

Law Firm Lessons From Michael Jordan and Phil Jackson

Forwards play forward; guards play guard. ~Coach

Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time. More specifically, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time who happened to be a shooting guard. Can you imagine if they had asked Michael Jordan to spend 3 quarters of every game at center, or point guard? Do you think there is any chance he would have 6 championship rings if that were the set up?

MJ With His 6 Rings

Michael Jordan's coach, Phil Jackson, didn't have a hard decision to make. He had the best shooting guard in the game, and so he maximized. He made sure that every minute possible MJ was on the court doing what he did best, playing at shooting guard. Was that unfair to the other players? Come on, this is the pros. NBA basketball is business and as such they maximize by making sure the best players are at their best positions.

So why aren't law firms run that way? Many firms can't seem to wrap their head around the idea of having an attorney spend a substantial amount of time doing something other than practicing. Here is how a law firm would look if everyone played their positions:

Rainmakers- great firms survive and thrive based on the business brought in by these rainmakers. These are true connectors with no fear of cold calls or cocktail parties. In a firm run by the Coach- these rainmakers are given greater flexibility to bring in business.

Minders- these are the leaders than run the firm. They design and redesign the systems, they make the crucial hiring and firing decisions, and they solve the firm's problems as they arise. The firm needs good minders desperately- and the minders need to devote significant amounts of time uninterrupted to running the firm.

Grinders- these attorneys know how to crank out the billable hours. They are almost like machines in their ruthless efficiency. They make few mistakes, they are outstanding writers, and they enjoy their work. The grinders make what law firms sell- expert legal advice- they are good at grinding out the hours. They should keep doing exactly what they have been doing.

So what's the problem? Law firms need to let rainmakers be rainmakers, minders be minders, and grinders... well you get the picture. At most large firms the attorneys that are great rainmakers and minders are expected to hit the same billable hour requirements as the grinders. How is that even possible? How can they be expected to be brilliant at

managing and rainmaking when they are expected to be in the office 60 hours per week grinding? That's like expecting Michael Jordan to get the same number of assists as the point guard, and as many rebounds as the center. That's not good team work, and that is not good business.

I had a great interview this last week with [Patrick Lamb of the Valorem Law Group](#). They take a different approach- they have a saying they live by: "When the tide rises, all the ships rise together." Since the partners split the profits evenly, nobody is pointing fingers at who did what- they are confident that if they all do their part, and focus on their strengths- in the long run it will be for the best for them and for their clients.

What type of results are they having? Not only are they attracting legal business from great corporations like FMC Technologies, Patrick says that his last 18 months since starting [Valorem](#) he has been having a ton of fun, best time since he started practicing law. Having a ton of fun as a lawyer? Pass whatever kool-aid they are drinking over there at [Valorem](#), I would like a taste.

MJ succeeded because the coach slotted him into the position that gave the team the best chance to succeed. How about Law Firms start putting their most talented lawyers in the position to do the same?

Its not that complicated, its just good business. To find out more solutions for modern law firms- [click here](#).