



IN SIGHT for Oregon Lawyers

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

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MY PATH TO CAREER SYNERGY

I was destined for a professional career from the start. My father was a doctor and my mother was a nurse – noble professions both. Never was there any question that my name, too, would end with initials.

B.A. TO J.D.

By age 21, my name ended with *B.A.* Unfortunately, I graduated in the early '80s, when certain Oregon counties were reporting 24% unemployment. So I did what any self-respecting liberal arts graduate would do. I went back to school – law school.

During my second year, I calculated my mounting student loan debt. Yikes! Only the federal deficit was more daunting. I stored my golf clubs and got to work. I studied hard and eventually landed an enviable job as an associate at a well-respected Portland law firm doing corporate finance work. Now I sported a *J.D.* or *Esq.* – take your pick. My parents were so proud!

My excitement quickly dissipated into ennui. “But it’s so boring reading the same documents over and over again!” I’ll never forget the day that sentence erupted from my mouth as a second-year associate. “These are your dues,” came the partner’s reply. Appropriately chastised, I marched back down the hall and continued to read the same documents over and over again. One day, the firm’s partners decided to go different directions, as did I. A lateral move didn’t improve my job satisfaction. It seemed that no matter

where I worked, I was always more interested in what my clients were doing.

J.D. TO G.C.

So I went in-house, first at a century-old, family-owned forest products company, which was fine but very staid. Then I was recruited to become the General Counsel at a local emerging software company. Now, I was a *G.C.*, and it was really exciting to attend executive management meetings and handle myriad legal matters for a single client. I had so much to learn and do that I thought I would wallow in my good fortune forever.

G.C. TO C.F.O. AND BEYOND

After about a year as General Counsel, however, my job satisfaction began to sink. The issues weren’t changing, my assistant took care of most of the routine work, and my primary task was arguing legal semantics with corporate law department lawyers. I found myself in uncomfortably familiar territory.

My next attempt at solving the career conundrum was to wander across the building to run the company’s consulting operations and be a *Dir.* Now I was actually in the game, on the floor. The ball was being passed to me. I rode on a lot of planes, rented a lot of cars, slept in a lot of hotel rooms, and ate a lot of expensive meals. It was fun. The problem was that it wasn’t rewarding, and my moonlighting work as an adjunct law professor didn’t fill the void.

So I accepted a job as vice president of another business and moved to Las Vegas . . . for 72 hours. I never started the *V.P.* job because I caught the dot.com bug and joined one of my consulting clients as co-founder of a fledgling e-tailer, Outdoorplay,

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Inc. I was now a *C.F.O!* With a lot of hard work and an astonishing lack of paychecks, we not only survived but thrived. Once established, we hired a general manager to run Outdoorplay, and we stepped back from the day-to-day business. With the company running smoothly, I could now turn my attention to other endeavors. But what would those be?

Looking around for my next career adventure, I began talking with my friends, many of them lawyers. Some had prospered in their practices, while others had left the law. Most were disillusioned by the profession, a phenomenon that intrigued me to no end.

I began investigating the causes of lawyer dissatisfaction. I read many books, talked extensively and intimately with lawyer friends, and reflected on my own experiences. I discovered that much of the dissatisfaction takes root early in our careers, caused in part by the gap between learning the theory of law and the business of law. Lawyers receive virtually no assistance in bridging this gap.

I found myself coming home. Here was a group of people with whom I enjoyed spending time. Their backgrounds and experiences were similar to mine, and they could benefit from my skills and advice. I decided to focus my energies on professional development training and consulting for lawyers and law firms. This path would allow me to combine all my experiences as a lawyer, client, and entrepreneur with my passion for developmental consulting.

Working with lawyers and law firms to discover their own unique interests and abilities is perpetually rewarding for both me and my clients. Each engagement brings new issues and situations because the definitions of and paths to success are different for every client. Discovering what success means for each new client is what I call finding the “diamond in the rough.”

I’ve worked in many aspects of law and business. My résumé now includes a *B.A.*, *J.D.*, *G.C.*, *Dir.*, *Prof.*, *V.P.*, and *C.F.O.* These diverse experiences have melded together into a fulfilling life and career. I guess I’ve finally found my own diamond in the rough.

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