



This past Saturday was a very special day for me. My first grandson became a Bar Mitzvah ... and I must proudly say that it was a very special occasion. It was he, not his parents and not tradition, that motivated him to learn a new language and to create this very special occasion. He is, indeed, a very special person. There is not much that can top this ... to see the next generation begin the process of taking over the reins. His mitzvah was to collect more than 1,000 books, and still counting, to give to those who don't have ... And this at the age of only 13! And to complete the celebration, I was lucky enough to have 7 of my 11 grandchildren join me for a sushi dinner and a Harlem Globe-trotters game. Now that is a world journey, all without getting on a plane!

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Associates Are Still Unhappy - And for Better Reasons

Intense Competition Among Associates

Back in the good old days of 2006 and 2007, when the competition was intense among big law firms to hire new associates out of top law schools at salaries of \$160,000 and more, it was a constant theme of articles in

legal publications that these associates were "unhappy." Associates were said to be cynical, with a prevalent attitude of, "This is a dysfunctional system, and it's not my fault." The dysfunctional system was the law firm "culling process" that got cheap labor (even at the then prevailing high salaries) for five, six or seven years. Then, if these lawyers did not make partner, they were asked to leave to make way for the next group of young law school graduates. Most young associates believed the sacrifices were worthwhile because they assumed partnership was a given - right up until the moment that they were shown the door.

Still Unhappy...Salaries and Bonuses Are Flat

Well, according to the [*Wall Street Journal*](#) in a late January article titled "Law Firms Keep Squeezing Associates," the young JDs are still unhappy, but for more fundamental reasons. According to the article, although conditions at large firms have stabilized since they cut more than 40,000 positions in 2009, "many elite firms have shrunk their ranks of entry-level lawyers by as much as half from 2008, [while] salaries and bonuses for those associates have remained generally flat. ... Associates at prominent law firms say some of their peers hired during the boom years are happy just to have jobs at all."

Welcome to the Real World

To that, the rest of us might say, welcome to the real world. And of course it has been a constant theme in these columns that law schools do little or nothing to prepare associates for the economics of that real world. Leverage is only effective when associates are effective and it is profitable for the firm to keep using them. What should firms expect from their young lawyers to justify keeping them? The fundamental question in this regard is obvious: is there enough work? In analyzing an associate's worth to the firm, there is no formulaic expression that specifically depends on origination, billing or collection. But obviously big firms know the benchmarks when they see them - and associates are learning them, too.

Moving to Smaller Firms

However, the article was not completely doom and gloom for associates. The article profiled one associate who "took what many colleagues then saw as a huge risk" by leaving an elite New York firm for a respected midsized one. The young lawyer "hoped to get more experience running cases and building a practice" - and that's exactly what he did get. Imagine that - leaving drudge work at a prestigious but unsatisfying firm for one where it's actually possible to learn to be a lawyer. Maybe there's a way for associates to be happier, after all.

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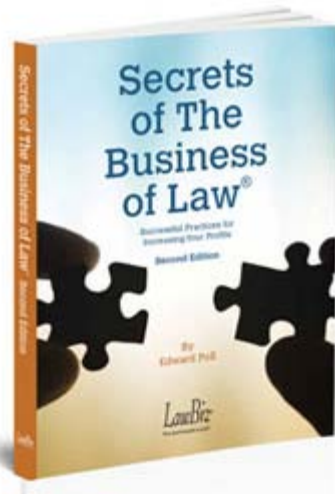
"This book is great. It's full of practical advice for lawyers who want to increase their bottom lines. The book is not overwhelming, the individual

What Clients Are Saying:

"Ed's command of the podium and his connection and interaction with the audience were outstanding. His skills enabled us to successfully implement a new culture into the organization without damaging our relationships with outside counsel."

**LS
Torrance, CA**

"When I had my own private practice as a solo practitioner, I wanted to run my office as efficiently and profitably as possible. I researched business coaches and discovered that most had "passive" models as their basis for coaching, i.e. they would promise all the things they would do for my practice without my having to invest time and energy into the process. I'm so glad I chose Ed Poll instead, for he had an "active" model, i.e. how much I got out of the coaching was directly dependent upon what I put into it. Over a period of six months, Ed conferenced with me and gave me weekly assignments for structuring my practice as well as giving me tips on how to work with clients from the initial interview through to the end of the case. After working with Ed, I didn't have a single outstanding account receivable over \$500. The time I spent working with Ed was invaluable and I would recommend him to any attorneys interested in improving the quality and



articles are short and to the point, and the writing style is friendly. I highly recommend it."

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