

Tips for How Women Lawyers Can Chart a Different Course (part 1):

By Kimberly Alford Rice

Kimberly Alford Rice is Principal of KLA Marketing Associates (www.klamarketing.net), a business development advisory firm focusing on legal services. As a legal marketing authority, Kimberly helps women lawyers develop practical business development and marketing strategies which lead directly to new clients and increased revenues. Additionally, Kimberly provides career management services to lawyers in transition. She may be reached at 609.458.0415 or via [email](#) and [Twitter](#).



For all the chatter, studies, and disheartening stats we read on where Women in the Law rank in the legal services sector, I say “phooey”. Yes, the numbers stink; yes, there are real barriers, discrimination, disappointing treatment from law firm leadership, but hey, we are women “with a capitol W” as the phrase goes.

Though I am not nor ever have been a practicing attorney, I have also carefully and strategically navigated the career slalom amongst men in the sense that I am usually the only woman in the board room; have been perceived as a “trouble-maker” at times when I preferred to regard my role as a “positive change agent”; and, have proactively spoken out for and against a leadership decision when I sensed it was misguided.

To say this, I say: If a woman (lawyer or other professional) is committed to creating the career of her dreams, she will, with some support and help from her friends.

Below is a checklist along your journey to stay on track:

- **Recognize the value of getting the “right folks” on the bus and those who must come off.** For a host of reasons, not everyone will be a supporter. Just know that and keep moving forward in executing your plan for reaching a “happy place” in your professional life. There are the doubters, the second-guessers, the jealous ones, and generally those who want to stand in your way. Utilize your astute intuition and clear the path of those who do not totally support you. You’ll pick up valuable others along the way.
- **Get and stay focused.** Of course, it is too easy to lose focus on creating the ideal professional life by how just everyday life steps in the way. That is one of the reasons why it is imperative to develop a strategic plan for your goals/objectives each year (with reasonable deadlines and measurable metrics) to keep you on track.

- **Enlist support of professional coach.** Referring to item #2 above, the probability that you will stay focused *and* execute with any great consistency and persistency exponentially increases when you engage the services of a professional coach. When we build the accountability factor into the mix, everything about creating your ideal professional life experience works better. Care enough to invest in yourself, and seek out this critical resource.
- **Carve out a non-conformist role.** Because there are way too many paths to a fulfilling career than to settle into the traditional one, should you see another path which will work better for you? What do I mean? Well, if commuting time consumes too much of your work day, propose to work at home (or closer to your home) at least one day per week.

If childcare concerns are always looming, propose and/or create a different situation. For instance, on Mondays and Wednesdays, you leave the office by 2:00pm knowing you will jump back into your work once you have your children at home and settled. There are many ways to “skin a cat”, as the saying goes. Just be prepared for your fellow female colleagues to exhibit signs of jealousy of your courage and assertiveness to make this work for you. It will likely happen.

In the next installment of this series, I will provide additional tips for women lawyers along their journey to create the career of their dreams.