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## Book Review [Lawyers in Transition - Planning a Life in the Law]

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## BOOK REVIEW

LAWYERS IN TRANSITION — PLANNING A LIFE IN THE LAW, by Mark Byers, Don Samuelson and Gordon Williamson. Massachusetts: The Barkley Company, Inc. 1988. Pp. 189. Softbound. \$18.50.

*Reviewed by Peter C. Califano\**

*Lawyers in Transition* is a very readable and useful career planning guide for anyone interested or involved in the practice of law. Through the use of data on the current state of the profession, extensive self-assessment exercises, and a lengthy resource section, the authors of this book inform, challenge and provide avenues for creative thinking for individuals seeking to better develop their career paths.

The book's major theme is that attorneys as a whole need to take more personal initiative and responsibility in planning out a career, if that career is to be satisfying and successful. Historically, careers have been "discovered" as one practices law. However, the authors suggest that given the growth of talent among new young lawyers, the increased competition for clients, and the new economics in the practice of law, such a passive approach to career planning is no longer possible. The authors amazingly observe: "More than practitioners of any other profession, calling or trade, lawyers as a group seem to trust the fates rather than their own analytical skills in finding their life's work."<sup>1</sup> Having made this point, the book is smartly divided into three main sections: Background, Foreground and Data Bank, in order to assist the reader to realistically reflect on a current or prospective job position.

In the Background section, information is provided regarding the basic aspects and structure of the legal profession. The main dis-

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1. M. BYERS, D. SAMUELSON AND G. WILLIAMSON, *LAWYERS IN TRANSITION - PLANNING A LIFE IN THE LAW* 5 (1988).

cussion of this section analyzes data from a 1986 study regarding job mobility and job dissatisfaction.<sup>2</sup> The study indicated that fewer than 25% of the individuals from the classes of 1956, 1969 and 1974, from seven northeastern law schools, were still in the same organization that they had entered after graduation from law school. The chapter goes on to discuss various elements of job dissatisfaction and groups the factors as follows:

**Growth:** Wanted to be own boss, start organization; increased responsibilities; growth potential; increase in salary or income.

**Negative:** Job dissatisfaction; limited/no advancement potential; to reduce job pressures; disliked ways skills being used; not challenged to potential; didn't like colleagues; was bored; felt burnt out; was fired.

**Neutral:** Wanted to use different skills; wanted to do different work; position was abolished; completed temporary assignment; wanted to change organization.

**Personal:** Wanted to change location; pregnancy/child rearing; spouse/family concerns; health problems.<sup>3</sup>

It was noted that, in the more recent graduating classes, more personal and negative factors were cited as the reasons for moving. This indicates that more recent graduates are experiencing a clash between their personal values/goals with the expectations/needs of their employers.

One particularly interesting concept presented in the Background section was the nine-year time period that the authors feel one needs in order to become a competent attorney.<sup>4</sup> In analogizing to the medical profession, the first three-year period begins in law school which is mainly concerned with the process of reading, writing, thinking and accumulating the basic knowledge of the law. The next three year period is an "internship" in which basic skills are learned and developed; and the final three-year period is a "residency" where the individual begins to work more efficiently in serving clients and deepens his or her focus in a specific specialty. Therefore, according to the authors, building competency over this nine-year period should be carefully considered and assessed in order to secure long-range career satisfaction.

The Foreground section of *Lawyers in Transition* is the main

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2. *Id.* at 11.

3. *Id.* at 22.

4. *Id.* at 9, 77.

section of the book. It is essentially a workbook that contains sixteen exercises to help the reader assess himself or herself. The exercises help examine career development, personal and career trade-offs and conflicts, current job satisfaction, and the visualization of an "ideal position." Particularly useful were the self-interview,<sup>5</sup> inventory of legal skills,<sup>6</sup> and the position statement.<sup>7</sup> The inventory exercise is most useful in helping the reader form a hierarchical checklist of legal skills that he or she should be accumulating in one's present position.

Having worked through the various exercises of the Foreground section, the reader should be able to objectively analyze his or her present job position and weigh that against various life-style issues, alternative career paths, and competency building needs. If a job change is suggested, the book then provides extensive guidance in planning and conducting a job search.

The Data Bank section is essentially a bibliography of current and relevant sources for legal career planning. This section also has an appendix that includes a very useful article on how to build a law practice by using a consumer oriented approach to the delivery of legal services.<sup>8</sup>

*Lawyers in Transition* provides an integrated "one-stop" career planning guide for its readers. But the book seems to indirectly advance the proposition that attorneys will and should change their current job positions. The authors might have developed more materials for the argument to stay put in one's current job and then offering strategies and tactics for communicating and negotiating desired changes. Additionally, the exercises in the Foreground section tend to be a bit mechanistic with too many charts and boxes to attempt to negotiate. Maybe, with only a book as the medium, these exercises might be the most one could have realistically hoped for. Finally, it might be useful for future editions to include discussions on the broader role of the lawyer in society. Certainly professional and personal career satisfaction can be enriched by an understanding and appreciation of the deeper meaning to the vocation of law.<sup>9</sup>

This book is a valuable addition to any individual's library who

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5. *Id.* at 69.

6. *Id.* at 80.

7. *Id.* at 91.

8. *Id.* at 178.

9. An interesting book on the vocation of law touching on various ethical issues and the role of attorneys in society is: J. PIKE, *BEYOND THE LAW—THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL MEANING OF THE LAWYER'S VOCATION* (1963).

is thinking about or currently involved in the practice of law. *Lawyers in Transition* helps its readers to objectively sort through and analyze the plethora of issues one faces when putting together a blueprint for developing a career in law. The authors' hope that readers "use" this book instead of "stealing" this book, as previous counterculture jokesters might have done, should be fulfilled quite easily.