

# *Taking Professionalism to New Heights* *–Mountaineering Lessons for the Practice of Law*

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## **Plan for Your Success**

- Plan your route, but be willing to make changes as you go.
  - *Always have a game plan for your transaction or case, but be flexible.*
- Train to a higher level of skill than you expect you will need.
  - *Law practice demands constant learning; be prepared for what may lie ahead.*
- Be bold in the conception, conservative in the execution.
  - *Be creative, but always in control of your actions.*

## **Equip Yourself for the Task Ahead**

- Pack efficiently – don't carry too much, and keep it neat.
  - *In law practice, less is often more; keep a tidy office and well-organized files.*
- Embrace technology, but don't become too dependent on it.
  - *The knowledge in your head may be critical.*
- Always carry the Ten Essentials for emergencies.
  - *What assets are vital to the survival of your practice?*
- Don't rope up unless you know it will be effective.
  - *Don't make foolish assumptions – maintain a healthy skepticism.*
- Use your legs more than your arms.
  - *Your common sense may be more important than your intellect.*

## **Respect the Team; Practice Leadership**

- Find good partners and maintain good communication with them.
  - *Find good partners, associates, assistants, and service providers.*
- Ask others to check your equipment and comment on your strategies.
  - *Test your ideas on your colleagues, and yes, on your assistants.*
- Swing leads for efficiency and to share the effort.
  - *Trust your colleagues – you can't and shouldn't try to do everything by yourself.*
- Keep close, but space yourselves appropriately.
  - *Make sure everyone – yourself included – knows his or her role.*
- Improve your own skills by being a mentor.
  - *Every time you explain something to your colleagues or clients, you learn it better yourself.*

- Lead respectfully, consulting regularly and giving orders only when necessary.
  - *Treat everyone as your equal, even if your job descriptions are different.*

### **Manage the Risks**

- Personally check any anchor or belay that you are depending on.
  - *Be wary of using someone else's forms – check every word.*
- Stay alert and recognize the warning signs.
  - *Beware a full inbox and repeated requests from clients, colleagues, and opposing counsel.*
- When it's time to take a leap, make a plan and then go for it.
  - *There are no guarantees of success, so prepare yourself and make the tough decisions.*
- Know when to turn back.
  - *You can't win every case, argument, or negotiating point.*
- When disaster happens, set definable tasks, do your best, and seek professional help.
  - *You will experience failure – learn from it.*

### **Rise to the Challenge**

- It's mostly plodding and hard work.
  - *Every job has tedium; life is not a highlight reel.*
- To stay in control, keep moving.
  - *Use your anxieties to improve your performance; be prudent, but don't come to a standstill.*
- Play through the discomfort.
  - *If things aren't going well, step back, get some perspective, and tough it out.*
- If you are turned back today, you can return to the mountain tomorrow.
  - *Don't give up on your career because of a setback; persistence pays off.*

### **Take Joy in What You Do**

- Relieve your stress; have a little fun; take pleasure from life.
  - *Find ways to take a break and wind down.*
- Don't complain . . . ever.
  - *Keep in mind what a privilege it is to be a lawyer.*
- There's nothing wrong with a little flair.
  - *A law degree doesn't deny you the right to be colorful.*
- Enjoy the reward of a summit, the friendship, a job well done.
  - *Take satisfaction in helping people with some of their most important challenges.*