

February 2025

From the Desks of Your D.C. Bar Practice Management Advisors



The Fear of Going It Alone

by Kaitlin E. McGee

“The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.” -Joseph Campbell

When lawyers think about starting their own firm, fear is often the biggest stumbling block: fear of failure, fear of judgment, and fear of the unknown all loom large. Even very experienced lawyers might wait years for the “perfect” moment to launch their firms, only to discover that no such moment exists. As with planting a tree, the best time to start may have been years ago, but the

second-best time is right now.

Getting Clients: The Most Common Concern

When I started my law firm, lawyers at larger firms would say, “That’s great—but how do you get clients?” The ability to shift from doing legal work to selling legal work is not intuitive for most lawyers. Dr. Larry Richard’s studies found three key personality traits in attorneys who excel at finding clients, often referred to as “rainmakers”:

1. **Ego Drive:** Not just believing in a cause but actually enjoying the challenge of persuading others.
2. **Empathy:** Seeing the world through the client’s eyes, understanding needs and perspectives.
3. **Resilience:** The ability to adapt, learn from setbacks, and keep going.

Attorneys with these traits also tend to be more sociable, confident, and less perfectionistic. While everyone’s personality is unique, recognizing where you stand, and which areas to strengthen, can help any lawyer grow their practice.

The Perfection Trap

I often hear fears like, “What if I put up a blog post and there’s a typo?” The reality is that you can fix it and move on. Mistakes happen. It’s not about avoiding errors at all costs; it’s about addressing them quickly and learning from them. Resilience is the muscle that keeps you moving forward when perfection is out of reach.

Building a Support Network

You don’t have to face your fears alone. Some lawyers have found that forming their own mastermind groups provide both practical guidance and an emotional support system. Sharing successes and setbacks with peers who’ve been there or are going through the same challenges reminds you that you’re not the only one facing these worries.

Moving Through Fear

Even lawyers who have built successful practices over many years sometimes feel fear and anxiety about their businesses. The key is making sure that these

emotions don't paralyze you.

If stress ever becomes overwhelming, remember that the [DC Bar's Lawyer Assistance Program \(LAP@dcbar.org\)](#) offers confidential counseling and support groups. And if you need practical business advice, contact Dan Mills and me at [PMAS@dcbar.org](#). The path to running your own firm can be intimidating, but a good support system and a willingness to learn from mistakes can make that path less daunting.

For more resources, visit our [website](#).

AI for Law Firms

Have you used AI for marketing your law firm? If so, please email me at [kmcgee@dcbar.org](#) and share your experience and favorite AI tools.

In [my Washington Lawyer column about AI](#), I break down what works, what doesn't, and how you can start integrating AI tools like ChatGPT into your daily workflow.

If you are using AI in your firm, let us know how at [PMAS@dcbar.org](#).

The banner features a dark blue background with a faint image of people in a meeting. On the left, a green square frame contains the text "Trusted Experts. Tailored Solutions." in white and green. To the right is the "LSP DATA SOLUTIONS" logo in white. Further right, the text "Digital Forensics and eDiscovery services that fit your needs." is displayed in white, with a green "LEARN MORE" button below it.

Trusted Experts.
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Basic Training & Beyond

If you're starting a firm, [Basic Training & Beyond](#) is a great jumping-off point. Day One will teach you the essentials to get your firm off the ground, and Day Two will help you grow and manage your firm.

Here is how to start, grow and manage a law firm in a large, urban market.

Our monthly [Basic Training & Beyond](#) is set for **February 4 & 18, 2025**, from **9:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** We will meet in person in the Williamson Conference Room on the third floor of Bar Headquarters. The program is presented monthly for members and law firm staff.

This program has been presented more than three hundred times for more than 4,000 lawyers over the last fifteen years, and many have launched and are now operating small firms. We stay connected with many small firms, and what we learn informs the content for this program.

Managing Money

[Managing Money](#)

Our next in-person session of Managing Money is set for **March 10, 2025**, from **9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

We also present Managing Money on request for a law firm or organization.

[Register for an upcoming session or schedule a session for your firm here.](#)



Lunch and Learn

PMAS will also be collaborating with the [Law Practice Management Community](#) to bring you the following [Lunch and Learn program](#):

- **February 27, 2025** – Lawyers & ADHD

An LPM & PMAS Production

Register for any or all [here](#).

Successful Small Firm Course

Are you interested in a business incubator approach to growing your law firm?

Consider working with us on an individual basis. We now offer the **Successful Small Firm Practice Course** in a series of one-on-one sessions on Zoom.

The course serves as an incubator for solo attorneys and small firms and helps them work through their business and marketing plans with support, feedback, and guidance. Lawyers focus on the type of firm they want to create and work through the course at their own pace with built-in accountability for achieving their business goals. If you are interested in this approach to creating and growing a law firm, contact PMAS@dcbar.org.

Resources

Our [video resource library](#) offers free webinars on a variety of practice management topics. New programs are added regularly. Our full archive of recordings and materials is [here](#). If you have an idea for a program, let us know at lunchandlearn@dcbar.org

Missed any of these recent sessions? You can [access the recordings and materials anytime](#).

Here's a glimpse of some recent sessions:

- **Cyber Liability Exposures for Law Firms**
- **Interested in Adding Law Bono Services to Your Practice?** with DC Refers
- **Recruiting and Hiring 101: How to Get Started When You Need to Hire Help**

If you are interested in a practice management assessment, [click here](#).

– Kaitlin & Dan

In other news . . .

For the recent results of the groundbreaking study on attorney mental health and well-being, [click here](#).

LAP published its [Winter Dispatch](#).

For more information on PMAS programs, [click here](#).

CLE, Communities Events & Pro Bono:

Continuing Legal Education programs are [here](#).

Communities Events are [here](#).

Pro Bono Center training programs are scheduled [here](#).

As we return to D.C. Bar headquarters for meetings and events, everyone entering the building will need to comply with the [COVID Guidelines](#).

Our Practice Management Advisors are:

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Practice Management Advisors have a free and confidential relationship with D.C. Bar members pursuant to Rule 1.6(j) of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct.

District of Columbia Practice Manual

Every D.C. Lawyer's Must-Have Resource



This two-volume title, typically priced at \$495, is being offered to subscribers of this newsletter at a discounted rate of \$450. To obtain the discount code, please reach out to communitiesregistration@dcbar.org.



Serving our members so they can serve the community

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