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LawBiz® TIPS – Week of January 24, 2012

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To merge or to die, those are the choices last week's Wall Street Journal article suggests are the only options left to mid-size law firms. While merger activity is up, it by no means represents the majority of the legal world. What happened to the option of providing good service and quality legal work to selected "mid-tier" clients who appreciate and value your work? What happened to the bulk of the profession, the more than 50% (some say as much as 80%) of sole practitioners to small firms? These are the folks who provide most of the legal services.

Yes, there is Corporate America, a small but disproportionately powerful group being serviced by Big Law, a small, but disproportionately influential component of the Bar ... the rest of the profession, however, is important and provides the bulk of the legal work for the other "99%."

It is this latter group, YOU, who need to attend our LawBiz® Practice Management Institute on April 20 & 21. Sign up now at www.lawbiz.com to take advantage of the **early bird discount**. And take away ideas from our group (limited to 20!) that will dramatically increase your revenues/profits and reduce your stress!

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Technology and Coaching, Like Love & Marriage?

Technology Can Broaden Coaching

Coaching is a highly personal experience, but "technology" - broadly speaking - can expand the reach and impact of a coach. Technology can be as basic as "smart phones" and as sophisticated as Internet meeting connections. Smart phones, for example, allow the person being coached to reach out to the coach at times previously not scheduled. They also allow the coach to reach out to the client from locations other than his/her office. This freedom of location and of contact serves both very well. In the case of the client, accessibility saves him/her from the knee-jerk reaction that coaching is not of value if the coach is unavailable.

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Increased Flexibility of Time

Ready availability by phone or texting doesn't mean the coach must answer right then. Instead, it allows flexibility to create a stated time window within which to respond to the client needs. When that occurs, even if the coach is not immediately available, the client knows the answers to the immediate issue will be forthcoming shortly, not tomorrow or next week. Obviously, there are modifications, but that should be discussed with the client in advance, such as for vacations and other absences by the coach. And even in these circumstances, technology makes it possible to shorten or eliminate communication gaps.

Increased Visual Technologies

Where visual aids are helpful to address the challenges being faced, the Internet and graphics programs like Power Point® create coaching tools that were not available before the current generation of technology. Some people are visual learners and a computer-generated diagram, graph or flowchart can be an important tool for successful coaching.

Implementing a Project Management System

Another example is the use of technology as a solution. An attorney told me he was stressed because he had so much business that he was worried about inadvertently failing to do something essential for a client. We discussed how he dealt with open files and I recommended that he use a project management system that would graphically keep track of the details. In just a week the attorney reported that the system worked so well that he had his best night's sleep in months.

Coaching as an Interactive Process

All such technology is useful, but it is not a substitute for personal interaction between coach and lawyer. The best coaching experience is an active and interactive process - a dynamic partnership between coach and client, and one in which roles and approaches can change. It is essential that the coaching client defines and conveys to the coach what the client "really wants" and works in partnership to achieve it. If the technology-fixated lawyer says of every task, "I don't need a coach, this should only take me 10 minutes to do," the result could be an overwhelmed practice that is either headed for ethical lapses or financial difficulties. In this, as in all other snares, the coach can be an objective sounding board to show the lawyer that, despite what technology can do, no one can do it all without help.

**We are pleased to announce the launch of our new
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Virtual Seminars, Packages, and more.



What Clients Are Saying:

"Ed Poll created and presented your three-day workshop "Starting, Operating, Growing and Profiting from the Practice of Law" for our Law School, the Continuing Legal Education Committee and the Washington Law School Foundation. Ed's professional management skills and presentation talents provided our alumni and students with an outstanding program. The evaluations, both oral and written, were excellent and demonstrated that his audience agreed. One evaluator was particularly appreciative of the thought-provoking and interesting new concepts. Another said, "I have a much better understanding of what I'm to do -- I'm energized. Thank you!" Ed had a major impact on the future of our attendees; this is a unique quality and we are most appreciative of his efforts to create such an interesting and informative program. I enjoyed working with him and look forward to doing so again."

**John F. Rapp
Director, CLE
University of Washington**

"Ed Poll's efforts resulted in the success of our Mid Year CLE Program event. During the planning stages of this Mid Year Program, the Section's leadership indicated that if 75 lawyers attended

This discount is good through January 31, 2012.

The LawBiz® Practice Management Institute

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April 20 & 21, 2012

Santa Monica, CA

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the program, it would be considered a success. With our program attendance at over 100 attendees, the leadership clearly is very pleased with our efforts and want to continue bringing programs to the solo and small firm practitioner. We look forward to this challenge of making the Mid Year Program a regular event."

***Lee S. Kolczun, Chair
Sole Practitioners and
Small Firms Committee
American Bar Association***

Ed Poll, LawBiz® Management

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