



IN SIGHT *for Oregon Lawyers*

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

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PLANNING FOR A LIFE THAT WORKS

When you find yourself in a rut or feeling dissatisfied with aspects of your life such as career choices or an imbalanced schedule, how do you get back on track? By finding your mission, assessing your current situation, and creating an action plan, you can design a life that works for you.

YOUR PERSONAL MISSION

First and foremost, like a litigator preparing for trial, you must find your theme – ideally a theme that ripples through all facets of your life. Formulate your own personal mission statement, such as preserving the environment or making your community safer.

For some, broad statements such as these provide an effective road map. Just knowing that you are helping people, for instance, may give you the satisfaction of being on course. For others, more specific statements work best. If the driving force in your life is assisting Silicon Forest high-tech start-up companies, make sure your statement captures this theme.

Articulating your theme makes you focus on what's important to you. Focus, in turn, gives you greater clarity. If you are having trouble starting, think of things that motivate you, drive you, and make you happy. What inspires you? What energizes you and gives you incentive to follow through? Your answers are the key to your theme.

Your personal mission is unique to you. Although others may share your theme, it will not play out the same way in any two lives. Only you can make your individual contribution.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

After you have developed your personal mission statement, do some self-assessment. Consider the areas discussed below and whether they further your personal mission.

Your Surroundings. Consider aspects of your home and work environment that you can improve. Find or create a space for retreat, as well as a place where you can entertain friends and family. Are your home and office decorated to your satisfaction? Believe it or not, aesthetics do matter. People often feel more relaxed and more motivated in an environment that accommodates their needs and preferences.

Your Skills. Think about skills you would like to use more, skills you would like to develop, and skills you would like to stop using or avoid using. Are you using your preferred skills at work? If not, can you change something about your job to focus more on those skills, or do you need to develop a plan to switch departments, practice groups, or jobs? Create a plan to acquire the skills you lack and to develop the skills you want to enhance.

Your Network. Look at the people you interact with daily. Are they people you enjoy? Are you spending enough time with friends and family members? Are you getting enough time to be alone? Find your own balance of time spent alone and time spent with others. Try to surround yourself with positive, uplifting people who support you and share your values.

Your Interests. Think about what interests you most. Consider the subject matter you deal with at work and your interests outside of work. Are you fasci-

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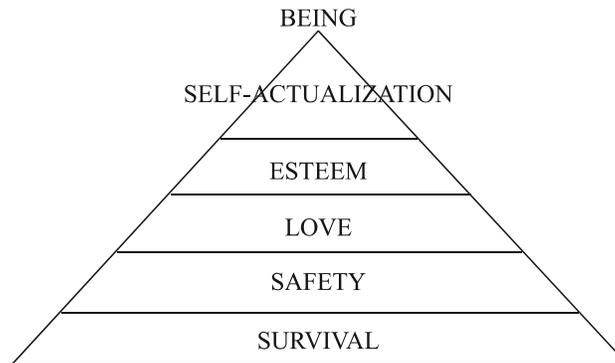
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MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



*For more information, see Christopher F. Monte, *Beneath the Mask: An Introduction to Theories of Personality*, 7th ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002).*

nated by technology, travel, or theater? Make time to do something that relates to things that interest you.

A PLAN OF ACTION

Creating your personal mission statement is likely to provide insight into areas of your life you would like to change. Evaluate your desires in light of your finances, family needs, and geography. Recognize your limitations and your strengths.

A workable action plan consists of long-term goals, intermediate-term objectives, and short-term steps. Try to design measurable, achievable goals. Give yourself a realistic time frame in which to accomplish them, allowing room in your life for spontaneity as well as planning. Break down your goals into shorter-term objectives. Then break down your objectives into even shorter-term tangible assignments that you can put on your calendar. These should be achievable steps that make you want to say, "I can do that today." The idea is to divide your plan into manageable items that are painless and don't overwhelm you.

Once you have formulated your action plan, you will have what you need to begin creating a life path that works for you. Eventually, after many small steps, you will have achieved your goals.

A FULFILLING LIFE

Looking at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (shown above), you can see that much of the world's population is concerned with the two bottom rungs – survival and safety needs. In this country, the majority

of people are fortunate to have their basic needs met most of the time. Once those are satisfied, we can concentrate on fulfilling other needs, such as belonging, esteem, self-actualization, and being.

When you achieve your personal mission, you are at the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy. Developing and reaching for your mission is an opportunity to live life to your fullest potential. Taking the time to define your mission, assess your situation, and create an action plan will help you to develop the internal compass that will keep you on the life path that works for you.

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