

*five*  
STEPS

*to BUILDING  
the PRACTICE you  
REALLY WANT*

*An action plan for building your book of  
business and finding your passion for law.*

BY JANICE P. BROWN



# SUCCESSFUL LAWYER RAINMAKERS

are those who are passionate about their profession and enjoy building a book a business. One of the benefits of having your own book of business is more control over your life. Lawyers who control their schedule are better able to balance their work and professional lives.

But how do rainmakers reinvigorate that passion and begin to find this independence? First, develop a vision for the kind of client and business you want. Really think of what your ideal practice would look like and abandon self-limiting thoughts. Second, read and apply the concepts in the leading business journals to the practice of law. The key to economic success is all about forming a successful mindset. Finally, develop a systematic approach to business development. Do something concrete every single day to develop your book of business. This article breaks down the path to building your book of business into five simple steps.

## STEP 1: YOU HAVE TO DO AT LEAST ONE NEW THING *this* YEAR.

*“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results.” —Anonymous*

Do something different. Commit to change your practice for the better. The goal is to add on a new positive layer this year. No matter how great the prior year was, improve it. Be bold! Tap into your inspiration. Believe that you can do anything, even if it only lasts a second. Ignore your brain’s excuses for why you haven’t reached your full potential. If you listen—and I mean really *listen*—you can hear the whisper of your dreams. Vow this year to sanely do something different to make your life more abundant and happier. Challenge yourself to take step 2.

## STEP 2: GET *a* VISION.

*“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.” —Albert Einstein*

Take some time to develop a vision of what you want your ideal practice to look like. Don’t set any limits on this vision. If you want to develop a certain kind of practice, it’s never going to happen until you articulate just what that practice would look like. I understand that, for lawyers, visualization is inconsistent with the practice of law. We are the sober ones, committed to facts. Visualization is for artists, not for those of us more firmly grounded. But to be able to see your success in your mind’s eye is one of the most powerful tools you can employ.

Think of the phrase from Martin Luther King’s famous speech: “I have a dream.” It has been said that he was strategic in using the word “dream.” He wanted listeners to look beyond their current circumstances; he wanted to inspire them. King did not say “I have a tactic” or “I have a strategy.” He said that he had a dream because a dream permits you to see a reality that does not yet exist. A dream is motivating; it speaks to your spirit.

As reported by Christopher Clarey in the *New York Times* in February 2014, the most elite athletes effectively use visualization to increase their skills. The more an athlete can “see” the entirety of what he or she is going to experience, the better the execution. Many Olympic teams have their own sports psychologists who assist the athletes with visualization techniques. These techniques are different than external visual tools, such as video games. Instead, with the internal visualization, the athletes learn to rely upon their own images to succeed.

Many celebrities claim to have always known they would be successful. Jim Carrey wrote himself a check for \$10 million when he was broke, before he received an actual check for that amount for one of his movies.

In business, visualization has become a vital tool for entrepreneurs. Google any of the significant business magazines—the *Harvard Business Review* or *Success*, for example—and you’ll find countless articles about the benefits of visualization.

So, given the scientific support and use, why don’t lawyers try it?

For one, the law is based on precedent, which looks backward. We rely on what came before to guide us on what to do next. Visualization is the opposite. It attempts to create a pathway in the mind for what hasn’t yet happened. Further, we belong to a profession that has a pack mentality. We copy each other. But innovation expands outside of the pack. For example, it has been said that if Henry Ford would have asked what people wanted before he created the automobile, they would have said faster horses. Lawyers can use visualization to create a picture of success, of abundance, of happiness and peace. The picture makes it easier for the brain to provide a pathway to achieve it. (As an aside, I knew one very successful lawyer who visualized daily: Mary Cranston, former chair of Pillsbury, who continues to be a role model for many.) Take 10 minutes when you finish this article to visualize the perfect client and the perfect practice setting for you.

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### STEP 3: OVERCOME *your* LIMITING BELIEFS.

*“If you want to doubt something, doubt your limits.” —Don Ward*

After you create a vision, you will then learn how best to hold it. At first the vision is foreign; you may feel as if there’s a gap between your reality and your vision. That gap is a function of your current beliefs—ones that you need to change. For example, if your vision is to begin to attract business from great clients (why not? You are making it up) but you have beliefs that undermine that vision, you need to recognize the negative effects and go about changing them one by one.

From my conversations with lawyers who begin this process, some of the limiting beliefs that I have heard include:

- I do not have enough time.
- I do not have enough support.
- I can’t succeed.
- It is too hard.
- I am too shy.
- I am not even sure I want to make money for this firm.

These beliefs, among others, may be true, based on your current set of circumstances. However, if the answer to your problem is that *someone else* has to change, you are doomed.

I am not naïve. Everyone has obstacles to overcome. I have experienced racism and sexism and other “isms” in my life. I understand that they are painful hurdles that I had to learn to jump over or work around. There are times, I admit, when I have felt outmatched by someone else’s negative views. Nonetheless, I do not have time to wait for them to change. My vision has no limitations for race, gender or jerks. So I keep working on my negative beliefs to minimize their impact on my life and do my best to share that confidence with others.

Even if you are not at the best firm in the world, learn how to network and develop business for yourself. I am not waiting until the world changes. I would rather have success in spite of it all. We all have 24 hours daily. How do you leverage your time? How do you manage your energy? Can you find at least five minutes a day to do something differently?

Give just five minutes a day to start changing your beliefs.

## STEP 4: FOLLOW BUSINESS LEADERS, *not lawyers*, WHEN IT COMES to CREATING ECONOMIC SUCCESS.

*“I always knew I was going to be rich. I don’t ever think I doubted it for a minute.”*

—Warren Buffett

*“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”* —Steve Jobs

*“The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude.”* —Oprah Winfrey

### SUGGESTED READINGS

In addition, listed below are some great books, organized by topic, that will enlighten you on general business, business development and the proper mindset for success:

- **Brainwork:** *How to Become a Rainmaker: The Rules for Getting and Keeping Customers and Clients*, Jeffrey Fox; *Super Rich: A Guide to Having It All*, Russell Simmons.
- **Personal Motivation:** *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*, Susan Jeffers; *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey.
- **Vision:** *The Power of Intention and Wishes Fulfilled*, Wayne Dyer.
- **Beliefs:** *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of “A Course in Miracles,”* Marianne Williamson; *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** *I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn’t)*, Brené Brown; *Neuroscience and Leadership: The Promise of Insights*, Richard Boyatzis.
- **Good Business Reads:** *The E-Myth*, Michael E. Gerber; *What They Don’t Teach You at Harvard Business School*, Mark McCormack.

**Start today.** Subscribe to the *Harvard Business Review* or pick just one of these resources to read over the next holiday break.

Now that you have your vision, take concrete action toward making it a reality. Take some time to develop a business plan for achieving your goal. Everyone, at every stage in their professional career, needs to take some time to retool and rebuild their practice. The good news about forming a successful business plan and adopting it is that a lot of successful people are writing articles and books and sharing their experiences. For example, the *Harvard Business Review* is a fabulous resource for understanding the leading trends in business success. It began in 1922 as the magazine for the Harvard Business School but has evolved into a general management magazine covering a wide range of business topics. As Adi Ignatius, its current editor-in-chief has stated: “The world was desperate for new approaches. Business-as-usual was not a credible response.” It’s a great magazine and contains a whole host of articles that are helpful to all business people, including lawyers.

## STEP 5: GET *a* SYSTEM *and* USE IT CONSISTENTLY.

*“Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.”* —Jim Ryun

You have a vision and you have done the research. Time to put your plan into action. What do you do? Turn to Jeffrey Fox, the Harvard-educated author who wrote *How to Become a Rainmaker*. Fox ingeniously created a system that numerically measured the value of vague business development conduct. I have been using Fox’s system since 2004 and it has served me well, increasing my business year after year. Fox suggests that each and every week, you do something to develop business. And each and every week you grade yourself. Hold yourself accountable.

In a nutshell, here is Fox’s system, which I have tweaked a bit:

### USING THE POINT SYSTEM EVERY DAY

- 1 point:** Sending an email or handwritten card to a decision maker.
- 2 points:** Scheduling a meeting or participating in telephone call with a decision maker.
- 3 points:** Meeting a decision maker face-to-face, attending a networking event with multiple decision makers.
- 4 points:** Getting retained for new matter.

I encourage lawyers to start with getting two or three points a week. Then build to a larger amount as they become more proficient. My goal, as Fox suggests, is 20 points per week. After I got accustomed to his system, I modified it by creating a spreadsheet and adding columns. Those additional columns included a follow-up activity and date when I would do the follow-up, and then I would schedule the follow-up. This system, called Cloudburst, has helped me and other lawyers who I have trained achieve business success. Lawyers like the mathematical aspect of the system. The bottom line? No matter what system you use, you need one.

The most important part of business development is the follow-up. Lawyers, like many people, do not follow up. They let their limiting beliefs negatively affect their ability to follow up. Often people interpret a slow response as a rejection. Most times, it isn’t. People are just busy or forgetful.

There is more to developing business than indicated here, but this is a good start. Developing business relationships is not a magic trick; it requires discipline and relentless optimism. I challenge you to do at least one new thing this year. **LP**



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