How to Achieve More With the Right Lawyer Coach

Written by Sharon Miki

Are you striving to take your legal career to the next level, but feel like you're not performing at your full capacity? If so, lawyer coaching could make all the difference. To elevate your career, law firm, and work-life balance efficiently and effectively, a lawyer coach can save you time and energy in the long run.

Just as a swim coach trains an athlete to achieve their personal best time in the pool, law coaches help train lawyers to reach their full career potential and realize their goals. Attorney coaches can offer you a fresh perspective, expert guidance, accountability, and more. Put simply, law coaches help attorneys create goals and bring those goals to life by connecting them with action.

In this blog post, we'll outline the ways attorney coaching can help lawyers reach their full potential. We'll also offer tips on choosing a lawyer coach and provide insight into the coaching experience.

Is lawyer coaching right for you?

Think about your career: Are there areas that could use improvement? Could your leadership or communication skills be stronger? Do you want a better work-life balance? If so, coaching for lawyers is likely a good fit.
Most lawyers can benefit from legal coaching services because all lawyers want to improve their careers in some way—as quickly, efficiently, and effectively as possible.

How lawyer coaching can help

There are many ways lawyer coaching can benefit you—including lawyer performance, business, career, and mental health and wellness.

On this episode of the *Legal Toolkit* podcast, coach Stephen Seckler breaks lawyer coaching into two broad categories:

- **Business development:** Where attorney coaches help lawyers learn essential business skills, create marketing and business plans, and provide support as they stick with those plans.
- **Career coaching:** Where coaches help lawyers grow their career, communicate more effectively, and make career transitions.

Let's look at eight ways working with a lawyer coach can benefit your career, practice, and well-being:

1. Reduce stress and improve mental health

Lawyers work in a high-pressure, high-stress environment that is often linked to negative consequences for mental health and wellbeing. Mental illness and substance-related issues are widespread in the legal industry—a 2016 study by the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation and the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs found these alarming statistics:

- 21% of licensed, employed attorneys are problem drinkers
- 28% face depression
- 19% struggle with symptoms of anxiety

How can lawyer coaching help to support mental wellness?

According to coaches Allison Wolf and Terry DeMeo, two of the most powerful steps lawyers can take to support mental wellness are:

- Talk to someone
- Actively cultivate a better mindset

And a lawyer coach can help with both of these.

Managing your stress is key as well. One of the best ways to keep stress at a minimum is to feel like you have some control and a plan for what you're doing. A lawyer coach can also help with this.

In an episode of Clio's *Daily Matters* podcast, for example, Allison Wolf discusses how working with a coach to set boundaries and create a game plan can help lawyers become more focused and efficient during their workday. This helps lawyers effectively reduce uncertainty and stress in their day-to-day.

For more about lawyer wellness and mental health in the legal industry, listen to this episode on lawyer wellness and mental health on *Daily Matters*.

2. Achieve better work-life balance

Carving out a better work-life balance is vitally important to most lawyers. According to the *2020 Legal Trends Report*, achieving work-life balance ranked third highest on the list for lawyers on what defines law firm success. But finding that balance on your own is a daunting challenge within the pressure-packed legal industry.

A law coach can keep you focused and help prioritize your work-life balance goals, which may otherwise be pushed aside during busy periods. Taking the time to talk through your goals may also help you uncover new strategies and tools to make finding balance easier (and help keep lawyer burnout at bay).

3. Grow your law firm by increasing profitability

Increasing law firm profitability is a major goal for most lawyers. But it's easy to get overwhelmed with client work. Also, getting swept up in the cycle of putting out fires in your day-to-day can overshadow your firm's profitability and growth efforts.

Lawyer coaching that focuses on business development can help you focus on improving your firm's profitability. This includes setting goals, delegating and automating work, and tracking your firm's key performance indicators. Coaching can offer a different perspective to look at your firm and your business while helping you stay engaged and accountable.

4. Improve your leadership skills

Building a strong law firm culture is critical to a law firm's success. But leadership skills are not always effectively taught in law school—and don't always come naturally. This is where lawyer coaching can help.

As outlined by the American Bar Association, leadership coaching for lawyers focuses on helping attorneys develop skills to make them better and more effective leaders. This includes improving attorneys' critical thinking, creative analysis, and well-being skills. Leadership coaching shows lawyers what is necessary to become effective leaders, like providing constructive feedback. Also, leadership coaching helps lawyers apply those skills to management and leadership opportunities in their careers, like decision-making for their practice.

5. Generate a healthy pipeline of new clients with effective marketing

New clients are essential for law firm success, but attracting and acquiring them takes work. A coach can help with business development by assisting with creating a lead generation and marketing strategy. A lawyer coach can offer insights, serve as a sounding board, and help you market your firm more effectively.

6. Improve professional relationships by communicating more effectively

Clear communication can make or break client and professional relationships. But attorneys often don't take time to step back and see what communication methods are working and what isn't. Attorney coaching is an effective way to assess and improve your professional communication style and strategies.

A law coach can, for example, help a lawyer develop their empathy and emotional intelligence (also known as EQ). This way, attorneys can improve their listening skills, learn to recognize other peoples' emotions, and adapt their behavior in response.

7. Provide career guidance

Lawyer coaching offers attorneys a place to discuss their career goals and aspirations—whether at the firm they're currently at or beyond. This helps attorneys make sure they're on the best path.

If you're in the process of taking on a new role within your firm, pivoting to a new firm, or even starting your own firm, it is useful to have someone to talk through your decision-making process. A professional can provide a third-party perspective and help point you in the right direction when you may otherwise be caught up in the minutiae of a situation.

8. Manage your legal practice more effectively

Coaching for lawyers can also help you think deeply about what's working (and what isn't) when it comes to managing your legal practice. By working with a coach, you can get more organized and brainstorm new ideas. For example, you might identify inefficient law firm processes, such as client intake, so that you can look for better solutions.

How to select the right law coach

When it comes to selecting a lawyer coach, there are many options available—but the key is choosing the coach who is the best fit for you. Hiring a lawyer coach is a financial and time investment, so don't just hire the first one you encounter. Looking for a reputable lawyer coach with the relevant certification and credentials is a good place to start. Then, consider the following factors:

Understand your learning style

Do you learn best by talking or listening? Do you need a lot of visual and tactile work to unlock ideas, or do you learn best through discussion alone?

By identifying your preferred learning style and finding a coach that complements it, you can save yourself from potential frustration in the future.

Determine your goals

While your law coach may help you unlock your specific goals when working with them, it's smart to have a general idea of what you most want to focus on. The best coach for you may be different if you want to do deep work on business development and marketing strategy versus focusing largely on work-life balance.

Time and budget

Lawyer coaching is an investment in yourself and your business. So, be sure to determine how much time and money you are able (and willing) to devote to the process before you start looking for your coach.

Create a plan for measuring your return on investment

You hire legal coaching services with specific goals in mind and things that you want to accomplish. That's why it's important to have a method to track your progress and measure success. Having a system of accountability is useful when motivation wanes—it also shows you what's working and what strategies need tweaking or changing.

While some of your objectives (for example, better work-life balance) might be driven by feelings, you can and should measure quantifiable goals. For example, if you want to coach to help you bring in more clients, you can measure and assess this over time. When you measure results, you can make more confident, data-driven decisions as you move forward with your business.

How attorney coaching works

Different lawyer coaches will have different approaches and coaching styles, but you can expect most to cover these core areas:

1. Initial consultation

An initial consultation can determine if the coach is a good fit for your needs. In an initial consultation, you can get a feel of the coach's style, see how their coaching will work, and discuss general goals and expectations.

2. First session

Once you've chosen a lawyer coach, your first session will likely focus on the specifics of what you want to achieve and what you're struggling with. A lawyer coach might ask you questions about your goals and the challenges you're facing. This process is, in itself, helpful for intensifying areas that you want to focus on.

3. Follow-up sessions and ongoing support

Ongoing work with a lawyer coach is essential for holding you accountable to your goals. Depending on your goals and situation, coaching may continue for months or may be ongoing. You may check in or have follow-up sessions on a weekly or monthly basis. By working with a coach for an extended period, the coach will become more familiar with your goals and growth. This lets them work with you to develop and achieve those goals.

4. Trust

Trust is critical in a lawyer-coach relationship. Before you start with a lawyer coach, be sure that you both are clear on your professional relationship parameters. This includes factors like confidentiality. If a coach is certified from an organization like the International Coaching Federation, they may have a code of ethical conduct that they follow.

5. Clear, open communication

When there's trust, there can be clear, open communication. Open communication also helps manage expectations on both sides. When you feel comfortable discussing your goals and challenges with your coach, you can get the most out of your time together.

Lawyer coaching can help you stand out in a competitive industry

Working with a law coach can give you a competitive edge by unlocking new perspectives and strategies. Lawyer coaching can also provide accountability to uncover ways to achieve your goals effectively and efficiently.

For lawyers considering attorney coaching, it's important to choose your coach carefully. Look for a coach who fits with your learning style, goals, and personality. Coaching styles will vary. But lawyer coaches should act as a trusted sounding board and provide reliable advice. This helps attorneys discover the right solutions to their career and business goals.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.