

FROM
ASSOCIATE
TO
AMBASSADOR

Lovereading Review

The Distinctive Skills
Every Law Firm Associate
Must Master
to Enjoy an Exceptional Career

Jeff Baldassari

From Associate to Ambassador, The Distinctive Skills Every Law Firm Associate Must Master to Enjoy an Exceptional Career

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Prelude

It's been 30 years since I wrote the manuscript for this book. Despite the seismic changes that have occurred in the world and in the practice of law, the content has stood the test of time. When my career shifted focus and I stepped into the role of mentor, I realized that there was no similar resource that effectively communicated these crucial skills for the practice of law. I knew the time for this book had come.

Foundational values and principles are timeless. They endure for generations and their impact resonates just as strongly today as it did in 1993. Therefore, rest confident that the contents herein are not simply the “next big thing” in legal practice. They are enduring truths that will benefit you immediately and serve you well throughout your entire career just as they have served those who have come before you.

I never intended this publication to be a how-to book. It doesn't contain any rules of substantive law. It is simply a collection of best practices drawn from observations, and it will provide you with an interactive experience to embed these practices into your career journey.

The approach is simple. If you incorporate these principles into your professional habits, the impact on your career will be profound. I have stripped away any narrative that could easily have been included so that the subtleties of the observations are not buried in the text, consequently increasing their impact.

I didn't conceive all of these concepts on my own. I, like all of us in this profession, applied what I observed or learned from my mentors. Therefore, I must give special recognition to several

talented attorneys who impacted my professional development tremendously far beyond the practice of law. I was fortunate to work with these professionals when I practiced law and I benefited from the experience. Thank you Richard R. Hollington Jr., Lawrence V. Lindberg, Thomas R. Lucchesi, and J. Kearney Shanahan.

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Introduction

Accelerating the trajectory of a career is not a passive endeavor. It requires a strong sense of self-awareness followed by consistent action. This is not a perfect science with a guaranteed outcome. Rather, think of it as a journey: specifically, a journey without a destination. Continuous learning and improvement require you to have an insatiable appetite for improvement and to accept the fact that you will never “arrive.” When one goal is achieved, a higher one must be set. Contentment with the status quo is death.

I suspect that you purchased this book not because you want an ordinary career in the practice of law. I think that you aspire to achieve more. How that’s defined is personal to you. I surmise that you want to be more than just a partner in a law firm with expertise in a field. Perhaps the role of ambassador to the firm is more to your liking. You want to bring something much bigger than yourself to the table. That’s where professional fulfillment lies, and it’s yours for the taking.

The key to your success is people, specifically, your connection to them. Your ability to influence, inspire, motivate and manage people is everything. People buy from people. People support people. The common denominator in successfully achieving these outcomes is trust and respect.

Trust and respect are earned. Both require time and consistent effort from you. This book will help you in those efforts. I provide you with specific, actionable tasks or points to consider to both get you started and keep you going. Each task is accompanied by a recommended activity to develop your skills and inspire you to

greatness. Along the way, I encourage you to monitor your progress and check off your accomplishments. Through these core concepts and takeaways, you will enhance the level of your practice and improve the quality of your relationships with clients, peers and support staff.

Enjoy the journey!

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Everything in life is easy until people get involved.

FRED J. BALDASSARI

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GENERAL SKILLS

Certain skills permeate all professions and industries. Such skills form the cornerstone on which technical skills are founded and developed. Not only do these skills enhance the value of the individual attorney, both personally and professionally, but they also have a synergistic effect on coworkers. To be sure, the overall impact of mastering these general skills is dispositive to the successful practice of law.

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GENERAL SKILLS

- ◆ Motivation That Moves You
- ◆ Be Responsible for Your Own Success
- ◆ No Man Is an Island
- ◆ Self-Management and Personal Growth
- ◆ A Skilled Writer Is a Skilled Communicator
- ◆ A Matter of Ethics

Motivation That Moves You

Although necessary in nearly every profession and industry, motivation and personal disposition are especially crucial in the practice of law because you are an extension of your client, serving in a leading role. You, not your client, are the driving force. As a result, a proactive approach driven from within is a must.

Not only do the following skills enhance the performance and value of the individual attorney, both personally and professionally, but they also have a synergistic effect on coworkers.

By leveraging your personality to your advantage, you will bring out the best in yourself and your team to achieve extraordinary results consistently.

Possess an Excellent Attitude

A positive approach is always better than a negative one.

HERBERT E. MARKLEY

Throughout your entire career, you will need to overcome challenges and obstacles. Your attitude sets the stage for what's possible and for envisioning a successful outcome. It's imperative from the start of the engagement that you believe the ultimate goal can be achieved.

*There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great,
and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something better tomorrow.*

ORISON SWETT MARDEN

Ask yourself: How have I achieved positive outcomes in my life and career when I faced less-than-ideal circumstances?

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What made me believe that I would be successful?

*An optimist is a man who says the bottle is half full
when it's half empty.*

AUTHOR UNIDENTIFIED, NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL, JUNE 11, 1962