

# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS, PRACTICE MANAGEMENT AND WELLNESS TIPS

Presented By:

Susan C. Olson

[solson@hawleytroxell.com](mailto:solson@hawleytroxell.com)

Andrea J. Rosholt

[arosholt@hawleytroxell.com](mailto:arosholt@hawleytroxell.com)

# WHAT IS A RESOLUTION

“A resolution is a highly formal kind of main motion, often containing a preamble, and one or more resolving clauses in the form, “*Resolved, That ...*”

RESOLUTION, Black's Law Dictionary (11th ed. 2019)

“A promise to do something different in the new year.” Merriam-Webster

# SEVEN TIPS TO ABIDE BY TO MAKE THOSE RESOLUTIONS STICK:

1. Cut yourself some slack
2. Identify the underlying cause
3. Deal with the real problem
4. Write it down
5. Get yourself a buddy
6. Give yourself enough time
7. Allow for slips

# WHAT MAKES A GREAT LAWYER?

We looked at a number of articles on the topic. Here are the top five reported things that successful lawyers have:

1. Communication skills/responsiveness
2. Analytical skills
3. Established professional and personal network/  
people skills
4. Innovative/creativity
5. Persistent/perseverance

# HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Eight resolutions and practice management and wellness tips to focus on the traits that make great lawyers

Focus on these resolutions and practice management skills both from a firm administration standpoint and practitioner standpoint

# RESOLUTION #1: COMMUNICATION

***Be It Resolved, That*** . . . I will engage in more conscientious communication with clients, colleagues and opposing counsel.

\*Failure to communicate effectively with clients leads to unnecessary stress, loss of a client relationship[s] and potential complaints.

Studies show that clients and colleagues expect a response within 24-hours or initiating communication.

The ABA cites a report from Law Technology Today indicating that 42% of law firms take more than three days to get back to a prospective client.

Practice Management Tips:

- Utilize staff (if available) to streamline intake and response to clients, colleagues and third parties
- Get in a habit of automatically copying clients on communications and filings
- Utilize out of office and other mechanisms to clearly set expectations regarding response times
- File and respond to outstanding e-mails at the end of each day/beginning of each workday
- Check out the Client Communication Checklist for Law Firms. Found at <https://www.attorneyatwork.com/client-communications-checklist-law-firms/>

# RESOLUTION #2: ORGANIZATION

*Be It Resolved, That . . .* I will be more organized in 2020.

## Practice Management and Wellness Tips:

- Review open files, close matters that have concluded, and send closing letters to clients
- Check your calendar and remove items that have been concluded; double check to make sure new items have been included
- Review and file all e-mail communications

## Practice Benefits:

- Avoidance of conflicts of interest. See Idaho Rules of Professional Conduct 1.6 and 1.7.
- Avoidance of “scope” of representation creep
- Habit building of running conflict checks and opening new matters appropriately
- Ensures you are not missing deadlines, e-mails that need responding to

# RESOLUTION #3: DISTRACTIONS

*Be It Resolved, That* . . . I will learn to address and balance distractions.

\*\*Studies show that it takes 25 minutes for our brains to refocus on an original task after getting distracted.

Common Causes of Distraction:

- E-mail and smart phones
- Family, friends and co-worker distraction
- Clutter
- Attempting to multi-task
- Paralysis by over-analysis

Practice Management and Wellness Tips:

- Set aside time each day to address e-mail and return phone calls
- Utilize your out of office response
- Turn your personal cell phone to “Do Not Disturb” during business hours
- Schedule coffee and other meetings with your colleagues and friends



# RESOLUTION #4: TIME MANAGEMENT

*Be It Resolved, That* . . . I will invest in time management to benefit me and my firm.

Key terms: Utilization Rates (hours worked/hours in a day) and Realization Rates (fees received/billable hours worked)

- Legal Trends Report for 2019 indicates the average Utilization Rate for lawyers is roughly 31%
- Legal Trends Report for 2019 also indicated that 19% of work doesn't get reported, for a realization rate of 81%

Practice Management and Wellness Tips:

- Start tracking all your time
- Make to do lists
- Outsource (if possible) nonbillable tasks
- Accurately report your time even if you decide/have to write it off later
- Check in with colleagues and firm management regarding average hours spent on similar projects

# RESOLUTION #5: INVOLVEMENT

*Be it Resolved, That* . . . I will be more involved in areas of the law and outside interests that have purpose.

“An Investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” – Benjamin Franklin

Rule 6.1 of the Idaho Rules of Professional Conduct – Goal of providing 50 hours/year of pro bono legal service

**What is the definition of Purpose:** An objective, goal, or end; PURPOSE, Black's Law Dictionary (11th ed. 2019)

Practice Management and Wellness Tips:

- Develop a list of areas of law and outside interests/list five things (jobs, volunteer work, hobbies) that you would like to do
- Learn something new each day in a field of law you are interested in/engaged in
- Engage in outside commitments that both satisfy your passions and have the potential to grow your practice
- Seek out pro bono commitments that align with your interests
- Learn to say “no” to commitments that do not align with your objectives and goals

Practice Benefits:

- Avoid burnout and keep on track to the next level

# RESOLUTION #6: TEAMWORK

*Be It Resolved, That . . .* I will focus on the importance of teamwork in my practice.

## Practice Benefits:

- Teamwork ensures greater satisfaction to the client
- Teamwork avoids client attrition

# RESOLUTION #7: HEALTH

*Be it Resolved, That* . . . I will focus on my physical, emotional, and practice health in the new year.

\*\*American Bar Association studies report that the most common mental health concerns for attorneys is as follows:

- Anxiety, 61.1 percent
- Depression, 45.7 percent
- Social anxiety, 16.1 percent
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, 12.5 percent
- Panic disorder, 8 percent
- Bipolar disorder, 2.4 percent

Not focusing on your health can lead to burnout, which doesn't benefit you or your firm.

Practice Management:

- Prioritize tasks and events and make a list before you head home for the day
- Focus on organization
- Take small breaks and get fresh air
- Find a mentor
- Spend at least one hour every morning/night engaging in an activity that you like

# RESOLUTION #7: LEADERSHIP

*Be It Resolved, That* . . . I will focus on leadership opportunities in my firm and community.

“Success is nothing more than a few simple disciplines, practiced each day” - Jim Rohn

Great lawyers are lawyers that network and have people skills.

Practice Management:

- Develop a detailed, written business plan
- Find local events that align with your interests and sign up to attend
- Keep track of your efforts
- Update your Resume/CV for opportunities for positions on boards and other leadership opportunities
- Learn the “Secrets of Mingling”: <https://www.attorneyatwork.com/secret-science-mingling/>

# RESOLUTION # 8: SHARPEN YOUR SAW

*Be It Resolved, That ... I will sharpen my saw each day.*

“We must never become too busy sawing to take time to sharpen the saw”  
– Dr. Stephen Covey (author, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*)

Practice Management Tips:

- *Daily:* Subscribe to and spend ten minutes of each workday reviewing blogs. Need ideas? Check out [http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/best\\_law\\_blogs\\_2018](http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/best_law_blogs_2018)
- *Weekly:* Review the summaries of opinions from the Idaho Supreme Court, Idaho Federal District Courts and 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit and flag cases or opinions that apply to your practice
- *Monthly:* Re-review a rule of civil procedure or rule of evidence and local rules to keep sharp

**THANK YOU!**

208.344.6000

[www.hawleytroxell.com](http://www.hawleytroxell.com)