

SO BUSY YOU CAN'T SEE STRAIGHT?

How to Cope
(and NOT put Marketing
on the Back Burner)

By Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC



I have yet to meet a lawyer who says, “I really have enough clients and I don’t want any more.” While you know you need a steady stream of new clients to sustain and grow your practice, many times your best intentions end up being filled with what you perceive to be more important – billable hours. Still today, too many of you think that marketing is a secondary task you will do – grudgingly – if you have the time. Imagine if other businesses had this mentality.

Apple would focus on fulfilling its current (huge) demand for the iPhone 10. The company would solely and exclusively build iPhone 10s because everyone wants one. They would cease doing anything but building and selling the iPhone 10s that are being demanded by consumers at the exclusion of everything else.

They would say, “We need to make hay while the sun shines.” But what happens when everyone who wants an iPhone 10 has one? Well, for one thing, the market will have become saturated. What happens to Apple who put all its – well, let’s say apples – into one basket? They would have no pipeline, no iPhone 11 in the works, no new resellers, no new strategic partners.

It’s highly likely they would panic, wishing they would have continued planting seeds to ensure their future growth.

Have you ever been so busy in your practice; immersed in litigation, helping corporate clients close deals, or handling a string of divorce or PI cases that landed – at the same time – on your plate? The truth is, you’re busier than you want to be. You feel like the

proverbial restaurant server whose section filled up all at once. The last thing you want to do is anything that would result in your life becoming even more out of balance like attracting even more clients. As you know, throughout the course of a year, your law practice and your own level of busyness will ebb and flow. Sometimes you have no work-life balance, and other times you fear your best years are behind you.

TIPS TO STAY FOCUSED ON THE BIGGER PICTURE

FIND HELP. If you are a solo practitioner, consider adding a contract paralegal or temporary associate to your team to help you through the onslaught of work. If you are in a larger firm, pull paralegals and associates in to help you.

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panic mode, which can result in many long- and short-term health maladies. When you are feeling stressed, close your eyes and take three very deep, slow, controlled breaths. In through your nose, out through your nose. Repeat those three deep breaths throughout the day. When you center yourself through mindful breathing, you can crank out your very best work. I just downloaded and have been using an iPhone app called – you guessed it – Calm. It walks you through a series of short guided mindfulness meditations. I highly recommend it.

DO ONE THING EVERY DAY.

Even when your work is demanding all your time, do one small task – every day – to plant the seeds for your future work. You can make hay, but don't think it will last forever.

A-LEVEL CLIENTS. Generally every lawyer who tells me about a challenging client, saw the red flags before they agreed to work with the person. It's one thing to be busy and quite another to be busy with clients with whom you wished you weren't working. When things calm down really look at the traits of your very best clients, so you can avoid taking on difficult clients in the future.

DRAW LINES IN YOUR DAY.

There comes a point when you realize that even if you worked solid for three

weeks, you would still not feel caught up. When you know you have come to a logical place to take a break, leave. Go home. Spend time doing the things you love. Your work will be there for you tomorrow.

GET MOVING. It's long been proven that exercise helps reduce stress and ultimately, gives you energy. Don't stop going to the gym or to yoga class because you're too busy. It defeats the entire purpose of your workout routine.

MAKE LISTS AND PRIORITIZE THEM.

After you have drawn a line in your day and before you go home, make a list of all the activities swimming around in your mind. If you put these action items down on paper, you will be better prepared to dive into them tomorrow. Make sure you assign "A" and "B" priorities to each task, along with the amount of time it will take you to complete them. This process alone will help you feel more in control. Then, in the morning, start knocking down the "A" priorities.

Remember that sometimes, when it rains, it pours. By acknowledging your practice will have cyclical ebbs and flows, you will be better prepared to fill your ebbing time with proactive marketing and relationship building strategies, and to cope with an excessive flow of work by calming your mind and setting priorities.



Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC, is the founder and president of Professional Services Marketing LLC. For nearly 30 years, Terrie has worked with individual lawyers who go through the typical ebb and flow of too much, or not enough client work. Much of Terrie's work focuses on helping lawyers achieve and maintain the right attitude to succeed; even when they are too busy. She earned her master's degree from the University of St. Thomas. Need help or motivation? You can reach Terrie at Terrie@psm-marketing.com or (320) 358-1000.