Formula 168: How lawyers create the life they want

By Wendy Witt, JD

As you look to create, build, or transform your law firm, start first by identifying clearly the life you want. The key to happiness and fulfillment is to pinpoint that ideal life and then build your law firm to serve that life – not the other way around.

Too many lawyers have it backwards, selling their soul to the firm, racking up hours without the results they want because they blindly threw themselves in without thinking through what they wanted to create. You own the firm; the goal is to not let the firm own you.

Putting off happiness until you're successful doesn't work. Both the scientific research (e.g. Dr. Shawn Anchor) and anecdotal evidence show that happiness comes first and success is a result of happiness. Again, not the other way around. When you’re happy, you’re focused on the good. You’re more productive and energized. You reach out. You make things happen.

You can change your life and be happier by modifying how you allocate the 168 hours we each get every week. The first step is observing where you are and where you want to be. Fill in the pictured chart, documenting how long you spend on each activity now as well as how long you would spend on that activity if you were living the life you want.

I’ve filled in a few blocks as example to get you started. In this scenario, I get 7 hours of sleep a night on Mondays, but if I was living my ideal life, I’d get 9 – and so on. Your 168 chart doesn’t have to be perfect. Nothing is perfect and you don’t need to be perfect to be successful. Just do fill it in with what you have in this moment and move forward.

When you go through the analysis, you’ll identify where to make changes to get you to where you want to be. Where in your life will you tweak your 168? Don’t take it for granted that you know where your 168 go. This exercise will surprise you – all my clients tell me they’re surprised in one way or another. For example, you’ll likely see the need to delegate. Shockingly, many solo and small firm lawyers lose up to $218,400 a year because they fail to delegate administrative tasks and use that time to bill, market or strategically work on the firm.

Once you see where your 168 needs to be invested, the next step is to identify how much money it takes for you to live that life.

Wendy Witt, JD serves solo and small firm attorneys by helping them create their million-dollar law+ firm and the life they love. She practiced estate planning law for 15 years and serves as a Master Law Firm Business Strategist, Certified Success Trainer, and Mindset Mentor for Entrepreneurial Lawyers. Learn more at MillionDollarAttorney.com.