

President's Column

The Ticket & The Journey

by **Scott D. Levine**

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Many of us recall getting our "ticket" to practice law. This ticket comes after getting through law school and then passing the Bar exam. Remember how badly we wanted to get through law school? Remember how badly we wanted to pass the Bar exam? Despite getting past these two hurdles in the way of us getting our "ticket," many in our profession are not satisfied.

My hope is that this year we will all take a step back and try to remember why it was or is that we chose to become lawyers in the first place. In addition, my hope is that during the course of this year, we will all take some time to learn some skills that make us better people and better in business. I think that sometimes these two skills go hand in hand as most of us measure our happiness with our success.

I am not one for statistics, but it is often said that lawyers as a group are generally dissatisfied with their work. That means that they are not happy with the "ticket" that they worked so hard to get in the first place. Why is that? Why is it that someone who has spent seven years of school (after high school), a lot of money on that schooling, and who has dedicated himself or herself to passing a single exam that is often referred to as one of the toughest exams in existence, is not satisfied with his or her work?

Some reasons I have heard include: billable hours, insurance companies, difficult clients, judges and other lawyers, lack of time for family, lack of time for self and money.

How is it that we were all smart enough to get through countless teachers and professors who often challenged us beyond our ability? How is it that we were all smart enough to graduate from college? How is it that we were all smart enough to graduate from law school? How is it that we were all smart enough to pass the Bar exam? Despite all of this, why is it that the challenge we face daily seems to have gotten the best of many of us? For some, this is a daily challenge. For others, it is a weekly, monthly or annual challenge. Instead of looking at these "problems" and/or dissatisfaction, look at them as "challenges." The best part about these "challenges" is that we set the parameters for success or failure! There is not a teacher or professor who is grading us. The only person grading you on your success is you.

About a year ago, I attended the Consumer Attorneys of California annual convention in San Francisco. At one of the sessions, a gentleman by the name of Timothy O'Brien spoke to a standing room only crowd. The topic for the session I was attending that morning related to the business of being a lawyer. Mr. O'Brien was very entertaining and also opened my eyes and the eyes of many of those in the room that early Sunday morning!

One of the questions Tim asked us is, "How many books does the average college graduate read each year?" There were a few guesses from those in attendance. The answer was .8! The "." is not a typographical error as the answer is not 8 but 0.8. Tim went on to say that "it is amazing that after college we all know all there is to know!"

Tim O'Brien wrote a book entitled, "The Power of Personal Branding." This is a must read for people not just lawyers. It is an eye-opening journey about you. The book explains in very good examples how the things that you do each and every day define who you are to other people. Is the message you are broadcasting the message you intend to broadcast?

This year, it is my goal to have CASD educate its members on the "business of being a lawyer." Hopefully, if we all gain a little more knowledge about the business and profession that we have all worked so hard to enter, we will all be a little more satisfied with our jobs. The satisfaction with our jobs will certainly spill into other parts of our lives and, hopefully, we will all be able to look back at the end of the year and say "this was a great year!" In addition, hopefully, we will be able to look back and list our accomplishments (both personally and professionally).

Here is to the most successful 2010 we have ever experienced! Enjoy the journey and embrace the opportunity.