Their Own

Having dreams is just the beginning. They require a plan to make them a reality and the plan needs your hard work hard to succeed. Everyone has a product they want to patent. Everyone has a get rich quick scheme. Everyone is a “entrepreneur.” But when it comes to the planning and the hard work, when it comes to taking risks and tackling challenges, most folks aren't up to it. They are spectators. They are not the ones in the arena. Consider dreams to be both the beginning and end of a race. Dreams are the beginning, because that's what you start out with. You start with what your dreams are—identifying them and writing them down. That's the starting gate. That's where the pistol goes off. Many folks start the race. But for most, it ends there. They don't see the finish line, where the dream is fulfilled. They don't put in the time, planning, energy and resources to finish the race, where their dreams are waiting for them. Dreams have a starting point and an ending point. Most step up to the starting line. Some even run a bit but most walk away. Your dreams won't happen on their own. You need to make them a reality.

## Dreams Require a Plan

You don't settle on a dream one day and go chasing after it the next. The dream is the end point. Between here and there, there is a lot to do and you need to figure out what needs to be done, how and when. All this requires a plan. You need to set goals for yourself and create a plan to achieve those goals. You want to be a leading attorney on cyber security? That's not going to happen overnight. You'll need to master the law in the area, write on the topic, present and speak on the topic, lead organizations that address the topic, represent clients with matters in the area, win cases in the areas and overall develop a reputation as the go-to lawyer in the area. To do all this requires a plan where you spell out your goals and the steps you will take to achieve them. You set out a proposed calendar for yourself and find an accountability partner to keep you focused and on task. You said you would give yourself three months to read X to learn the practice area. How is that going? How far along are you in completing the task of learning the law in the area? So you've tackled this aspect and you're next short term goal was to write a column on the topic for a trade magazine? How is that going? You need a plan, you need to set benchmarks, you need to create deadlines for yourself for achieving those benchmarks and you need to be prepared for any



obstacles or setbacks along the way. Your dreams simply don't become a reality without a plan.

## Dreams Require Work

Dreams require work, a lot of it, to make them a reality. The bigger the dream, the more the work. The higher the goals you set for yourself, the higher the climb. Becoming a partner is a lot of work. Becoming a practice chair takes more work. Becoming managing partner takes even more work. Becoming a top rainmaker is even more work. There are no shortcuts. This book isn't about shortcuts. There are no get rich quick schemes. You have a dream, you develop a plan to achieve the dream and you work hard to accomplish the plan. That's it. What I have to say isn't novel nor revolutionary. In fact, I'm probably just confirming what you've already heard and what you already know. This book is for those who are willing to put in the hard work but don't quite know what hard work to do. They'll put in the time and the long hours but want to make sure they're not spinning their wheels or running in several different directions all at once. They're willing to work hard. They just want to make sure they're working smart. It's saying the obvious but it must be said nonetheless—working hard is a prerequisite to accomplishing any dream. Anything worth pursuing takes work.

## Dreams Require Sacrifice

If you're pursuing your dreams, you're not setting your alarm for 8 am, or even 7 am. Try 6 am or even 5:30 am. If you're working toward your dreams, you're not binge watching the new series on Netflix. If you're doing the work your dreams require, you're playing fewer rounds of golf or attending fewer sporting events or reading fewer novels. There are only so many hours of the day, so every hour you spend on your dreams is an hour that has to come from somewhere else. You need to work, you need to eat, you need to exercise and you need to sleep. Not many hours left. So that favorite television show may become a casualty. Carousing with friends may have to be reined in. Happy hours may have to be reduced (unless you're doing them for networking and business development reasons). Just as dieting requires us to cut back on desserts and exercise regimes require us to sweat and push ourselves physically, chasing a dream requires us to say no to other things so we can say yes to pursuing it. My television died in our living room. We decided not to replace it. Without the distraction,

I've had the time to write much more, which is my dream. Find the time wasters in your life and choose your dreams over them.

## Dreams Require Self-Motivation

We've already talked about this (in fact, we've talked about it a lot), but heck, let's talk about it some more. No one is better at motivating you to chase your dreams, which are personal to you, than you. You know why they're important to you. You know what they mean to you. You know why you're pursuing them. You know what's at stake if you don't achieve them. No one else can tell you what happens if you make them come true or what happens if you don't. You know what gets you up, gets your blood pumping, your mind racing, puts a smile on your face and makes you fight and charge the hill. You know all this. Look inside, find your voice and let it scream in your ear that it's time to get up and get to work. Sir, yes sir.

## It's Up to You Whether Your Dreams Become a Reality

No one can make your dreams come true except you. They're your dreams. Own them. Embrace them. Live them. No one else can put flesh and bone on your dreams. Everyone else has their own dreams to pursue. They neither have the time, will nor desire to help you pursue yours. You're on your own on this one. That can be overwhelming, but it's also exhilarating. Think about it. You have a dream. You have a plan to achieve. You pursue it. You achieve it. How cool is that? When I volunteer for a bar association, such as the DRI for example, I propose a new idea, something the organization hasn't done before, possibly something no bar association has done before. I explain the idea to the leadership, propose a plan to bring the idea to fruition and then I take it upon myself to make it a reality. Those are the three simple steps - idea, plan and hard work. Turning an idea into reality is a lot of fun. And when it's done, you can look at it and say, from nothing came something, and I was a part of that, and if I could do that, I can tackle an even bigger project, an even larger dream. But making this happen depends on you. Yes, depending on the project, you may get help, you may need help. Yes, it may require a team to accomplish it. But making your dreams come true, the idea, the planning, the motivation, the momentum—that's on you.



# Reality Check

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## Most Don't Care About Your Dreams

You know what most people think about your dreams? Nothing. They don't care. They have their own problems and concerns, their own worries and obligations, and could care less about your dreams. You talk to them about your purpose and destiny and they politely listen and seek out the first opportunity to change the subject. They'd rather talk about the news, or sports or the hot new show that premiered last night. If you're looking for affirmation, don't bother. If you're wanting others to cheer you on, you're probably not going to get it. Actually, many will scratch your heads about your dreams, and your plans and what you're doing to achieve the, because many folks don't think that way and the idea of pursuing one's dreams is alien to them. Sure, they want to do well at work, they want promotions, they want to be valued. But pursuing big ideas? Many folks don't think in those terms and are confused, even taken back a little, when others do. It can come across like one of those self-help gurus we've been discussing. It doesn't seem genuine because from their view, who actually thinks that way? Who defines their dreams and plots a course to make them a reality? So don't be surprised when others don't want to hear about your dreams. That's just the way it is.

## Many Want to See You Fail

Not only do others not want to hear about your dreams, some of them actually want you to fail. Yes, they want you to fail. The way they see it, the more you achieve, the less it appears they have achieved by comparison. They don't want to do the hard work, so they're envious when others do and make something of themselves. They don't have their own dreams, or if they do, they lack the initiative, effort and work ethic to pursue them, so they cringe when others achieve what they only dream of achieving. They don't appreciate that each of us has our own destiny, and wasting time tearing others down prevents them from fulfilling their purpose. It also creates a frame of mind where energies better spent building themselves up are wasted on tearing others down. We only have so much time, energy and effort to make our dreams a reality. These folks would prefer to use those precious resources on wishing ill to others. Therefore, be careful with whom you share your aspirations. They may be praying for you to fail.

## Most Don't Want to Hear Your Plan

To transform dreams into reality you need a plan. The bigger the dream, the more moving parts the plan has. You'd be tempted to share your plan, and all its minute details with others, partially so you can hear how it out sounds out loud, partially to seek others' input and partially to get a pat on your back. The fact is most don't want to hear about your dreams and could care even less about your plans for achieving them. Plans take time to create and because they can involve so many issues can take a long time to explain. You could monopolize lunch conversations talking about it, so don't. Just don't. If you need someone's feedback, pick wisely. Include your spouse, a close friend, maybe someone from work. But keep your advisory board small and do the heavy lifting when creating your plan so you don't come to them with every little detail. There's a lot of planning and thought in developing and executing a plan. Most of that is on you.

## Don't Look for Encouragement from Others

You have to be your own cheerleader. Everybody enjoys the occasional congratulations, but don't seek it out. It's great to have an encouraging spouse, family and friends. You yourself should go out of the way to encourage others, having experienced firsthand the level of dedication required to work toward your dreams. But don't ask others for it. You need to be self-sufficient when it comes to encouragement. It's your vision. Your plan. Your process. It needs to be your words playing in your head that you've got this, that any setbacks or failures are temporary, and that you're going to proceed forward hell or high water. Pursuing your destiny can be very lonely. It can be very discouraging. But if you believe in the mission and believe in your heart of hearts that you're pursuing what you were put on this earth to do, you can draw encouragement from that. And what's the alternative? Give in? Throw in the towel? To what end? To continue with the daily slog without an end in sight, without an alternative where you win and everyone lives happily ever after, fade to black and roll the credits? We're all looking for that joyous ending. There's going to be bumps on the way there. Press forward and don't look back.

## **In Fact, Don't Share What You're Doing with Others**

Trust me—your life will be easier and less stressful if you keep your dreams, plans and efforts to yourself (with the exception of close loved ones). Most don't care. Many will offer criticism. Many will offer unsolicited advice, which generally is unhelpful, and will get annoyed when you don't follow it. Many will play down your accomplishments, talk about their own or simply patronize you. I only let folks know after I've accomplished what I set out to accomplish. I'm going to write a book? It's need-to-know and it's not until after it's published that I talk about it. At that point you've done what you've set out to do, you fulfilled your goal, and there's little unwarranted criticism or advice that others can share with you because you did it and you're moving onto the next project. I wish people didn't behave this way, but too many do, and you're not the one who's going to change them. Keep your plans to yourself until you fulfill them.

## **Don't Discuss It on Social Media**

It's one thing to share your plans with your close family and friends. It's quite the other to share it with everyone on social media. Some use social media as a source of encouragement, sharing with others their plans and achievements. Don't do that. Many folks don't want to hear about your plans and most quickly tire of congratulating you. Understand that social media is not the equivalent of deep, personal relationships nor should it be a substitute for them. Social media allows us to keep up with more people with less effort, and it can feel at times all too real, all too personal. But it isn't. It'll never substitute sitting down with others over a meal or a cup of coffee. And because of that, you're not going to get what you're looking for on social media. You can always lend others a word of encouragement, let them know you're thinking of them, but don't be that person who seeks that encouragement on social media. You're going to get a whole lot of silence and some negative comments and little of what you really need.

## **Just Do It Quietly**

Go about your business quietly. Don't brag. Don't over share. Don't take the opportunity when others ask you how it's going or how your weekend was to go on and on about your plans and dreams.

Whatever you do, be humble and keep it to yourself. Most folks prefer banal conversation about the weather, television, movies or music. Talking about your big ideas and dreams often isn't received well. It should be. We should all be sharing with one another our plans and encouraging each other to achieve them. But that's not how the world works. There are just too many people who don't care, are too busy or too self-centered to listen patiently and give valuable feedback. So you're better off going about your business, pursuing your dreams and keeping silent about it.

## Seek Advice Judiciously

Opinions are, as they say, like noses, everyone has one. Everyone you share your dreams with will have an opinion. Some will be skeptical, and encourage you to abandon them. Others will be supportive, but will offer unsolicited advice that doesn't fit with your plans. As we discussed earlier, we're all unique, each with our own special gifts and our own distinct destiny. And we all see the world through the prism of our life experiences, our talents and our own plans and dreams. So when you reach out to others, they're invariably going to offer advice through their own paradigm, not yours. They are going to see the world differently than you. Most folks give advice from their own vantage point and, accordingly, that advice may be what's best for them but not for you. And it's hard to encapsulate what you're setting out to do and why in a conversation to others' when asking for their advice. There is too much nuance and too many details to provide others a complete picture (which they need to limit their own perspectives and biases when offering advice) in any conversation. So be thoughtful about who you ask for advice and the type of advice you seek. It may be good advice generally, but it may be terrible advice for you.



# Where Talents and Passions Intersect

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## Find Common Ground Between Your Talents and Passions

You've written down your talents. You've written down your passions. See where the two intersect. See where there is common ground between them. You'll find much overlap between your talents and passions. You have the talents you have to serve your passions. You have the passions you have to direct your talents. There are no coincidences here. There is no coincidence that you have oratory talents and you're passionate about being a trial lawyer. It's not dumb luck that you're a great storyteller and you love to write. You will always find a nexus between what you're good at and what you're passionate about. It may not be a perfect nexus and there may not be complete overlap, but there is a strong relationship between the two that cannot be denied and that must be mined to advance our goals and dreams. I'm not sure which came first—a bit of a chicken and egg scenario—do we start out with talents that fuel our imaginations or do we have passions that hone in on our talents that can advance those passions? Whichever it is, there is a nexus there.

## What Have You Done Where They Intersected?

Write down a list of activities you have done where your talents and passions have intersected. Don't limit the list simply to work activities. Include hobbies, volunteer work, community involvement, serving on boards, etc. Where they've intersected before is a good indicator of where they can intersect in the future. If you're a natural leader and have maximized this skill at your house of worship or local charity, you can do the same at your firm or voluntary bar association. If you're exceptional at the sciences and assist your kids with their chemistry homework, you may be a perfect fit for a drug & medical device practice group. Not many lawyers love the life sciences. That's why they're lawyers and not doctors. So think about each time you've done something where you were both great at it and loved doing it. Jot those circumstances down. Maybe it was organizing a gala or a conference, or rolling out a new initiative at work or at a charity, or starting a pro bono service or directing a high school play. Maybe you took up your long lost love of art, music or theater? Often, what we love outside of work can benefit us at work. Helping a struggling ballet troupe can put us in touch with business folks who



support the arts and need legal counsel for their companies. Study the intersection points—there's often overlap with your career.

## What Can You Do to Ensure that They Intersect?

Sometimes talents and passions intersect without much foresight or effort from you. More likely, you need to sit down, list your talents in one column, your passions in another, and reflect on where you can make them come together, feed off one another and use them in a complimentary fashion to help you achieve favorable outcomes. At work, look for opportunities to represent clients, handle cases and tackle tasks that play to your strengths and for which you are passionate. If you love medical issues, you'll likely enjoy personal injury or product matters involving personal injuries. You get to depose doctors and experts in their fields through a forensic lens. I knew an attorney who worked at a large firm and his sole role was to depose doctors in tobacco litigation matters. That's not my dream, but he loved it. If you're doing what you love and you're good at it, you'll do it well and you will add value to your firm or corporate law department. Your boss, if she's a good leader, wants that for you, wants to make reasonable accommodations to make that happen, because if you're doing



this, you're not only benefitting yourself but the firm or company, and you're providing the best value for her and for everyone else.

## Where at Your Job Do They Intersect?

Make a list of tasks at work where your talents and passions intersect. If you love writing, maybe you can focus on preparing the memoranda and briefs on your firm's cases and let others handle other aspects. This division of labor works best at larger firms where several attorneys are assigned to the same matter. Research and writing attorneys may need to look at larger firms which handle larger cases which have specific attorneys assigned to handle the research and writing. Conversely, if you're great at taking depositions and are passionate about pinning witnesses down and extracting favorable admissions, that could become your niche at a firm. Of course, you should learn to handle a case from soup to nuts, including trial, and whatever your preference, you should make yourself handle all aspects of cases, even those you don't enjoy (who likes answering discovery, right?). But there may be opportunities at your firm to spend more time handling a specific aspect of litigation, and if you have that opportunity, and neither you nor the firm pigeon hole you into that narrow window of activity, then consider pursuing it. It will highlight your strengths and will benefit the firm and its clients. Preferably, you can identify types of cases that suit your repertoire of skills and passions and handle those matters.

## Where in Your Personal Life Do They Intersect?

Our focus on our talents and passions need to go beyond their application at work. How do they apply at home? How do they apply in your interactions with your spouse and kids? With your friends? At your house of worship? You're a great storyteller. Do you tell your kids bed time stories you make from whole cloth? Do you make them the protagonists and get them to help tell the story, training them to become storytellers too? Do you have the skills to help your spouse's dreams become a reality? Are there hobbies you do together as a family, where your family gets to share their talents and passions? We don't have talents and passions simply to advance our career. We have them to support our family, to help spouses and kids achieve their dreams, to give back to our community, to serve our family, friends and neighbors. We have

talents and passions not simply to serve our personal needs, but to serve others. Not simply to advance our careers, but to help others with theirs and their needs. So as much as you focus on maximizing your talents and passions at work, do the same at home.

## Ask a Spouse or Close Friend Where They See Them Intersect

Sometimes we're too close to things. We see the trees but not the forest. We don't see our destiny because we don't see where our talents and passions naturally intersect. Sometimes others see what we don't. Ask your spouse and your close friends where they see the intersection points, where they see you doing what you're best suited for. They can answer the following questions for you: When are you happiest? Most focused? What do you discuss frequently? What gets your attention? What are you good at? Where do you make the most impact? When are you in a groove? They see first-hand your strengths and weaknesses, and see where, when and how you use your strengths and when those strengths are interwoven with your passions. Sometimes those closest to you are not the most objective, but they have the most experience seeing what you do and what makes you joyful and can open your eyes to what you should be doing (or doing more of).



# Developing Your Talents

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## Talents Must Be Fed

Talent isn't enough. You need to work on them. You need to feed them. My sons are gifted musicians. They don't have to practice as much as others to attain the same level of musicianship. They do, however, have to practice. Not as much practice, but practice nonetheless. Professional athletes may be natural athletes but that doesn't mean they don't spend hours in the gym every morning and the field or court every day improving those talents. They were born to play professional sports—that was their destiny—but they sacrificed a lot to get there. Talent, for them, was not enough. Let's say, you're a natural public speaker. You love the attention, you love the crowds, you love feeding off their energy, improvising. Being satisfied with the same old opening lines and anecdotes and jokes and the same delivery won't get you far though. You'll want to watch other speakers give presentations and see what you respond to as an audience member and what you don't. You'll want to read books on public speaking. You may take the time and join the local Toastmasters. Simply relying on your talent makes you a good public speaker. Developing your talents will make you a great one. No matter what your talents, provide them the proper care and feeding.

## Explore the Scope of Your Talents

How talented are you? Really, how broad and deep are your talents? Find the right setting and put your talents to the test. Don't explore the scope of your talents on a case or working with a client. Find something where little if nothing is at stake but which requires you to use your talents, and see just how talented you are. Let's take an example. Let's say you're a good writer, and to put a finer point on it, you're a good non-fiction writer. You write articles for legal publications and even have ventured to write a book on a legal subject or practice area. The articles, and especially the book, took longer than expected. You doubted your writing talents and vacillated on the subject areas you were writing about. You kept redoing the lead and the conclusion and all in all, it took longer than expected and the final product, though strong, wasn't, in your opinion, strong enough. What happened? You second guessed yourself throughout the process, and the final piece wasn't so much you as it was what you thought others wanted it to be. In effect, you sabotaged your own talents. So let's start over. You're a good writer. Others have told you so (not just your spouse or friends). If you're honest with yourself and not

being overly humble, you know you're a good writer. So, let's do this. You're going to write a 1000 word article over two nights at home. You're on a self-imposed deadline and you have to do the best you can in 3 to 4 hours. What happens? I bet what happens is that you write a pretty darn good article and discover you can turn around a piece in short order. And suddenly you have some clues about just how good a writer you are. And you have the added benefit of knowing you can turn around articles on short notice, which opens up new opportunities for you to get published.

I have an exercise I do. I give myself 30 days to write a book (which I work on in the evenings and on the weekends). I don't even start with a topic in mind. I just start with a 30 day deadline. And then I do it. I've written several books (including this one) with this arbitrary self-imposed deadline. I've tested the scope of my writing talents (and in the process, matured those talents), and now, intuitively, know what I can and can't do as a writer. Push your talents to the failure point and see what amazing things you can do. You'll never know just how good you are at something until you've tested the hypothesis that you are, in fact, quite good at it.

## Seek Out Opportunities to Use Your Talents

Whether at work, at home, or while volunteering, seek out new opportunities to use your talents for the benefit of others. Maybe you're a natural leader or a natural manager. Maybe you're natural at planning events, developing business plans, marketing or fundraising. When opportunities present themselves (or you search them out), ask yourself, "Do my talents fit the need, and if so, how?" "How does this situation make the most of my talents, and how can I use them to help others in this set of circumstances?" You may have non-traditional talents requiring you to seek out nontraditional opportunities to use them. Or you may have traditional ones which may serve you and others in non-traditional settings. What cases at work make the most of your talents? Which voluntary organizations? Which activities? Which projects? For example, when getting involved in an organization, find what activities they do that most suit your talents, and volunteer for those activities. If you're a great writer, write for or edit their publications. If you're very thoughtful and logical, help them with their strategic planning. If you're empathic and a good listener, assist with their new membership drive. If you do what you're good at, you will be maximizing your talents for the good of the organization.

## Use Your Talents in the Office

There's a regular debate among professionals—do you play to your strengths or do you work on your weaknesses? Of course, you should do both. The better question is how much time and energy should you devote to one over the other? As lawyers, we wear a lot of hats and are called upon to handle a variety of issues, matters and concerns. You can't simply do one aspect of your job and ignore the others. Even if we have a specialty, we're still utility players juggling several tasks at once. So yes, take the time to work on your weaknesses, but take more time to play to your strengths. Seek out opportunities on your cases to tackle issues and tasks that highlight and make the most of your strengths. Seek out practice groups or cases that call out for your strengths. Yes, there will be aspects of those cases that will require skill sets you need to improve. But, hopefully, there are large swaths of work to be done in those cases for which you are well suited. Doing high quality, distinctive work is what the client and your firm wants, so seek out opportunities whether handling a case or volunteering for a specific project on a case to do so.

## Use Your Talents in Voluntary Bar Associations

Applying your talents in a voluntary bar association is easy. Since it's volunteer based, no one makes you do anything. You get to volunteer for what best suits your talents. You don't have to write if you don't want to. You don't have to speak if you don't want to. You don't have to fundraise if you don't want to. You can look at an organization, study what they do and what they offer their members, and choose those activities that highlight your talents. When I volunteer for organizations I seek out two opportunities—opportunities to write and opportunities to lead. I love writing and I love developing a vision and a plan and implementing them. So I write articles and books and edit publications and I propose projects and plans to make them a reality (and then do the work I decided needed to be done). There are certain things I'm not good at—like fundraising, so I avoid tasks that involve fundraising. If there's a big gala that requires sponsorships, I'm not the best person to seek out and secure those sponsorships. I can do it, and I have, but others are much better at it than me and they should be the ones tasked to do so. But you can do a lot for an organization, get very well known in the organization, and develop

business through the organization by volunteering for tasks that highlight your talents.

## Use Your Talents at Home

Your talents' usefulness isn't limited to work. They have a role at home too. They can help your spouse tackle volunteer projects. They can help with upcoming PTA events. They can help your kids evaluate their own talents and passions and aide them in pursuing their destiny. In fact, there are few things more fulfilling than helping your kids identify and pursue their dreams. Experiencing with them their "aha" moments when they realize what their talents are, what their passions are and plotting a plan for their dreams and destiny. These moments, this process, witnessing it, being a part of it—there is little that is more joyful, more heartwarming. Often, there is a synergy between a child's talents and passions and one's own. That's not to say they have the same talents or share similar destinies as you do, but just as you were imbued with certain talents and passions to achieve your dreams, you were provided those same talents and passions to compliment your children's and help them achieve their dreams. Not only are there no coincidences as to the skill set with which we're imbued, there are no coincidences with those who come into our lives and need our skill set to assist them in chasing their dreams.

## Use Your Talents in the Community

Go beyond work and family and seek out opportunities to serve your community. You could do it through working on a board of a local non-profit, volunteering at community events or starting something entirely new that benefits your neighbors. When you volunteer, you get to choose what to do, so you can seek out tasks that play to your strengths. In your pursuit to serve, avoid tasks for which you're not well suited. The purpose isn't simply to serve. The purpose is to serve through your talents. Any organization, including a volunteer one, is comprised of different individuals with different talents. No one of us can do everything. And no organization can thrive when everyone shares the same talents. So you need to do what you're good at, and others have to be chosen to do what they're good at, and if the leadership of the organization is doing its job, it's matching the right people with the right talents for the right jobs. If you want to be a leader, you need to identify others talents and passions

and put them to work for the organization. One of the biggest mistakes a leader makes is hiring a talented person for a job where her talents go to waste, and she struggles to do a job for which she is not well suited.

## Grow Your Talents

Take the time to nurture and grow your talents. You want to learn their applicability to your career, family, friends and community. Talents are like muscles—they need to be used, and the more you use them, the more they grow. Test them, apply them, find different scenarios to use them—by doing so, not only will you develop your existing talents, you may uncover secondary talents you previously were unaware of. Most don't have your talents and no one can use and apply them like you. If you don't develop them, nurture them, push them to their limits, then there will be countless opportunities—tasks that were meant for you to tackle, obstacles for you to overcome, folks that needed your help—that will go to waste. There are tasks to be done in this world that only you can do. There are others who need help that only you can provide. If your talents stagnate, then you'll never completely fulfill your destiny, and a half-lived life is a tragedy.

## Explore New Opportunities to Use Your Talents

Think of new ways to use your talents. Maybe you have a new idea about how the firm can market its practice areas, or perhaps you have an idea on how your local voluntary bar association can generate revenue, or how your house of worship can raise funds for a new sanctuary. Perhaps what you need is to apply your skills to a goal or plan no one has thought of yet, a plan no one but you has skills to execute. Some talents can be applied across a wide array of opportunities waiting for them. Some talents are more specialized and narrow and must be analyzed more thoroughly to appreciate a wider application for them. Whatever your talents, think about how they can be used in different circumstances and situations. Ponder on a fit for them and on scenarios which benefit both you and others. Tap into your imagination and ingenuity to see opportunities others have yet to see. It is through this self-exploration that new opportunities for you and your talents will present themselves.

## Seek Others with Complementary Talents

As leaders, we need to put together teams, and successful teams are often comprised of talented individuals whose talents complement one another. You're good at X, he's good at Y and she's good at Z. Acknowledge your weaknesses and seek out those whose strengths are in those areas. When you evaluate successful law firms or businesses, you see a wide variety of skill sets across the individuals who comprise the organization. In a firm, for example, you may have great writers, great orators, great marketers, great managers and great visionaries. Each plays a role in the sustainability and growth of the organization. No one person can be great at all of this (if one can, it's quite rare). The right people for the right job can make an organization grow by leaps and bounds. Placing folks where they belong is the sign of an intuitive and successful leader. At your work and in the associations you belong to, seek out folks with complementary skill sets and see what synergies you have to tackle projects that neither of you could do on your own, but by aggregating your skills, you can do it collectively.





# Fueling Your Talents With Your Passion

## Talent Isn't Enough

I don't care how talented you are. I don't care what skills you have. It doesn't matter how naturally you perform certain tasks. Talent isn't enough. If you're not passionate about what you're doing, you're going through the motions. If you're not passionate about your job, your skills aren't being tested and challenged. If you're not passionate, then your talents don't have the fuel they need for you to do the best, to be the best. I know a lot of talented people who don't use their talents, or simply get by on them. They're talented writers, who don't want to write for legal publications, because who has the time. They're talented speakers who don't want to market themselves. My boys are gifted student musicians. They practice a lot because they love music. They have friends who are also gifted, but skate by on their talents. They could be so much more, but they choose not to be. Talent may get you across the finish line, but it won't get you across it first. You have to want to finish first. You have to have the drive to do so. Without the passion, you'll never appreciate how far or deep your talents go because you'll only be working with what you need to do the job at hand and little if nothing more. Talent plus passion is the key.

## Passion Directs Your Talent

Think of your talent as the automobile and your passions as the driver. Talent will get you to the destination but it needs passion to direct it. What you find exciting, what drives you, what gets you out of bed in the morning, what you dream of, what you read and talk about—your passions—these will focus you on what goals to pursue and will fuel your talents. Your talents may have varied applicability, and your passions can find their right application for you. What you love will direct how you use your talents. What gets you excited will drive your passions to pursue what excites you. Passion is the reason you love to do X. Let that passion instruct you on how to apply your talents to X. You've already studied where your talents and passions intersect. Let your passions make the most of those intersection points and find new and novel ways to make the most of your talents.

## Passion Motivates You to Use Your Talents

Let's revisit the motivational speakers. What they have to say sometimes will resonate with you and sometimes it won't. Their inspirational sayings and anecdotes may be exactly what you

need one day and not the next. They're not you. They don't know your talents and passions. It's like drinking water but never having it quench your thirst. Your passions provide a fountain that will never run out, and will always, if you allow them, wake you up early, keep you up late, skip television and avoid other diversions and distractions that prevent you from using their talents to their fullest. Passion keeps you from staring at your watch, makes mornings and afternoons disappear without notice, helps you focus and keeps you going when others have called it a day. Your passions compel you to get up and move toward your goals. They are drawn to your talents because they see them as a conduit to those goals. If you let them, they will utilize your talents in ways you never believed or anticipated. A motivational speaker can never do this. Only your passions can.

## Passion Informs You on How to Leverage Your Talents

They say imagination is the mother of invention, but passion is what drives your imagination to envision old and new ways to leverage your talents. When you want something, really want something, your passion for it is machinating every which way to get it. You're not coloring within the lines anymore. You're out of the box, reflecting on anything and everything you can do to achieve your goal. Your passion to secure X, achieve Y or accomplish Z opens up your mind's horizon to apply your talents to get what you want. Passion drives us to satisfy it and in so doing opens our eyes to new avenues and possibilities on how our talents can be applied, grown, expanded and recruited to serve it. Passion focuses us on the end game, because it wants to win. Passion serves as a foil to our fear, hesitancy and laziness. At the start of each day there is a struggle between our passions and the status quo. A struggle between what we want and what we're satisfied with. If you allow your passions to leverage your talents, most days your passions are going to have the upper hand and dictate to you how the day will go. And when it does, when the sun wanes and you're back in bed, with your arm under your pillow, you'll say to yourself, this was a great day.

## Talent Without Passion Is Dead

You can have all the talent in the world, but without passion fueling it, directing it, driving it and maximizing it, your talent is on life support. You have it, but you don't quite know what to

do with it, you don't feel compelled to use it or develop it, and it atrophies. You may have talent to play the saxophone, but if you're not passionate about playing it, you'll never practice and never realize how good you could become. Remember that there is often overlap between our talents and passions, so focus on that, and use your passions to invigorate and drive your talents. You have to want to use your talents to accomplish a goal. Without that desire, your talents will be underutilized, if utilized at all.

### Search Out Others Who Are Like Minded

Not only will your passions fuel your talents, others with similar passions will do so too. If you love a burgeoning area of the law, there is no doubt there is already an organization that caters to attorneys who love it. Join the organization, volunteer, get involved and get to know others with similar passions. They love this area of the law. You love it. You have something in common to talk about. You can learn from them more about the area and how to flourish as an attorney handling matters in the area. Folks who love the same thing love being together to talk about that thing. There was a fiction phase of my life where I wrote short stories. Since I didn't have a fiction writing background, I joined a weekly



class at my local community college. I quickly made friends and we talked about writing—a lot. How to brainstorm, how to deal with writer's block, how to outline a story and to whom to pitch it. I've also been involved with practice committees in various bar associations I've belonged to, including DRI, where I've socialized and become friends with others in my practice area, and have learned a lot, not only substantively, but about how to make the most of my practice in that area. Working alongside like-minded individuals creates an environment where everyone's motivations work off of each other and creates more motivation both for the group and for the individuals who comprise it.

## Find a Community of Others Like You

If you work out, you may belong to a class where everyone encourages and pushes one another. If you enjoy reading, you may belong to a book club where everyone discusses the latest novel or non-fiction book by so and so. For your career, find a local community of folks who share similar career plans and goals and meet with them face to face on a monthly basis to discuss plans, pursuits, ideas and goals so you can expand your frame of reference of what you should be doing to achieve your dreams and have accountability partners who help you stay on task and whom you help to stay on task. Like-minded people can help one another see new opportunities, maximize them and encourage each other. Yes, we lawyers are competitive by nature, and it may seem counterintuitive to seek out a community of potential competitors for new business, but when pursuing goals, there is a lot to learn from others' successes and failures in pursuing the same or similar dreams.



# Defining Your Dreams

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## Review Your List of Dreams

Flip through your journal and find the page where you wrote down your dreams. Review the whole list. Which ones excite you the most? Which ones are those that you have had since you were young and you've kept them through every stage of your life? Which ones relate to your career? Your family? Your community? How about personal dreams? With your journal open and a pen in hand, organize your dreams according to category—Career, Family, Community and Other. Once you've separated them out, number the dreams in each category according to how each best matches up to your talents and passions. By doing this, you can see which of your dreams are really your dreams and which of them you've glommed onto because of society, culture, family or friends. At this point, there are no dreams that are too big, or that you consider too ridiculous, to include in your lists. You want to organize the full panoply of dreams you have, categorize and number them and then look at them closely. Your destiny is in that list. You just need to spend some time with the list to figure that out.

## Optimistic, but Realistic

Dreams are supposed to be big. That's why they're called dreams. But there are big dreams, even huge dreams, and then there are impossible ones. I can dream of playing professional sports, but that's never going to happen no matter how hard I try. I can dream of becoming a pop vocalist, but that's not going to happen. Dreams that are rooted in your talents and passions are ones you should focus on. Even if you have to muster every ounce of optimism you have to see them come true, if they're grounded in your talents and passions, you have a real shot at them. It's when you're relying on talents you don't have or passions you lack that dreams get out of reach. In fact, they're probably not dreams you should be pursuing. They're just distractions from what you should really be doing with your life. The greater the talents, the greater the passion, the bigger you can dream and still consider your dreams realistic.

## Career Dreams

What dreams do you have for your career? Do you want to become a specialist in a certain field? Do you want to become a national expert in that field? Do you want to head a practice area that

handles cases in that field? Do you want to start a national practice in that field? What are your long term dreams? Intermediate? Short term? Do you want to become a rainmaker? How big of a rainmaker? Do you want to help your firm grow? How big? Doing what? Take the time and spell out exactly what your career dreams are. Be as specific as possible. The more amorphous your dreams are, the harder is to set goals to achieve them. You don't have a clear target so you're not quite sure what to aim at.

Let's assume you want to want to become a go-to attorney in the area of cyber security. Look up attorneys who have a national reputation in the area. Study their firm profiles. What does it look like to be a national expert in the area? How does the attorney's practice area look in terms of size and scope? Has she written on the topic? Spoken? Lead an organization involved with the area? Is she involved in any industry groups? What you have in mind may not imitate what this attorney has accomplished, but it will provide you with insight and context as to what it looks like to achieve the dream of being a national expert on cyber security. When I was a younger lawyer, I studied the firm profiles of leading civil defense attorneys. What had they accomplished? Who were their clients (it was common then to list a firm's clients on one's website)? What jury verdicts and published opinions did they have? What organizations did they belong to? What awards had they received? Looking at the bios of the attorneys you aspire to be like will provide some meat on the bones for your career dreams.

## Family Dreams

In addition to career dreams, you have dreams for your family. If you're married, what will retirement look like for you two? If you have kids, what do you want to see them accomplish? What are their talents, passions and dreams? How can you help them achieve their destiny? As a family, you may have collective dreams—dreams about starting a charity together, fundraising together, teaching together, traveling together. As a family, each member has his or her own dreams. You may play the role of helping each family member achieve their individual dreams just as you're on the road to achieving your own professional dreams. Your daughter wants to be a lawyer like you. You've been through the process. You have ideas (some strong ones) about how to go about it. You can be more than a parent—you can be a professional mentor and accountability partner. Both my sons want to be professional musicians. I'm tone deaf. So I don't have the skills

or passion for music they do, but I'm a process guy, believing every goal can be achieved with the right process. So I help them brainstorm and think about what they should be doing to get from here to there. For David, my older son, the dream is being a professional conductor of an orchestra. For Michael the dream is being a professional jazz musician. My family dream is to help their dreams come true, and I do that by helping them find opportunities to develop and showcase their talents. Think through your family dreams and how you can make them a reality.

## Community Dreams

What altruistic dreams do you have for your house of worship, your community and for those less fortunate than you? Is there a charity you want to start or lead? Is there a non-profit you want to assist and help grow? We're talking about dreams that change others' lives. Dreams that leave a legacy. Dreams that live on after you're gone. We should all have at least one dream that makes the world a better place. What's yours? Perhaps you belong to a house of worship where attendance and giving is in decline. You want to stop the slide and grow it back up. Your dream could be to develop and implement a strategic plan to turn things around and make your congregation larger, more engaged, more giving and more grounded in the mission to help and serve others. We are social creatures. We need one another. Put in solitary confinement long enough and we lose our minds, our imaginations and our identity. We are wired this way to engage with others, help them and lift them up. We are less when we don't do this. Community dreams tend to be our biggest dreams. So take the time to think them through.

## Other Dreams

The catch all—other dreams. Did we miss any? Are there other dreams in other categories we haven't yet discussed? Maybe something more personal? You want to run a marathon? You want to climb a mountain? You want to walk the Appalachian Trail? Be a bestselling author? Compete in body building competitions? There's something about doing something extraordinary that is appealing. Doing something that few others have done. And not just doing it. Excelling at it. Perhaps not being satisfied running a marathon. Perhaps running several and cutting your time in each subsequent race. Maybe starting with a manageable climb, and then another and another until you're scaling one of the bigger

mountains in the world. As lawyers, we're competitive by nature. We like scrapping and we especially like winning. So it's no surprise to hear from other lawyers that their personal dreams have a competitive aspect to them. Write them down. They're part of you. They define you. They drive you.

## Journaling

I keep going back to journaling, because writing down our dreams and how we plan to achieve them is so important in following through with them. There is something about writing your dreams down, by hand, and going back and reading them over and over, reflecting on them, studying them, and imagining and brainstorming how to achieve them. The written word, in your own handwriting, takes on a life of its own. It jumps off the page and reminds you what you want to do with your life and how to do it. I keep a business card in my wallet with my dreams written on the back. I've misplaced it a few times and have to go back and write a new one, but it's there, and from time to time, I'll look at it and remind myself where I'm headed. Journaling accomplishes the same thing. Now go write down your dreams.





# Developing a Plan to Achieve Your Dreams

## Defining Your Goals

Every dream can be broken down to several or more goals. Let's go back to the example of becoming a national expert in a given field of law where you represent the top clients who need legal services in that field. So let us start by stating the dream concisely:

### Dream

I want to be a national expert on cyber security law, and I want to represent the top clients in this field.

This dream is a big dream. It needs to be unpacked and reduced to definitive goals. Let's define the goals for this dream.

### Goals

- Read all the leading materials on cyber security
- Be published regularly on cyber security
- Speak regularly on cyber security
- Lead an organization that focuses on cyber security
- Focus business development efforts on cyber security clients
- Represent clients on smaller cyber security matters
- Represent clients on larger cyber security matters
- Become national counsel for clients on cyber security matters
- Become de facto general counsel to clients on their cyber security matters

You can probably think of several more goals, but let's start with these. Being the best at something is amorphous. How does anyone become the best at anything? That dream has to be broken down into goals that can be pursued. For example, reading all the leading materials on cyber security. Go online, find the leading treatises, articles, blogs, magazines and books on the topic, order or download them and read them. That's doable. I mean, sure, it's a lot of work, but it's doable. The goal can be reduced to tasks and you can perform those tasks. Simple enough. So when I say taking your dream and define the goals that if achieved make your dream a reality, do what I did above. Define all the goals, that if all are accomplished, you achieve your dream. Thinking through this takes time. Don't run off to the next topic of the book. Take some time and reflect on what goals, when taken together and achieved, fulfill your dream. Be as specific as possible. If given the choice between writing down a large goal or two or smaller goals, go with

the latter. If you make your goals too big, you'll be discouraged from pursuing them. And as always, write it down in your journal.

## Developing a Plan to Fulfill the Goals

Once you've reduced your dream to writing and defined the goal to achieve the dream, develop a plan to fulfill those goals. Create a step by step list of tasks to achieve each goal. For example, let's say your goal is to become a sought out public speaker on cyber security (which you want in order to achieve your dream of becoming a national expert in the area). That goal has several aspects. First, you need to become an effective and powerful public speaker. To do that, several tasks come to mind:

- Read books on public speaking
- Watch YouTube videos on public speaking
- Watch YouTube videos of effective public speakers
- Join Toastmasters
- Join an improv class
- Teach a class so as to get used to being in front of others (Sunday school class, lectures at your local law school, moot court instructor)
- Get involved in the local speaking circuit



On a parallel track, you have to become a master of the subject matter so you come across as knowledgeable and confident. To do so, consider doing the following:

- Subscribe to magazines, blogs, websites and other resources about cyber security
- Create alerts to receive the newest cases, statutes and regulations in the area
- Read the leading treatise and books on the subject
- Attend CLE on the subject

You can see how you can start at the 30,000 foot level—being a national expert on cyber security, dip down to 10,000 foot level—being a sought out speaker on cybersecurity—to the ground level spelling each individual task to complete to fulfill the goal.

Your plan to achieve the goals which comprise the dream has to spell out all the tasks that you need to do, the order to do them, and a proposed deadlines by which to complete them. At this point, you've moved on from your hand written journal to a word document where you spell out your plan step by step.

## Strategic Planning—What Is It?

If you belong to a voluntary bar association or nonprofit, you probably hear this a lot: “We can’t do that. It’s not in keeping with our strategic plan.” Or perhaps this: “How does this proposal advance our strategic plan?” A strategic plan starts with defining the organization’s mission, vision and values. By doing this, you answer the “why” question—what is the purpose of the organization and what should it do to fulfill its purpose. Without fully appreciating it, you’ve already begun to prepare your strategic plan. You’ve reflected on your purpose (your mission), your dreams (your vision) and your values (your code). This forms the core of why you’re on this earth and what you’re tasked to do. Once you answer the “why,” you can plan on answering the “how,” the goals and steps to achieving them. What we’ve been doing so far is similar to what organizations do all the time to ensure they have defined a “win,” established the “finish line,” and figured out how to get from here to there. Just as every organization needs a strategic plan, each of us needs one to define where we’re going and how to get there.

## Asking Yourself the Tough Questions

To develop your plan, you have to ask yourself the hard questions. You've already started doing so by defining your dreams, purpose, talents and passions. You've asked yourself what you're good at, admitted to yourself what you're not good at, and studied the intersections between your talents, passions and dreams. This all took time and reflection. Now the elephant in the room we haven't talked about, but I'm sure in written down your dreams you've already reflected upon, is—"Am I where I am supposed to be, doing what I am supposed to be doing?" In other words, am I working at the right place, pursuing the right career and doing the right things? So, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I handling the right cases?
- Am I specializing in the right area of law?
- Am I at the right firm?
- Am I doing enough to advance my career?
- Should I even be practicing law?
- Am I on the right career path?
- If not, what does the right career path look like?
- Am I neglecting the other aspects of my life?
- Am I the best spouse I can be?
- Am I the best parent I can be?
- Am I taking care of myself physically, emotionally and spiritually?

Never assume you're at the right place doing the right things. Just going through the motions and going through life checking the boxes isn't living. You owe it to yourself, your family and your boss to maximize your talents, rely on your passions and seek out your dreams for your benefit and everyone else's.

## Personal Survey

If you have ever participated in strategic planning for an organization, one of the things you'll do is conduct surveys of the leadership and the members. You want to hear from everyone about what the organization should be doing and how to do it. If you're going to prepare a personal plan, then you need to conduct a personal survey. Without realizing it, you've already completed a fair amount of it.

- You've listed your talents

- You've listed your passions
- You've listed your dreams
- You've written down your purpose
- You've written down where these items intersect

By doing this, you've defined your life goals and have a destination. In addition to what you have already written down in your journal about these topics, also answer the following questions:

- Where do you see yourself, in terms of your career, your family and your community in:
  - Five years
  - Ten years
  - Twenty years
  - Thirty years
- How do you want to be remembered?
- How do you want your obituary to read?
- How do you know when you've achieved your purpose? Your destiny?

The more long term you look, the more you'll get the big picture, and the more in focus your life's goals will be.

## Asking Others the Tough Questions

Just as you asked yourself the hard questions, find two or three close family or friends, and ask them to answer the tough questions about you. They see and interact with you regularly. They've experienced and seen firsthand what you're good at and what you're not good at. They've seen when you're passionate and when you're apathetic, when you're excited and when you're barely registering interest. They've seen your skills for certain things and seen your lack of skills for other things. They have their thoughts about what you should be doing with your life, but have thought better to share their thoughts with you. Interview them about you and get their wisdom, thoughts and reflections on you—who you are, what makes you *you* and where they see you 10, 20 and 30 years from now.

## Your “Business Plan”

Writing a plan for your life is akin to writing a business plan for your law firm or company. Let me show you:

## **Company Business Plan Personal Plan**

Mission Statement Your Purpose

Vision Statement Your Dreams

The Company's Strengths Your Talents

What Drives the Company Your Passions

The Company's Goals Your Goals

Plan to Accomplish Its Goals Your Plans to Accomplish Your Goals

Plan Details Plan Details

Measuring Progress Measuring Progress

Corporate Accountability Individual Accountability

As you can see, a business plan is similar to a personal plan. You start with the fundamentals as to why you even exist—your purpose. Where is your purpose taking you? What's the end game? Those are your goals. And then you prepare a plan detailing how you get from here to there. You wouldn't start a business without a business plan. Likewise, don't embark on the rest of your life without a personal plan.

## **Defining Processes**

I believe any activity can be reduced to a process—a series of steps, which if carefully followed, will achieve what you are after. There's a process for everything you're planning for. Let's assume your plan is to write a book. There's a process for that. Let's assume your plan is become a leader of an organization. There is a process for that. To discover that process you can do one of several things:

- Think through all the steps you believe you must take to accomplish your goal. Study what each step entails and the proper order of those steps. With proper analysis, you can define the process to achieve your goal.
- Ask others who have already achieved the goal you have in mind what their process is. They may have had a detailed process or possibly let their instinct take charge, but either way, with thorough questioning you can extract their process so you can imitate it.
- Read books by or about others which, whether directly or not, discuss how they achieved what they achieved. Study their process.

There's a process to developing a national reputation in a field of law, developing business, building your brand, attracting clients, becoming a voluntary bar association leader, etc. There's a process to becoming a better spouse and parent. There's a process to improving your neighborhood. Go into your planning believing that you can reduce your plan to a step by step guide to get there.

## The Elements of Your Plan

You've been journaling a lot. I mean a lot. You may be on your second journal by now. Let's take everything you've done and reduce it to a step by step plan. Your plan should include the following elements:

- Your Talents
- Your Passions
- Your Dreams
- Where Your Talents/Passions/Dreams Intersect
- Your Purpose
- Your Short Term Goals
- Your Mid-Range Goals
- Your Long Term Goals
- The Steps to Achieve Each Goal (The Process)
- A Calendar of Events
- A Budget

I would suggest you put down your pen, walk over to your computer, and type up your plan. This is going to be a living document that is going to direct your life. It will be easier to work with if it's a Word document you can modify and edit. You're putting together your personal blue print. Exciting, isn't it?

## Creating Concrete Actions to Accomplish the Plan

Goals are what you want to achieve. Each goal has to be reduced to concrete action steps. If you don't have a concrete to do list, your goals will simply remain goals. Let's take a smaller goal—getting published by a national bar association magazine or newsletter. Admirable goal. How do you achieve it? Reduce it to action items. They could include the following:

- Read several issues of the publication to learn the types of articles they publish
- Read the publication's writer's guidelines
- Read a book on writing articles
- Settle on an idea that you feel comfortable writing on and that suits the publication
- Pitch the magazine on your proposed article
- If rejected, shop the idea to other publications until you have someone accept it
- Prepare an outline for the article
- Draft and edit the article
- Submit it
- Use that article to get other writing gigs

Each of these steps is an action item that you can do. Getting published is a goal. These steps are the action items to accomplish that goal. For every goal you list in your personal plan, you need to spell out what steps to take and what order to take them. For some goals, it will be intuitive what you need to do. For others, you'll need to research what achieving your goal entails. For example, the steps above for getting published I learned from speaking with published authors. Do your research and prepare your to do lists.

## Macro Goals

Write down your long term macro goals. These are goals that will take years to accomplish (possibly decades). These are the big picture goals. Examples are:

- Becoming lead trial counsel for a fortune 100 company
- Becoming a national expert in a legal field
- Becoming president of a national or international bar association
- Becoming the public face of a legal field, such as cyber security
- Becoming a best-selling author
- Becoming a nationally recognized speaker
- Starting and growing a successful business, charity, restaurant, etc.





The macro goals will largely be taken from your dreams (or will be some permutation of them). These are the big things you want to accomplish with your life. These are things you want to be remembered for. These are the things which will leave a legacy. These are long term. They will define you. They will take years to accomplish. These are the marathon goals, where the journey means as much as the destination. Take the time to make sure these are your goals, that you are committed to them and that you're in it for the long haul to make them a reality.

## Micro Goals

Once you've defined your long term goals, divide each up into a series of micro goals. For example, to become a nationally recognized expert in a legal field, there are several micro goals you need to pursue. For example, there is a micro goal of getting published on the topic, a micro goal of speaking on the topic, a micro goal of securing a leadership position in an organization that caters to those handling the topic, etc. Big goals have a lot of moving parts. By reducing them to micro or mini goals, you make your larger goals more manageable and provide a more detailed road map to accomplishing them. There is an old joke—“How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” Micro goals allow you to reduce your large goals into bite-sized ones. And by

creating micro goals, you create more opportunities for you to succeed and build upon those successes when tackling the next set of micro goals.

## Creating a Timeline for Your Plan

Once you have written down your macro and micro plans, create a rough timetable of when you plan to accomplish them. By creating deadlines for yourself, you create motivation to stay on task and move forward on your plan. If you don't create deadlines for yourself, even though they may feel artificial, it's easy to continually push your goals to the back burner and do little to achieve them. We're lawyers. We're driven by deadlines. "What, discovery isn't due for another 30 days? No rush." "Trial is set nine months away, what's the hurry?" By creating a calendar of events for yourself, where let's say you give yourself 60 days to get published, 90 days to secure a speaking opportunity, etc., you create momentum. Momentum is key. So often we start projects and we chug along for a few days, sometimes a few weeks, and shortly thereafter we get distracted by life, and without even realizing, we've given up pursuit and our goal is soon forgotten. Deadlines keep the momentum going.

## Making a Flexible Plan

Life is full of surprises. Some good. Some not so good. You have to have a flexible plan. Your approach to your plans may not work out. The steps you laid out for yourself to follow may prove not to be the right ones for you and your plans. Your written plan needs to be flexible to respond to these contingencies. Not everything is going to work according to plan. Life doesn't care if you have a plan. Life isn't going to apologize for making aspects of your plan obsolete. You need to roll with the punches, get up when you get knocked down, and improvise when necessary. You're not going to change your purpose or your dreams, but you need to be flexible in how you achieve them. There are no right answers in getting from A to B. There is no path written in stone to get where you're going. Change course when necessary.

## Sample Plan

I'm not going to tell you what to include in your plan. I will, however, suggest how you should lay it out:

**DESTINY**

**PURPOSE**

**TALENTS**

**PASSIONS**

**DREAMS**

**THE POINTS OF INTERSECTION**

**MACRO GOALS**

**MICRO GOALS**

**STEPS FOR MICRO GOALS**

**CALENDAR**

**BUDGET**

**MEASURING PROGRESS**

The section “Steps for Micro Goals,” which will include an action plan for every micro goal (for every macro goal), will be the longest and most detailed. Here, you will spell out every step to take to achieve your goals. Take time to put this section together, and research online, read books related to your goals and speak with others who have achieved these goals to make informed decisions on what steps to include in your plan.



# Implementing the Plan

## Following Through

Having a plan is only the beginning. If you stick it into a drawer, and don't review it regularly and tweak it as necessary, if you don't implement it, if you don't do the tasks you outlined for yourself, you won't get any closer to making your dreams a reality. If you're pursuing your dreams and making the most of your talents, your passion should serve to motivate you. Pay attention to and fuel your passions to help you follow through with your plans. And start with the smaller of the micro goals. They can be done more quickly and doing several of them in consecutive order leads to quick victories for you, improving your optimism and perseverance, encouraging you to pursue other goals. Start with the low hanging fruit, achieve some quick victories and use that as the fuel to climb the next rungs of the ladder.

## Investment of Time

Rome wasn't built in a day and you won't achieve all your dreams by next Tuesday. You need to set aside time every day to do something to complete the tasks you have laid out for yourself. Some days you'll be able to dedicate a block of time. Other days you'll only be able to spare a few minutes. But it's important you do something every day. Published authors will tell you that if you want to write a book, you have to set aside time every day to write. If you set aside time to work out, to watch your favorite program, to golf, to go to happy hour then you can set aside time to make your dreams a reality. Most folks' dreams die here—the daily investment of time and energy to make them a reality—most folks can't bring themselves to do it. That's why our dreams often seem elusive, because we're not willing to put in the time. You already have the talent. You have a plan to make the most of your talents. You're passionate about what you want to do. The only thing missing is committing the time to do it. Include time in your schedule, every day, to do something, even if it's a small something. If you're not moving forward, you're falling behind.

## Investment of Money

Not only is there the cost of time and energy to pursue your dreams, there is likely some hard costs for which you'll need to reach into your pocket. For your career goals, depending on what firm or company you work for, your employer is likely to pick up most of your expenses. They'll likely pay for membership in an

organization, travel and attendance to an organization's meetings, and the like. Other expenses, like taking folks out to coffee or lunch, will likely come out of your own pocket. I previously mentioned seeking out others who can direct you on the right path to achieving your goals. You'll likely want to treat them to coffee, lunch or drinks. That's probably going to be on you. There may be other expenses, for example stationary for hand written letters - that will also be on you. You know what your personal budget is and how much you can spend on such items. Prepare a budget for your plans and try your best to stick to that budget. And offer your firm or company a budget for what you want them to contribute (these would be limited to goals that advance your employer's mission and goals). Likewise, stick to that budget.

## Taking Risks

If you're thinking big, you're going to be taking risks. Want to become an expert in a niche area? What if that area goes away? After the market crash in 2008, several firms put all their eggs in the foreclosure litigation basket. That lasted a few years and then as suddenly as it appeared, it went away, and a number of firms had to reinvent themselves on the fly or close their doors. So yes, there will be risks in becoming a practice area expert. But if you don't take risks, you won't reap the rewards. There are folks who jumped into cyber security law long before it took off, not knowing whether they made the right bet. Many have discovered that they did. Life is about taking risks. The more safely you play, the less likely you'll achieve your dreams. To achieve big things, you're going to take chances. Yes, educated, researched chances, but chances nonetheless. Failure often accompanies dreamers. Just get up and try again. Adjust your plan, adjust your approach, adjust your analysis, but don't abandon the dream. Giving up isn't an option.

## Believing in Yourself

If you don't believe in yourself, if you lack confidence and conviction, if you only see what can go wrong, then it's going to be hard to achieve your dreams. Small setbacks will seem like large ones and large setbacks will be unmanageable. Remind yourself:

- You have a destiny.
- You have a purpose.

- You have been imbued with the talents to achieve your purpose.
- You have been imbued with the passions to make your dreams a reality.
- Only you can achieve what you were placed on this earth to do.
- If you don't fulfill your purpose, you will deprive others. Your purpose goes beyond you.

Each of us is unique. Each of us is talented. Each of us has a purpose. Each of us was meant to do something big. Each of us is part of a larger tapestry where we are all called to share ourselves for the larger good. So when you start doubting yourself, remember you're already destined to change the world in your own way, you just haven't done it yet. So go do it.

## Rewarding Yourself

Don't cheat yourself, treat yourself. Reward yourself when you achieve a goal. Get an article published? Have a night out. Have an effective presentation? Catch a movie. Get appointed to a leadership position? Buy yourself something. What are the things you enjoy doing in your free time? What music do you enjoy? What books do you read? There are a variety of ways of treating yourself after a job well done. These are appropriate gifts for accomplishing minor goals. If you accomplish a larger goal, one that took months or years to achieve, think bigger. Perhaps a short vacation, or new golf clubs or some quick adventure like scuba diving or hang gliding. If an employee exceeded her quotas at a job, she'd likely receive a bonus. Give yourself a "bonus" by treating yourself when you complete each goal, whether big or small.

## Having an Accountability Partner

You need someone close to you, such as a spouse, sibling or friend, with whom to meet regularly and discuss your progress on your plan. If possible set aside time each week and get together for coffee or a meal and discuss what you have done over the past week to achieve your goals. Knowing that you have someone to report to each week to provide a status update will encourage you to do your share each week to work toward your goals. Also, you will have a sounding board with whom you can discuss overcoming obstacles and changes to your action plan. Sometimes you'll only

be able to discuss these issues by phone, e-mail or text, but as much as possible, meet in person. Your accountability partner will help you stay on track.

## Journaling

Never stop journaling. Keep track of your progress. Keep track of the obstacles and setbacks. Keep track of the successes and achievements. Journaling will help you stay focused and directed. It will be a resource to review and help you decide how best to forge ahead. And once you accomplish your goals, you will have a written record of how you did it, which you can reduce to a how to book and share with others to help them achieve their dreams.



## What's Standing in Your Way?

Take the time to think through what's standing in your way, both internally and externally. Maybe it's how you look at situations, obstacles and challenges. Perhaps you have health issues you need to address. Make a list of things that stand between you and your dreams. Be honest and be thorough. And then reflect on how you can remove or push aside these obstacles, or at least make them less problematic. We each have our own demons, flaws and shortcomings. We have our blind spots and misperceptions. We have to take stock of all this and decide how we're going to address these issues. If you need help, get it. If you need advice, seek it out. Do what you need to do to move hindrances out of your way.

## Physical Health Issues

Our legal careers are a source of stress. Deadlines. Obstreperous opposing counsel. Chasing a win. Multitasking. If we don't watch what we eat and don't exercise, this stress can get the best of us and affect our health. If you haven't had a physical in some time, get one. If you have chronic or persistent pain anywhere, get it checked out. If you're struggling with your weight, seek help to get on a balanced diet and encouragement to stick with it. If you haven't exercised since the Clinton administration, see a doctor to make sure you're healthy enough to start an exercise regime and find one that you'll likely stick with. It could start with walking, and then jogging and then running. It could be calisthenics at home. It could be something more formal like joining a class or a gym. See the doctor. Eat right. Exercise. It's easier said than done, but not doing this can result in long term health problems that will hamper your ability to chase your dreams.

## Mental Health Issues

Just as you have to tend to the body, you have to tend the mind. Having lived through chronic depression, I know how hard it is to do anything, much less chase your dreams, if you're not managing your mental health issues. There's no shame in seeking professional help or being prescribed medications. Mental health illness is just that—an illness. In many respects, it's no different from physical illnesses like cancer, or high blood pressure or diabetes. You need to seek treatment to address it. Not doing so can result in the disease becoming unmanageable and may cause you to have suicidal ideations. Reach out to family and friends, stay



connected to them, seek professional help and do everything you can to secure the treatment and support you need to get through depression, anxiety or any other mental health disease with which you're struggling.

## Bad Habits

We all have them. Bad habits. We watch too much television. We don't get enough sleep. We get too much sleep. We eat fast foods. We don't take care of ourselves. We don't stay in touch with family or friends. We drink too much coffee. We eat too much. We don't eat enough. The list can go on and on. Think through things you do unconsciously that are undermining your ability to perform at and be your best. I don't have a silver bullet for you in overcoming your bad habits. The best insight I can give is first be honest with yourself about what your bad habits are, then list them in order of worst habit to just mildly annoying, and then tackle them in that order. You can't change all your bad habits all at once. If you try, chances are you probably won't change a single one. So take them in order, and make a conscious effort of not doing them anymore. Habits are just that. It's something we do without thinking about it much. Be more reflective about what you're doing and stop before you start falling into doing your unconscious acts.

## Self-Doubt

You're looking at your list of dreams, and asking yourself, "Can I do this? Can I really do this?" Yes, yes you can. If you took the time to reflect upon and think through what your talents, passions, purpose and dreams are, then you've put together a plan that was meant for you to execute, and only you. If you don't do it, no one else will. Don't doubt you can do it. Reflect on what happens if you don't. You were meant to do this. Don't doubt that, or yourself, for a minute.

## Fear of Failure

Just because you have a purpose in life and you're pursuing it doesn't mean you won't fall or fail along the way. In fact, you are virtually guaranteed to do both, and possibly do them repeatedly. If you have big dreams and want to do big things, there will be disappointments. You're trying to do things that perhaps others have done but you haven't. Or perhaps you're trying to do

something never done before and you need to figure it out on your own. There will be ups and downs. There will be hills and valleys. I can't tell you that you won't fail, because you probably will. And I can't tell you it won't suck when you do, because it will. But success is often achieved after failure, sometimes a string of them. That's just the way it is. It's not you. That's just life. The universe isn't out to get you. To advance, you have to fall along the way. To make it, you have come close to not making it. You'll be better off for failing. You know how they say, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger? They're right. A failure free life where everything goes just according to plan is an unlived life. It means you played it safe all your life and you'll look back and hate yourself for doing that.

## Procrastination

Procrastination is a dream killer. To make your dreams a reality, you have to work towards them every day. Procrastination convinces you that you don't need to do anything today. And when tomorrow comes, you don't have to do anything on that day either. Procrastination convinces you that you can keep putting off the tasks and acts you need to do to achieve your goals. It convinces you that you're better off watching television, taking a nap, hanging out at happy hour or going to a sporting event instead of proactively doing something. A good way to overcome procrastination is to calendar an activity each day at a time you're available. Having a specific task pop up on your smart phone will encourage you to turn off the television and do the task at hand. Procrastination is a bad habit you can overcome by consciously doing something each day that moves you closer to your dream.

## Laziness

There's no excuse for laziness. I suspect you're not lazy because you're still reading this book and we're closing in on the end. You can hire the most talented candidates, but if they're lazy, they will adversely affect morale and undermine your firm's mission and purpose. A strong work ethic is needed to transform a vision into a reality. As I previously said, talent is never enough. I don't know if there is a cure for laziness. Few times in my life have I seen a lazy person transform into a hard worker. It can happen, but not often. If you're chasing your dream, and you have the skills and passion to pursue it, I don't see how you can be too lazy to pursue it. It really just boggles the mind.

## Naysayers

Ignore the critics. You know what most of them are? They're lazy. You would think being lazy is bad enough. But lazy people aren't satisfied with simply wasting away their own lives. They also want to bring down others who have the work ethic to make something of themselves. Other than family and close friends who have my best interests at heart, I don't see why anyone else should have an opinion, or quite frankly care, what I'm trying to do with my life. I don't have time to think about, much less opine about someone else's plans. If you have naysayers in your life, ignore them. They're jealous because your success only makes them feel smaller. People who dream big attract others who do so too. Seek out those folks in your life. Their optimism is a breath of fresh air.

## Time Management

There are so many parts to your plan, that unless you manage your time, you'll never get to all of it. Get used to using a calendar for tasks related to your plan just as you use your calendar for work. Just as you calendar every deposition, hearing and teleconference, you must get in the habit of setting aside time and calendaring activities that form the basis of your plan. Do you need to read a book to learn more about topic X, because you need to understand topic X to advance to the next step in your plan? Schedule an hour a day to read X. Do you need to meet others who have already accomplished your goals? Schedule coffee or meals with them. The key to time management is being in charge of your calendar instead of letting your calendar take charge of you. You can't be running from one emergency to the next because you didn't bother to calendar activities, which if done in a timely manner, would have prevented a much more time consuming emergency.

## Measuring Success

You need to establish criteria by which to measure your success. You may be completing a lot of tasks, but are they truly helping you achieve your goals? Analyze how what you're doing is helping you achieve success. You may be having a lot of articles published, but if your motivation to write them is to increase referrals and you haven't secured a single referral, then maybe you need to adjust your micro goal of getting published to better achieve your macro goal of developing business. Conversely, perhaps you haven't presented much, but from your two speaking engagements you've

secured two referrals. Maybe you need to shift away from writing and toward speaking more. Doing a lot isn't the point. Doing what works is. Getting back to writing articles. Maybe your purpose in writing them isn't to lure clients but rather it's for the purpose of creating a national reputation as an expert in the field, and that reputation, over the long term, will result in clients. In that case, you may want to continue writing, but cut back a bit to allow more time for speaking. Pay attention to the results of the tasks you're performing and not just the fact that you're completing them. Completing a task is an accomplishment, but the goal is larger than that.

## Being Accountable

I mentioned getting an accountability partner. It's so important that I'll emphasize it again. Get an accountability partner. Get someone you can talk to on a regular basis who will hold you accountable for sticking to your plan and working toward your goals. Find someone who won't put up with your excuses or whining or procrastination. Knowing you have to report to someone once a week about what you're doing will motivate you to make the most of that week. Your accountability partner may give you a pass for a week, but if you do nothing for two or three weeks in a row, she's going to kick you in the rear. Actually she should be encouraged to be honest and to kick you in the rear when necessary. An accountability partner will help you keep focused and stay on task.



# Defining Success

## Achieving Short Term Goals

Ultimate success is fulfilling your purpose and living your destiny. But there will be smaller successes along the way. Achieving your short term (micro) goals is a measure of success. Moving toward your goals is a success. Checking off tasks and staying on track is a success. Of course achieving a short term goal is only truly a success if it builds toward your larger goals. If they don't, you will need to modify your short terms goals. But whether they do or don't, take pride in accomplishing your short term goals. Perhaps speaking at an event or securing a leadership position in an organization didn't have the payoff you expected, but that doesn't change the fact that you spoke at an event and that you were appointed as a leader. Those accomplishments are still a success even if they didn't prove to be the ultimate success you had hoped for.



## Achieving Long Term Goals

Long term goals can take months, years and even decades. These are your career, family and life goals. These are the goals that define you. They are the ones that make your dreams come true, make your purpose shine and fulfill your destiny. Achieving them is the definition of success. You wanted to lead a national bar organization and you were elected president? That's success. You wanted to become a national expert in a field of law and you receive regular calls from the media, voluntary bar associations and prospective clients about that field of law? That's success. The charity you started is serving local homeless veterans and getting them the help they need to return to the workforce? That's success. Your book is on the *New York Times* bestseller list? That's success. Aiming at a target and hitting the bullseye is immensely gratifying. And remember—success breeds success. It's a confidence booster. It builds your reputation and your brand. You're seen as a force to be reckoned with. You achieve something big and suddenly the next big challenge doesn't seem so big. Suddenly, there is no mountain too high.

## Tweaking Your Plans

Nothing is guaranteed in life and even the best laid plans fall short or steer you wrong. Never abandon the dream. Never ignore your purpose. Never turn your back on your destiny. But if your plans aren't achieving the results you want and expected, and your dreams aren't as close as they should be despite your best efforts, don't hesitate to study your plans, reflect on why they're not working and tweak them. In fact, you may even have to start from scratch and start all over with them. Odds are you likely don't have to start over, but I say this to let you know that you have to be willing to start over and have an open mind to doing so. If the plan isn't working it needs to be changed. Doing the same thing and expecting a different result is not only the definition of insanity but it will ensure that your dreams will simply remain dreams.



# I've Been Chasing the Wrong Dream

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## Counting the Costs

You take stock of your talents, passions, purpose and dreams. You define your goals and prepare a plan and you look at it all and you pause and you sigh and you pause again and you realize up until now you've been chasing the wrong dreams. Whoa. That can't be right, can it? You go through your journals again and realize it is right. Some of you will put the journals away, put your plans away and never think of them again. You have a family, you have a mortgage, you have car payments and private school tuition for your kids, and vacations you're planning. These dreams you have require an overhaul of how you're living your life. I get it. Providing for others and putting their needs before yours is noble.

But before you continue on the same path and shelve your dreams for the life you have now, sit down and count the costs of changing the course of your life. How much will it cost you, not just in terms of dollars, but regarding every aspect of your life? Take stock, evaluate, and reflect on what you need to change and the costs associated with those changes. Big dreams aren't easy. Big plans come at a cost. I never said it was going to be easy. It's going to be hard. It's especially hard if you realize you're in the wrong practice area, the wrong city, or even the wrong firm. Or worse, you realize the practice isn't for you. It's up to you to continue doing what you're doing or do something different. I'm not here to tell you how to live your life. It's up to you to decide what risks, costs and chances you want to take to change course. Give this a lot of thought and speak to others who have made similar changes in their life and ask them how they did it and what it cost them. This is a crossroads. Take your time before you decide what route to take.

## Plan B

Up until now you've been living life according to Plan A. We all have a Plan A. So what happens if you're living the wrong plan? You fell into Plan A, or it seemed like the right plan, or others had followed Plan A and it worked for them so why wouldn't it work for you? Your first option is to tweak Plan A. Perhaps Plan A isn't far off from the plans you wrote down for yourself. Perhaps Plan A needs more work than some tweaks. Perhaps the core dreams stay the same, but you've been approaching them the wrong way. It's when you've been chasing the wrong dreams and pursuing the wrong purpose, that you need a Plan B, something more than a mere recalibration, more than a remodeling. You're taking a wrecking ball and blow torch to Plan A and creating a Plan B for



your life. Most of you won't have to do this. Some of you will. It's scary, isn't it? You don't have to do it, of course. You can make the best of your current situation. By now, you have the plan in black and white. Pursue Plan B? That's up to you. Entirely up to you.

## Getting the Buy-In

None of us is an island. If you're changing course, then others are changing course with you. Your spouse. Your kids. Your company or law firm. It's like tossing a stone in a pond. You will be creating ripples that will affect many others. Sit down with your family and work out the details with them. Do the same with your employer. Remember, that our purpose goes beyond ourselves. Our purpose isn't about us. If you're pursuing your true purpose, then it will not only benefit you but it will benefit your family, your firm, your colleagues and your community. Explain what you want to do, why you want to do it, and how it lifts everyone up, not just you. Because if it doesn't, if it's selfish and short sighted, if it's all about you, then you got this dream and purpose and destiny thinking all wrong. But if you did the proper analysis, others will see the positives and benefits of your plan.

## Turning the Cruise Ship

If your new plans are significantly different from your existing ones, you're looking to make a big change. It's like turning a cruise ship. You do it too quickly, too suddenly, and you'll be sending all the passengers and cargo every which way. You can't abandon what you're doing today to do what you want tomorrow. There is a transition period, where you move from what you're doing to doing the tasks to achieve your new goals. You have obligations. You have duties. You can't abandon your current responsibilities to chase your dreams. You have to do both. You won't always have to do both. One day, you'll wake up and you'll be doing what you want to be doing and only that. But it will take time. Transitions always do. Hang in there. You'll get there.

## Getting from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be

Your plan should address the transition from where you are to where you want to be. You'll be juggling two lives for a while until you fully transition into the life you want. Living two lives is a lot



of work. Making a calendar with deadlines for tasks will keep you focused. Your family will need to know what you're doing and why because for a while you'll be limiting your extracurricular activities while you prepare to turn the ship around. It's easy to get caught up in your dreams and plans and ignore your family. Never leave them behind. The fact is you're changing course in part for them so don't focus so much on the destination but the journey, which should include them and take them into account. Time management is critical if you have a foot in each world and are serving two masters. You have to eliminate all time wasters and make the most of your time in the car or when running errands, brainstorming and dictating into your smart phone. You can make the transition, you just need to be prepared for what a time commitment it is.



# Helping Others Realize Their Dreams

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## Your Company or Law Firm

Much of what we have discussed thus far not only applies to you, but it applies to those around you too. Not only do you want to fulfill your destiny and live out your purpose, you want the same for others too. Let's start by discussing your company or law firm. Are folks assigned to the positions that maximize their talents and passions? Is everyone being utilized according to her gifts? Some companies and firms may not think this process will help them and believe it will encourage their employees to become dissatisfied with their current positions and leave. The fact is if a firm wants to become one of the best, then it needs to find the right people for the right positions and equip them to shine. If the legal department of a company wants to excel, it must ensure that all its folks are there for the right reasons and they're committed to the company's mission and vision because they have similar personal missions and visions. This isn't simply feel good psycho-babble. This process will ensure that the company is pursuing the right mission for it, and that it has the right people who buy into that mission to make it a reality and success.

## Your Family

Just as you plan to fulfill your purpose, help your family fulfill its purpose. Every unit, whether a family, a firm, a company, a church, etc.—has a collective purpose. A group can accomplish goals that individuals can't on their own. Your family has a purpose just like you. They have a destiny just as each member of your family does. You have complimentary talents and passions. Each of you has something to contribute to the family to bring you all closer and achieve things that help not only the family unit but others too. Go through the same analysis you went through individually, but go through it together as a family and see what each of you want the family to do, why and how to get there. Having common goals and working on joint projects together builds upon the fabric that binds your family together. Those with common goals, who are rowing in the same direction, grow closer. Doing this won't resolve all your familial problems, but it will help.

## Your Children

I believe one of the primary responsibilities we have as parents is to help our children identify and develop their talents, discover their passions, define their purposes and develop plans to pursue

and achieve them. In fact, this book is loosely based on how my wife Ana and I have raised our two boys. How I propose you plan for your life is how we guide our boys to plan for theirs. If you want to get closer to your kids, if you want to spend more quality time with them and if you want to improve the likelihood of their success, then work with them on developing their personal plans. Sit down with them, and work through the exercises in this book with them. At first, they may think it's annoying or sappy, but I bet they come around and will love you for it.

## Your House of Worship

If you attend a house of worship and are involved with their programming or leadership, share the ideas in this book with them. Most of what they do relies on volunteers, and working with volunteers requires its own set of skills and motivators. Often, because of budgetary issues and lack of time, many houses of worship don't spend the required effort to develop a strategic plan and ensure the right people are doing the things best suited for them to help advance the strategic plan. If you have the time and the patience, speak with the leaders and offer to work with them on creating and implementing a strategic plan to increase membership, volunteers and donations.

## Your Organizations

I'm surprised how often I come across organizations that have not taken the time to survey their leaders and membership about why the organization exists, what it should be doing and how it should be doing it. If you belong to an organization (voluntary bar association or nonprofit) that hasn't asked itself what its role is and has no plan to fulfill that role, then speak to the organization's leadership and propose helping them put together a strategic plan. They'll appreciate your help, you'll get to meet and network with those in leadership and in the long term, it may result in referrals. Alternatively, if an organization prepared a plan years ago and shelved it and never enacted it, help them update it and make it a reality.



# You're the Rock Star

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## Forget Oprah. You're Oprah

Repeat after me: “Forget Oprah. I’m Oprah.” You don’t need to listen to the Oprahs of the world to get motivated. (Not that I have anything against Oprah. I am a native Chicagoan, after all). You don’t need to chase down the gurus and hang on their every word. I’m circling back to the first few pages of my book where I told you that the only person who can consistently and effectively motivate you is you. The motivational speakers out there will not quench your thirst for motivation. They are not a living wellspring from which you can draw week after week, day after day, hour after hour, and remain motivated. You are your own Oprah. Your passions will motivate you. Your talents will move you forward. Your plan will keep you stay focused and directed. Do what you’re destined to do with your life and you won’t have to keep shopping in the self-improvement aisle at the bookstore.

## Dreams Can Be Too Small, Not Too Big

If you’ve done all the exercises thus far you have a dream and a plan to achieve it. But you may still be hesitant. What if your dream is too big? Well, don’t worry about that. Dreams can be too small but never too big. If you’ve carefully thought through everything in this book then you’ve settled on a dream that was meant for you to pursue. Each of us has a dream to pursue. Most of them are big dreams. A few are huge. If you’re pursuing your dream, the dream that’s meant for you to pursue, then don’t worry about its size. If it’s yours and you do your part to seize it, you will. You always will. That’s why it’s yours. Don’t ask yourself whether your dream is too big. Ask yourself what happens if you fail to chase it down?

## You Were Put on This Earth to Change It

If you take anything away from this book, take this: each of us has a destiny to improve others’ lives. It’s not about you. It’s not about me. It’s about us. It’s about how each of us has innate gifts and passions and are meant to use those gifts to help not only ourselves but those around us—our family, friends, firm, community. There is no coincidence that your talents, passions and dreams naturally work together. They interlock for a reason. They feed off of one another for a reason. You have them for a reason. The people we run into each day—those “chance” encounters are not a coincidence. I don’t believe in coincidences and you shouldn’t either. We’re meant for big, wonderful things. We’re meant to serve

and help others through our talents and passions. We're here to create change one person at a time. We each have our own destiny, but that destiny is interwoven with others' destinies and together we can serve and help even more individuals.

## Keep Chasing

Reducing your life plan to writing is just the beginning. Every day you need to do something—sometimes a lot, sometimes a little—to move toward making your dreams a reality. This is a lifelong commitment. This isn't a job. It's your life and you'll be living out your dreams until your last breath. You will take chances and risks along the way. You will fail—a lot. But you will also succeed. You will have ups and downs. You will have moments you want to walk away from it all and there will be moments that you'll be glad you didn't. Nothing's easy. You will need to work hard. You will need to say no to life's distractions. You will need to keep chasing, moving forward, advancing and climbing the hill. Sometimes a door will close. Sometimes several will. Another will open. Keep at it. Be patient. Be persistent. And most importantly know that great things lie in store for you. You have already changed the world. You're just waiting for the future to catch up to this reality.

## Now Stop Reading and Go Change the World

That's it. The book is over. You can stop reading and start doing. The world is waiting. I wish each of you the best and I know whole heartedly that if you chase your purpose and pursue your destiny, nothing will stop you.

And for my boys, David and Michael, I know great, wondrous things lie in store for you both. Your talent and passion for music is unsurpassed. You're going to change the world through your music—performing, composing, conducting and teaching. This book, as with most of what I do, is primarily for you. I can't wait to see your dreams materialize. I really can't wait.

