

Surviving in the Legal Practice

By Sonia Gallagher, Esq.

Coach for Lawyers at www.TimeForLifeNow.com

Time is constantly ticking isn't it? Doesn't it seem to get even faster when you walk into your office? Competition for solo practitioners and law firm associates is only getting tougher each month as more lawyers lose their jobs.

So, how can you stand out? How can you differentiate yourself, be profitable, and truly enjoy being a lawyer?

As lawyers, we often see clients with issues that could have easily been prevented. We can learn from their mistakes to avoid these issues for ourselves. Though some days may seem like the world is against you, there are specific things we should always keep in mind. If opposing counsel yells at you on the phone, your paralegal gives you an attitude, or a client refuses to pay for work you've already done, always remember these 6 rules for the firm.

These 6 rules enable you to get more work done, keep you from getting a bad reputation, and allow you to be a happier lawyer.

1. **Listen.** How often do you truly listen? Paying close attention to your colleagues and staff can give you a wealth of knowledge. It allows you to have your finger on the dial. You can find out about issues, concerns, and developments going on in your own practice. Don't lock yourself up in your office. You can miss really important information about things going on around you. The information you miss can be incredibly helpful for your professional development, partnership potential, or change of employment.
2. **Take a breath.** We are known for liking to hear our own voices. Be careful not to say whatever pops into your mind, unless you want to take the risk of having to explain it later. This may happen at the worst possible time-like when you are up for a review or promotion to partnership. Think about the way you say things too.



3. **Your beliefs become your reality.** You are the captain of your own thoughts. The only thing in life that you have complete control over is your own thoughts. Yet, so many of us find it extremely difficult to control our thinking patterns. The easiest way to change this is to take 10 minute silence breaks each day. This can be done anywhere and at any time. Doing this frequently empowers you to be able to recognize negative thoughts for what they are, acknowledge and let them pass, and not be affected by them.
4. **Patience is a virtue.** Patience is one of the key elements to being an effective lawyer. After all, we work with a wide variety of cases and personalities each day. It's easy to see how we can lose it at some point. Remember, you can be patient and strong. In the practice of law more than any other profession, it's extremely important to keep your cool. Think about it. How quickly will you be at risk of losing a client or losing a case if you get affected by every little thing that people say or do to you? Don't give anyone else that much control over you.
5. **Lend a hand.** Try not to be territorial in defining your work from the work of others around you. If you face an opportunity to be helpful, do it. Not only will it make you feel great to be useful, it reflects that you are willing to collaborate and go the extra mile- An attorney to watch come promotion time.
6. **A moment.** Sometimes the stress can get the best of us. The key thing to keep in mind when we face a difficult case, client, or situation is that it is only a moment in our life. Like all other moments, it too will soon pass. Remembering this can be the key to a profitable and balanced practice.

Apply these tips to your professional and personal life as often as possible. Before you know it they will become second nature and won't require any effort from you at all.

Sonia Munoz Gallagher, Esq. is an attorney, trainer, and coach for lawyers at Time for Life, LLC. She works with **lawyers** nationwide guiding them to steer the direction of their careers, create sustainable practices reflective of their values, and be happier and more effective advocates. She also works with **law firms** to create collaborative work environments leading to higher productivity and satisfaction. **Schedule a free coaching session** at www.TimeForLifeNow.com and experience the benefits of coaching for yourself.