

**Relationship intelligence:
To succeed as a lawyer
You must supplement your IQ with RQ**

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The skills a law student needs to succeed at law school and the skills a lawyer needs to succeed in the “real world” are distinctly different. In order to be happy and successful within their chosen profession, lawyers need to understand this difference – and take steps to bridge the gap.

The path that leads to successful completion of law school is based almost exclusively on academic intelligence. First, you do well in high school. Then, you do well at a good college. Finally, in law school, it is more of the same – but in an even more academically competitive and intense environment.

After law school, however, the characteristic that distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful lawyers is no longer pure academic intelligence. Almost by definition, everyone who earns a J.D. is extremely book-smart. Most of them are not people-smart.

“Most lawyers never make the shift from academic intelligence to relationship intelligence,” said Arnie Herz. “In my opinion, this accounts for the extremely high level of malaise and dissatisfaction that is plaguing the legal profession. At most law firms, academic intelligence is a given. Everyone is smart. Relationship intelligence is what helps you develop and maintain new business and sets you apart.”

Herz is a speaker and a trainer who has worked with thousands of lawyers and legal professionals to polish their relationship intelligence. Based in New York, he is author of a popular blog -- Legal Sanity (www.legalsanity.com). He is also a practicing lawyer.

In a presentation based on one he recently made to the graduating class of Harvard Law School, Herz discussed the value of relationship intelligence. The monthly educational program of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Legal Marketing Association (www.legalmarketing.org/rockymountain) took place in Denver May 13 at Maggiano’s Little Italy.

“On a daily basis, attorneys must deal with clients, paralegals, co-workers, support staff, adversaries, civil servants, judges, business development sources, family and friends,” said Herz. “With rare exceptions, the ability to manage those personal relationships determines how successful and satisfied an attorney will be.”

Three core principles

Three core principles support the paradigm shift from academic intelligence to relationship intelligence:

- Relationships are essential
- Relationships must be energizing and
- Relationships must accommodate feelings and meet needs.

Relationships are essential, but they must be the right relationships. “We spend too much time with too many people who make too little difference in our lives,” said Herz, “and too little time with the few people who do.

“Take some time to think,” said Herz. “Who are the individuals who contribute most to your success – professional as well as personal? You may be spending too much working on a relationship with a seemingly ‘important’ person who contributes little (or detracts) from your success -- and too little time with a seemingly ‘less important’ person who is actually essential to your success. Align your priorities.”

In addition, you must decide upon your personal definition of success. “A person can work all the time, make a lot of money and have no fun,” said Herz. “That is not success. A person can opt out of work, make no money and have a lot of fun. For most of us, that’s not success either. The definition of success usually lies somewhere in between.”

The second core principle is that relationships must be energizing. In every interaction, there is an exchange of energy – no matter how subtle. This exchange can be depleting or energizing. Each time you interact with someone, become aware of the energetic exchange that is taking place. How do you feel afterwards?

“A depleting interaction affects you physically and emotionally,” said Herz. “Physically, your posture deflates, your body aches and you are less able to control unhealthy impulses like lack of exercise, overeating or substance abuse. Emotionally, you are depressed, defensive and unable to focus. In an adversarial situation, all parties are less likely to compromise.”

An energizing interaction has the opposite effect. “Physically, you bound down the hallway -- alert, pain-free and ready to tackle any issue,” said Herz. “Emotionally, you are optimistic, happy, positive, creative and flexible. Compromise is easier to achieve.”

Whether depleting or energizing, any interaction has a domino effect – leaving the client (or colleague) either less or more energized as well. If you leave them less energized, they will not want to work with you or pay your bills. If you leave them more energized, they will work with you, pay your bills – and recommend you to others.

“Eliminate or minimize depleting interactions,” said Herz. “Focus on those that make you feel energized and positive – about your work, your social network and yourself.”

Finally, relationships must accommodate the feelings and needs of others. “Your clients, co-workers and others want to work with someone who is smart and good at what he or she does,” said Herz, “but they also want to work with someone who connects with them as a human being.” In a commodity market, sensitivity to needs is an excellent way for a lawyer to distinguish himself or herself from the equally good competition.

“An academically intelligent lawyer,” said Herz, “might respond to an urgent client request with a quick email saying ‘Got it covered.’”

“A lawyer with relationship skills would know that the client plans to leave on vacation next week,” said Herz. “He would call the client, acknowledge the client’s need to resolve the problem so he can go on vacation and keep his family happy, and assure the client that he is available and that everything will be done on time. This lawyer/client bond will be much stronger and less vulnerable to a lower-priced competitor.”

In today’s competitive marketplace, academic intelligence is no longer sufficient to insure success. The smart lawyer will develop relationship intelligence as well.