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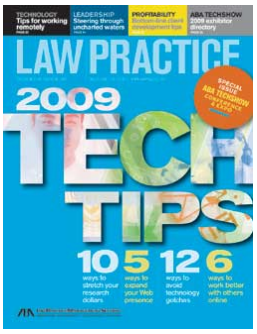
Law Practice Magazine



ABA TECHSHOW 2009 TECHNOLOGY TIPS ISSUE

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FRONTLINES

Reading Minds

Finding a New Framework

Edited by Stephanie West Allen

Are you ready to take a fresh look at your practice and potentially find a different meaning in it? Here are some suggested books for creating a new perspective on both the professional and personal levels. This edition's quartet of contributors recommend books that shifted their thinking.

KIMBERLY ALDERMAN RECOMMENDS:

Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity

David Allen's *Getting Things Done* (Viking, 2001) has affected me on a fundamental,

philosophical level since I first read it in 2002. I remain devoted to the principles outlined in this book, and I believe they create the foundation for my personal and professional success.

Allen explains that unhappiness comes from broken contracts—these can be contracts with family members, clients or even yourself. His principles have strong parallels in Buddhist philosophy. By making a promise to do something, we create an expectation and desire, and by failing to fulfill such expectations, we create disappointment and distress. The purpose behind the organizational system that Allen describes is to prevent broken contracts. The truth is, however, it doesn't matter how you organize your law practice or your personal life, as long as you work within a framework of authenticity and deliberate action.

Getting Things Done does not focus solely on professional success because true success cannot exist isolated in one component or another of our lives. We either go through our days feeling in control and productive, or we do not. If you create a system that allows you to manage your personal and professional life with ease, then you can operate with a "mind like water," bringing a new level of consciousness to your law practice and your life.

Kimberly Alderman is a contract attorney and cultural property law scholar. She authors The Cultural Property and Archaeology Blog and Lawyer On! The Contract Attorney's Blog.

KEVIN HOUCHIN RECOMMENDS:

Inspire: What Great Leaders Do

Lance Secretan is renowned as a thinker on self-improvement and leadership, and it is easy to see why when you read his book *Inspire : What Great Leaders Do* (Wiley, 2004). Consider the following passage:

> We overuse the word "driven." We want to be values-driven, customer-driven, mission-driven, market-driven, technology-driven, solutions-driven and self-driven. Perhaps this is why so many people are driven to drink, driven insane or driven to distraction? Are Zen masters "driven"? Were Christ, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, Buddha or Mother Teresa "driven"? Is being driven part of the problem rather than part of the solution? What would it look like if we were customer-inspired? Or market-inspired? Or values-inspired? Or family-inspired? Wouldn't anyone rather be inspired than driven?

Whenever I feel like practicing law has become a burden instead of a privilege, I review this passage and shift my internal motivation away from billing hours back to where it should be: inspiring clients to reach more of their potential.

Kevin E. Houchin is the author of *Fuel the Spark: 5 Guiding Values for Success in Law School and Beyond* (Morgan James, 2009). In practice, he helps creative people reach their goals.

GERRY RISKIN RECOMMENDS:

Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive

If you are a lawyer, you are likely called upon to persuade others of something quite often—even your own clients at times. Why do this chemistry by the seat of our pants when we can actually have a fabulous chemistry set at our disposal? A chemistry set comes in the form of *Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive* by Noah J. Goldstein, Steve J. Martin and Robert B. Cialdini (Free Press, 2008). The first clue that this might be a great book is the presence of author Cialdini, who alone wrote the classic *Influence* (now in its fifth edition).

Yes! is the equivalent of a decoder ring for how people are persuaded. The first chapter, for example, is called: "How can inconveniencing your audience increase your persuasiveness?" In it, the authors describe the story of Colleen Szot, who supercharged the NordicTrack infomercial sales by changing a tag line from "Operators are waiting, please call now" to "If operators are busy, please call again."

Have a look at the table of contents on Amazon. The breakdown into 50 chapters makes this book ideal to sample bit by bit.

Gerry Riskin is a former managing partner and a cofounder of Edge International, as well as author of *The Successful Lawyer* (ABA, 2006). He is a Visiting Professor at the University of Pretoria in South Africa and authors the blog Amazing Firms, Amazing Practices.

VICTORIA PYNCHON RECOMMENDS:

Conflict Revolution: Mediating Evil, War, Injustice and Terrorism

Written by attorney-mediator Ken Cloke, *Conflict Revolution* (Janis, 2008) is not the first book urging us to exchange 18th century adversarial processes for 21st century conflict resolution techniques. But it is the book that transformed finally and forever the way I personally experience and professionally resolve all disputes.

For those attorneys whose worldview was forged in the 20th century's civil rights movements and perfected during years of legal practice, it is no small matter to acknowledge how thoroughly "rights-based processes" undermine relationships and cause collateral damage. Neither is it simple to replace our maddening but beloved adversarial system with techniques we haven't seen proven. In response, Cloke assures us that mediation, informal problem solving, group facilitation, collaborative negotiation, public dialogue, prejudice reduction and other conflict-resolution techniques have amply demonstrated, in countless conflicts over the last three decades, that there is a better outcome than winning and losing, a more successful process than accusation and blaming, and a deeper relationship than exercising power over and against others.

At a time in our history when technology moves faster than our legal processes, making every victory Pyrrhic, the difficulty of "listen[ing] to people and ideas we do not like or agree with and …

shar[ing] power and control over outcomes" with them should not deter us.

We've begun 2009 with a new president who speaks the 21st century's language of collaboration and reciprocity. *Conflict Revolution* is the book best suited to help 20th century lawyers speak it, too.

After a 25-year litigation career, Victoria Pynchon began mediating the same type of high-stakes commercial disputes she once litigated. She blogs on negotiation strategy and tactics at the Settle It Now Negotiation Blog.

About the Editor

Reading Minds editor Stephanie West Allen is a writer, speaker and mediator who presents seminars on harnessing brainpower for improved business development and conflict resolution. Formerly a lawyer, she blogs at idealawg.net and brainsonpurpose.com.

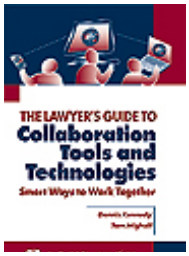
What are you reading? Favorites from wise minds. Reading Minds invites sage professionals to recommend favorite books on a chosen topic. If you have a book you'd like to share, contact Stephanie West Allen.

SPOTLIGHT

New and notable books and resources for the business of practicing law

The Lawyer's Guide to Microsoft Excel 2007 by John C. Tredennick, Jr. (ABA, 2008)

This is a hands-on manual for beginners and longtime spreadsheet users, designed to help you analyze and present your cases more effectively. You'll learn how to build spreadsheets from scratch, use them to analyze issues and create graphic presentations. Key lessons include: How to get started for beginners, setting up advanced spreadsheets, how to use formulas to calculate values for settlement offers and damages, how to make sophisticated charts for the court or to impress your clients, sorting and filtering data and more.



The Lawyer's Guide to Collaboration Tools and Technologies: Smart Ways to Work Together by Dennis Kennedy and Tom Mighell (ABA, 2008). Technology makes it easier than ever to work with others—and this is the first guide dedicated to the special requirements of the legal profession. The authors explain how to use technologies such as Microsoft SharePoint, Microsoft Office 2007, Adobe

Acrobat 8 and Google Docs to leverage collaboration inside and outside the office. You'll learn the best ways to collaborate on documents, cases, transactions and projects, how to collaborate using tools you already have, and more.

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