



11-2008

Professional Development: Your Key to Success and Satisfaction

Sandee Magliozzi
Santa Clara University School of Law

Susan P. Beneville

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/facpubs>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Professional Development: Your Key to Success and Satisfaction, with Beneville, ____ *The Complete Lawyer* ____ (November 2008)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at Santa Clara Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Santa Clara Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact sculawlibrarian@gmail.com.

Cover Blurb:

Professional Development: Your Key To Success And Satisfaction

To achieve the level of growth and expertise you want, develop a robust professional development plan. Here's how. By *SANDEE MAGLIOZZI and SUSAN P. BENEVILLE*

Sandee Magliozzi is the Director of Law Externships in the Academic and Professional Development Department at Santa Clara University School of Law. Ms. Magliozzi oversees the many upper division law students who work for credit with judges, in-house counsel, and law firms practicing civil and criminal law. In addition, she teaches the Civil Practice and High Technology Externship Seminar and conducts workshops on professional skills and leadership development. Before joining SCU, Ms. Magliozzi was the firm-wide Professional Development Manager for Heller Ehrman and a former Senior Manager of Attorney Training and Development at Holland & Knight. In addition, Ms. Magliozzi works as a Strategic Professional Development Consultant with Firm Fundamentals. Contact: smagliozzi@scu.edu or visit: <http://law.scu.edu/>

Susan P. Beneville is the founder of Firm Fundamentals, a leading provider of clinical programs and workshops specializing in professional practices, litigation skills and writing. Building on her years of experience in professional development, associate recruiting, and mentoring, Ms. Beneville, a former litigation partner at Crosby, Heafey, Roach & May (now ReedSmith), founded Firm Fundamentals in 2000 to provide high quality programs to law firm associates nationwide. In addition to providing training programs, as a Strategic Professional Development Consultant Ms. Beneville guides firms through the process of building awareness, assessing individual, practice group, and firm-wide needs, creating strategic professional development plans, and designing and implementing programs. Contact: sbeneville@firmfundamentals.com or visit: www.firmfundamentals.com/

Professional Development: Your Key To Success And Satisfaction

To achieve the level of growth and expertise you want, develop a robust professional development plan

By Sandee Magliozzi and Susan P. Beneville

Click these links for a specific section:

[Think Of Professional Development As Continuing Education](#)
[Professional Development Has Four Components](#)
[Mastering Core Competencies Advances Professional Development](#)
[Tailor Professional Development To Your Needs](#)

In today's changing and challenging legal marketplace, a robust, dynamic and strategic professional development plan is essential to achieving the level of growth and expertise that individual lawyers need to compete and thrive. Though many lawyers view professional development as a way to bridge the gap from law school to practice or as the periodic obligation to fulfill mandatory CLE requirements, it should be viewed as a continuum that encompasses an attorney's entire career from law school to retirement. Think of it as the process by which attorneys acquire, increase and hone the knowledge, skills and attributes (often referred to collectively as "competencies"), which they need to effectively "do" the work of lawyering and excel in the practice of law.

Professional Development Has Four Components

Professional development helps us each become the complete lawyer in four important ways. First, and most obvious, it simply makes us better lawyers—more knowledgeable and more skilled. As our competence increases, so does our confidence. Perhaps just as important, our feelings of stress and risk decrease.

Second, because we are more knowledgeable and more skilled, we become more efficient, productive and profitable. We don't waste time spinning our tires or reinventing the wheel. Even better, clients are often willing to pay more for greater expertise and higher quality work. Whatever the goal, professional development provides the tools that allow attorneys to take command of their work and their work-life.

Third, we create new opportunities and gain choices. We become more selective in choosing the clients and types of assignments we take on, and the people we want to work with. We have a greater ability to say "no" to the work we don't want and "yes" to the work we do.

The fourth benefit is ultimately the most important: through effective professional development, we become self-actualized as attorneys, thus increasing our peak experience. In other words, we are more satisfied with our work efforts. By becoming more expert, knowledgeable, skilled, competent, and confident, we can dive deeper into each project, transaction, or case and take on more challenging and complex work. Quite simply, that level of engagement tends to make us happier.

Mastering Core Competencies Advances Professional Development

Professional development should continue as we progress through our careers. Ideally, as we acquire new skills, we will meet performance standards, develop new areas of expertise, improve our job satisfaction and exceed client expectations.

But besides learning the law and keeping up-to-date, we need to focus on a comprehensive set of five competencies to ensure success and satisfaction.

Knowledge of the law (researching and finding the law, knowing general substantive and procedural law, developing subject-matter expertise)

Marshalling information (fact finding, questioning and interviewing, collecting and reviewing documents, e-discovery, organizing and categorizing information)

Analysis (critical review, reasoning, problem solving, understanding what facts mean, understanding what the law means, and applying the law to the facts)

Legal Expression (persuasive or objective oral and written communication of analysis, positions, opinions, arguments, and recommendations)

Practice skills (executing practice specific tasks such as, in litigation, taking depositions, arguing motions, and trial tactics; or, in transactional work, negotiating, drafting agreements, conducting due diligence, and counseling clients)

We also need to master five intrinsic professional skills:

Client service (building client relationships; understanding the client's business, interests, and needs; providing advice and counsel; and building trust)

Professionalism: (maintaining integrity and honesty, diligence, civility, ethics, diversity, mistake management)

Leadership (influencing others, supervising, delegating, collaborating, building consensus, envisioning, planning, giving feedback, and mentoring)

Business Development (creating and maintaining business relationships, networking, marketing, cross-selling)

Management (time management, planning and implementing tasks, organizing and managing one's own work, organizing and managing others, and running the "business" side of the practice of law)

Tailor Professional Development To Your Needs

To develop a strategic professional development plan, first identify what kind of work you do and what kind of work you want to do. Second, identify the skills and benchmark experiences you need to do that specific work. This will help control the direction and pace of your careers. The individual plan you develop should cover all of the substantive legal and intrinsic professional skills described above. It should also incorporate the five professional development methods: training, work experience, feedback and evaluation, mentoring and coaching, and self-study.

Training includes in-house, outside and on-line programs, seminars, conferences, workshops, and clinics. To be effective, training should be interactive and go beyond the lunchtime info dump; you need to think about the material discussed and to practice the specific skill.

Work experience (or on-the-job-training) is an effective professional development tool when it consists of purposefully determined assignments that build on a solid foundation in the basics and then progressively increase in complexity and responsibility. There is an adage that a person can have twenty years of experience or one year of experience twenty times. If you're doing the same work the same way, over and over again, you will not develop and your work will not improve. Instead, you'll become bored and dissatisfied as your skills

atrophy. We must seek work that stretches us, interests us, and keeps us actively engaged in our practice.

Feedback and evaluation provide the most meaningful (if occasionally uncomfortable) opportunities for professional development. Attorneys must seek and receive constructive, timely, and specific feedback on their efforts. Further, they must be held accountable for building on that feedback. Feedback can come from anyone—supervisors, peers, clients, staff, opponents, judges and juries. The formal evaluation process should be tied to and reinforce each individual's professional development goals. Finally, all attorneys should consciously and critically evaluate their own work upon its completion.

Mentoring and coaching (formal or informal one-on-one intensive relationships, whether long- or short-term) are essential but need to have a specific focus. Most attorneys single out a key skill they want to improve, such as writing, oral advocacy, time management, or business development.

To self-study, review new case law, chat with a subject-matter expert, catch up with the legal bloggers, or read a textbook, journal, or newsletter (by reading this article, you're doing it right now). Self-study is a great way to brush up on the basics, pick up practical pointers, explore new ideas, and stay on the cutting edge. For attorneys with subject-matter specialties, self-study is necessary to stay up-to-date not just on the applicable law, but also on the non-legal aspects of their field of specialty.

All of these professional development methods should be part of a strategic development plan. Revise the plan whenever you achieve or change your objectives. By assessing the skills we need, establishing priorities for developing those skills, and choosing the professional development methods that will achieve those objectives, we set a course for success and personal satisfaction that will have us traveling further faster.

To become more satisfied with your work, figure out where you think you'd like to be and create a professional development plan to get you there. As with most things, professional development takes some time and some money; but if it keeps you fresh, leads you to work you love doing, and paves the way for exciting new challenges, isn't it worth it?