

LAWYERS AND PRODUCTIVITY

By Allison C. Shields, Esq.



Preventing "Lawyer Meltdown" and Creating Productive, Profitable and Enjoyable Practices

Lawyers and Productivity

I recently had the privilege of appearing as a guest host on the [Kennedy-Mighell Report](#), a podcast on the Legal Talk Network. The topic was "Powering Up Your Personal Productivity."

Tom Mighell and Dennis Kennedy are friends and colleagues I met through the American Bar Association's Law Practice Management section. In addition to being great guys and a lot of fun, Tom and Dennis are two powerhouses when it comes to technology for lawyers. I love their podcasts, so I was especially excited to have been asked to join them. If you missed the podcast, you can listen to it [here](#).

Activity vs. Productivity

If you're a regular reader of my newsletter and my other writings, you know that I write and speak about productivity a lot. One of the hurdles I think lawyers need to overcome when it comes to productivity is understanding that being busy isn't necessarily the same as being productive. Too many of my clients (you know who you are!) are busy all day, every day - running from here to there, putting out fires, moving from task to task and project to project. But all of that activity isn't always good - for lawyers or their clients.

We all want to be as productive as we can - to accomplish more in less time, whether to create 'free' time, to satisfy our clients, to get our work 'done' (whatever that means - is it ever all done?), or to make money. But sometimes just doing is counter-productive, either because we're busy with the wrong things, or because we just need some 'not-doing' time to make it all work.

Not only is it important for your mental and physical health to take breaks, but your work and your ideas need breathing room in order to flourish. How often have you gotten a great idea only after walking away from a task or remembered what you could have done or said after the fact?

Try a Little Boredom on for Size

I am reminded of some of these principles when mulling over the differences between how I spent time as a child in the summer and how children today spend their time. When I was little, during the summer months my parents sent us outside and told us we couldn't come in until it was time for dinner. Complaints that there was nothing to do or that we were bored fell on deaf ears. "Find something to do!" we were told. And find it we did. Sometimes the most fun or the best games were derived from our own nutty inventions.

Kids today seem to be provided with entertainment 24 hours a day. Adults are constantly busy. But without boredom, creativity and innovation can suffer, as can self-sufficiency. Necessity is the mother of invention, and boredom necessitates coming up with something to entertain or occupy yourself with. It provides breathing room for your brain. It allows you to come up with new solutions for problems or new ways of doing things when the old ways no longer work or are simply less than optimal. Sometimes that 'not-doing' time is the most productive at all, so try it out.

Even better, try being bored or spending unstructured time with someone else with no technological distractions. You might be amazed at what happens.



Allison C. Shields, Esq. is the President of Legal Ease Consulting, Inc.

Do you want to improve your firm but don't know how or where to start? Do you know what you want to do, but can't find a way to get it done? Contact me to see how I can help.



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