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■ Bulletin # 223

The Future Begins Now

This past summer, the work of the Canadian Bar Association's Futures Initiative culminated with the release of the report, *Futures: Transforming the Delivery of Legal Services in Canada*. As a member of the Steering Committee, I recommend reading the Report in its entirety, especially if you are a lawyer planning to practice in Canada beyond the next few years.

While the Report makes a number of recommendations for change in how lawyers are educated, do business and deliver services, one thing that isn't expected to change in the future is the focus on providing direct client service. In fact, the Report suggests that:

If lawyers are to continue contributing positive value for their clients, the legal profession must become more focused on their expressed needs and expectations for legal services.

The Futures initiative conducted a broad consultation process in developing its recommendations for change, including seeking input from client groups. Through that process, it found that clients are looking for:

- Lower costs and cost certainty
- Clearer information about the process and the use of familiar technology and processes
- Participation in the process
- A mutual partnership rather than an authoritarian approach
- Disaggregation of tasks and services.

In other words, clients are looking for legal services to be delivered in ways that are familiar to them through service delivery from other professions and professionals.

Keeping the client and the client's needs at the centre of a legal practice is not a new idea. Such a focus engages the client in the legal process and minimizes risk through better communication, enhanced responsiveness and greater transparency within that relationship.

A greater client focus may mean taking a preventative and proactive approach rather than only responding to legal problems after they arise. It can mean delivering services in an unbundled or disaggregated fashion, offering a menu of service options rather than taking an

all or nothing approach.

Greater flexibility and choice in legal service delivery resonates with today's clients and creates new opportunities for lawyers to better meet the needs of clients in the future.

The Report also includes a helpful self-assessment tool to assess lawyers' readiness to practice in new ways in the future, whatever their current practice environment. It's a good place to start and will get you thinking about the change that has already come and is coming upon the legal profession. There is no question but that lawyers and the services they offer remain relevant in this changing environment; however, as the Report concludes:

Canadians still expect much of the legal profession, but they also seek a profound change in the way legal services are delivered. To be the vibrant and relevant profession they deserve, and to perform the role that our democratic society rightly expects of us, our profession must meet the changing expectations of clients.

Download the complete report, *Futures: Transforming the Delivery of Legal Services in Canada* at: <http://www.cbafutures.org/The-Reports/Futures-Transforming-the-Delivery-of-Legal-Service>

■ Bulletin # 224

10 Tips for Daily Stress Management

Managing stress is something every lawyer needs to always practice, but will never wholly master. Those in our profession seem to be particularly vulnerable to stress. Some suggest it is because of the kinds of personalities drawn to a legal career. For example, a high degree of perfectionism is quite common in lawyers and we know that setting unreasonably high or unattainable standards creates stress.

Stress may also be a response to circumstances outside our professional lives, whether health-related, relationships, finances or family. Regardless the source of the stress, all of us need to know and put into practice effective strategies for dealing with stress. While each of us knows best how we personally respond to stressful stimuli and what works best to manage those stressors, there are numerous stress management techniques that have broad application.



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In preparing for a recent talk to a class of articling students on maintaining balance and managing stress in a legal career, I reflected on what stress management techniques have worked best for me. Following are some of the lessons I've learned about how to most effectively balance the obligations and responsibilities in my life that can create stress when out of balance:

1. Not every task I take on needs to be completed to a standard of perfection. In fact, good enough is frequently good enough.
2. Time needs to be allotted every day to keep my body functioning effectively. This, for me, means setting aside time to get outdoors and walk. Happily, my dogs are always ready to join me. It also means taking a break for a snack or a meal before my blood sugar levels get so low I can't think clearly.
3. Vacations are not optional and ideally, the next one should always be planned before the current one ends. Whether spent at home or abroad, these breaks are necessary for my mental health.
4. When taking a break from work, whether on the weekend or on vacation, it needs to be a genuine break, even if only for an hour or two. A break won't be nearly so effective or rejuvenating if I remain tied to my work.
5. Structure your life so you have time to say yes to the things you want to say yes to. If you relish the work you are doing, whether for yourself, for your family, for your community or for your clients, you will be able to more easily maintain a feeling of balance.
6. Conversely, when no feels like the right answer, listen to your gut and say it as boldly as you're able.
7. Accept that you cannot control every aspect of your schedule. Keep a firm grip on what you can control and come to peace with those commitments and obligations that are out of your hands and in someone else's.
8. If having more control of your schedule is important to you, you need to understand that it may come with trade-offs and those may also create stress, including less long-term security or reduced income.
9. Make time for your friends and family as often as possible and when you do, give them at least the same level of focus you give to your paid work. Relationships are essential to a balanced life and need regular "feeding and watering" to thrive.
10. Taking time to do good for others helps to keep a balanced perspective about some of the stressors in your life.

Sometimes, despite our very best efforts, things in our lives begin to get out of hand, or to spiral out of control. At those times, these simple day-to-day stress-busting techniques likely will not suffice. When issues relating to drug or alcohol overuse or abuse, marital breakdown or financial stresses present, accessing outside supports may be essential.

There are helpful resources available to lawyers across the country, often provided at no cost through bar associations and law societies. If you are finding that you cannot manage the stress in your life, please reach out for assistance before you cause damage or harm to yourself, your career, your family and friends or your clients. Likewise, if you see a colleague or friend struggling, reach out to help them find the supports needed.

Your local lawyers assistance program, whether operated by your provincial or territorial branch of the Canadian Bar Association or your local law society, is a valuable resource, providing supports, referrals and confidential assistance when you need it most.

Stress management is a lifelong task. Each of us needs to figure what works best and practice it regularly. Equally important is to remember that there is no shame in reaching out to others for assistance. Help is available and may be as close as the office next door. When you find you need help, you need only ask.

Lawyers Assistance Programs:

Saskatchewan Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers:
<http://www.lawyersconcernedforlawyers.ca/>

Manitoba Lawyers at Risk:
<http://www.lawsociety.mb.ca/member-resources/lawyers-at-risk>

New Brunswick Lawyers' Assistance Program:
[http://lawsociety-barreau.nb.ca/uploads/Lawyers_Assistance_Program_\(LAP\).pdf](http://lawsociety-barreau.nb.ca/uploads/Lawyers_Assistance_Program_(LAP).pdf)

Prince Edward Island Lawyers Assistance Program:
<http://www.lspei.pe.ca/index.php>

Newfoundland and Labrador Professionals' Assistance Program:
<http://www.lawsociety.nf.ca/lawyers/professionals-assistance-program/>

Nova Scotia Nova Scotia Lawyers Assistance Program:
<http://www.nslap.ca/>

Yukon Yukon Lawyers Assistance Program:
<http://www.lawsocietyyukon.com/lawyersassistanceprogram.php>

Northwest Territories Lawyers' Assistance Program:
<http://www.lawsociety.nt.ca/membership/lawyers-assistance-program/>

Nunavut Nunavut Lawyer Assistance Program:
<http://lawsociety.nu.ca/nunavut-lawyer-assistance-program-nulap/>