What 10 Legal Professionals Have Learned in 10 Years

Written by Derek Bolen

In business years, 10 years can be a lifetime. In fact, it's estimated that 96% of businesses will fail within 10 years.

Those that succeed do so with a tremendous amount of effort and support. This year at Clio, we're celebrating our 10th anniversary—thanks in large part to support from our customers.

10 years can also be a long time in terms of one's legal career, and certainly, many Clio customers have had incredible experiences and learned important lessons along the way. We asked lawyers and legal professionals to share the most valuable lesson they've learned over the past 10 years.

Below are some of their responses, grouped under three poignant themes:

1. Trust your instincts

Loraine DiSalvo, Morgan & DiSalvo, P.C.

"If a client balks at your fee or at your retainer, they won't pay you anyhow, and it's best to let them walk out the door without hiring you."

Bobbie Wallace, LaMont Law

"About 10 years ago, I was working on a case with a very difficult client. While working on responding to a discovery request, I groused to a co-worker about what bad karma I must have projected into the universe that now I had to deal with the client's idiosyncrasies and what was I supposed to do with this? Her simple response has stuck with me to this day: "Maybe you're not the student in this lesson. Maybe you're the teacher." Her words totally changed my attitude about the way to handle difficult people and have made an immense difference in my life, both personally and professionally."

Michelle Limbaugh, The Limbaugh Law Firm

1. Do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.
2. “Just because you can” does not mean that you should.
3. Do not make decisions based on fear.
4. Be intentional.
5. Remember that crisis is self-defined.

2. Never Stop Learning

Jonathan G. Stein, Law Offices of Jonathan G. Stein

“Professionally, I have learned that there is so much I still don’t know about the practice of law!”

Jordan Couch, Palace Law

“I’ve learned to travel through life like a leaf on the wind. Ten years ago I was preparing to graduate high school. I was going to go to college then some east coast law school and work for a big firm in DC doing mergers and acquisitions. Only one of those things ended up being true (I went to the planned college) and I couldn’t be happier or in a better position professionally or personally. At times over the last 10 years I tried hard to focus on my plan, [but] it always failed. But when I opened myself up, wonderful opportunities came to me. Now, my law school was in a state I had tried hard to avoid, my firm is small, I’m on the opposite coast, I’m heavily involved in organizations I love, and my practice area is one I didn’t even know existed when I graduated law school. By abandoning my plans, I found my passion and more importantly, found an environment that encourages me to pursue them relentlessly.”

Michael Huddle, Caulder & Valentine Law Firm, PLLC

“Never stop learning and streamlining. Minimize distractions and excess.”

Liz Cuccinello, Elizabeth Cuccinello, Esq.

“There’s always something new to learn and [there’s always] more developing. Other attorneys are great resources and great contacts (not only for legal issues either!)”

3. Put kindness first

Todd Ver Weire, The Law Office of W. Todd Ver Weire

“Even with the advances in technology and communication, never forget that a small human touch, whether it be an actual call instead of a text, or a handwritten note instead of an email, goes a long way. Also, sometimes it is worth it to just drop in and say hi to the court staff where you appear regularly. While this is admittedly easier in some jurisdictions than others, it never hurts to be friendly and take a genuine interest in them and their lives.”

Chelsea Griffiths, DeVries & Associates, P.C.

“Treat everyone with kindness. I speak to a lot of people daily that our firm can’t help ([their needs are] outside of our scope, etc.), but just being kind and human seems to go a long way. People thank me all the time for taking 30 seconds to let them talk, or for providing them with a referral.”

Elizabeth Cary, Chartier & Nyamfukudza, P.L.C.

“Be kind to everyone you meet. It doesn’t hurt anyone to be kind to them, but it can hurt if you aren’t.”

About Clio

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