



## **Finding bliss: Toward greater profits, productivity and satisfaction**

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For lawyers and their firms, change is inevitable. Once-hallowed law firms face unprecedented financial pressures, with corporate clients negotiating rates, reducing their reliance on outside counsel and demanding more value. Lawyers themselves, overworked and worried about job security, are more anxiety-ridden than ever.

But as the 2015 American Bar Association book, [“Finding Bliss: Innovative Legal Models for Happy Clients & Happy Lawyers,”](#) suggests, there are creative and disruptive solutions lawyers can pursue to enhance the delivery of legal services as well as improve their daily lives in and outside of the office. The book provides compelling examples of how to achieve greater success in terms of profitability, productivity and satisfaction. It explores seven themes to improve legal practice and client service:

- innovation;
- value;
- predictability and trust;
- flexibility;
- talent development;
- diversity and inclusion, and
- relationship building.

“Finding Bliss” outlines ways for traditional and new model firms to more effectively deliver legal services and align the skills of the legal talent pool to better meet clients’ needs.

The concepts are important for all interested in the future of the legal profession, as they guide lawyers unhappy in outdated models to new approaches and new ways of thinking. The seven-theme approach offers an alternative to a life of only billable hours, and sets out a refreshing roadmap for the legal profession to follow to reinvent itself as a renewable source of work and a way of life.

The book was written by Deborah Epstein Henry, Garry A. Berger and Suzie Scanlon Rabinowitz, three co-founders and managing directors of Bliss Lawyers, a new legal model that hires attorneys to work on engagements for its corporate and law firm clients. In this short video, Henry, an internationally recognized expert, consultant and public speaker on the future of the legal profession, discusses the group’s new legal model.

The ABA caught up with Henry to discuss the book:

### **Why did you and your co-authors decide to write this book?**

We felt that the profession needed inspiration, both in terms of how to better deliver legal services and to improve the daily lives of lawyers. Many clients are disappointed in how lawyers are servicing their needs. Meanwhile, many lawyers feel disenfranchised and they are anxious about the stability of their jobs, the future of the profession, their livelihood and what the future of law will look like. My co-authors and I see a silver lining, so in this book we tell the other side of the story. We share how clients’ needs can be better served and how lawyers can be happy, satisfied, productive and profitable all at the same time.

### **Does the title really capture the book's message?**

Many would say, oh, in today's legal market how can you even talk about achieving happiness, and isn't the notion of Bliss Lawyers really an oxymoron? We don't think so. We think that happiness is integral to legal practice and the more engaged and happy lawyers are, the more productive, profitable and loyal they will be. The subtitle of the book, "Innovative Legal Models for Happy Clients & Happy Lawyers," also captures our message, since the book focuses on innovation both in new and traditional legal models.

### **Your book is part autobiographical. Tell us about your career path and how it relates to the book.**

I started off as a traditional lawyer. When I graduated law school, I clerked for a New York federal judge and then worked as a commercial litigator first in New York and then in Philadelphia. But I found in 1999 that I was not inspired by my work and started delving into work/life balance issues and realized that there was a real need to address satisfaction issues among lawyers. As I began doing public speaking around work/life issues, as well as women's issues, I saw the significant dissatisfaction in the profession and a yearning for nonlinear career paths to enable lawyers to work differently.

When I researched, wrote and subsequently promoted my first ABA book in 2010, "Law & Reorder," I evolved on the subject. Prior to the book's release, I was principally focused on work/life balance and other challenges that impeded women lawyers' success in the profession. What I discovered is that while half of the problem is the result of individual action steps that lawyers may or may not take, the other half is the law firm model and the broader legal employment model itself. The model is broken. "Finding Bliss" conveys how other models can work.

### **What are some of the new ideas in the book?**

One big idea is thinking about career paths differently. In most law firms there is one valued career path and that is to become equity partner. Often those who do not get the brass ring of equity partner are stigmatized or diminished and undervalued by their firms. In the book, we talk about swapping out the brass ring and replacing it with the image of five Olympic rings of talent. The idea is that there are five valued career paths in a law firm rather than just one. The Olympic rings of talent build an infrastructure around alternative career paths beyond the traditional trajectory to equity partner that so few lawyers ultimately achieve. This is not about accommodation or a charitable arrangement. It is entirely business-based. In other words, if there is not a means to support one of these paths at a certain time in a law firm, then the business would not support that role until the need returns. But if there is a business basis to support different career paths, the Olympic rings of talent creates the infrastructure to allow law firms to value, compensate and bill different levels of contribution and facilitate less-linear roles for lawyers.

Another big idea is a concept around core competency training for junior lawyers. The premise is that it doesn't make sense for law firms around the country to each individually train their junior lawyers. The trend across industry is about outsourcing, so why aren't we thinking about creatively outsourcing the initial training of junior lawyers? Junior lawyers at law firms have certain skill sets that they need to learn, and the notion of having a consortium of law firms contribute to hire a third party to train their junior lawyers on certain foundational skills makes a lot of sense and creates a more cost-effective and efficient means to absorb the cost of training junior lawyers.

### **Do you have any advice for bar associations?**

First is to become current on technology, which will result in effective outreach to Gen Y lawyers. Gen Y lawyers communicate through social media. What's also key is being integral to the changes in the future of the profession. Historically, bar associations have not offered many programs on how to run a law practice as a business or alternatives to practicing law in a traditional way or how to use your law degree outside of the profession. So I would encourage bar associations to be more broad-minded in the types of programming that they offer about ways to practice (and not practice) differently.

**You use some real heavy hitters in the book to impart your message.**

Part of the value of our book is the wisdom we collected from thought leaders across industry. For example, Anne-Marie Slaughter wrote the book's foreword. She is an internationally recognized expert on foreign relations, but she's also been at the forefront of issues around institutional change, individual change and women's issues.

Another thought leader who provides a chapter introduction is Gretchen Rubin, the happiness expert and best-selling author of "The Happiness Project." She shares the research around the fact that happiness is not a luxury in the workplace. Happiness breeds productivity, profitability and satisfaction. When lawyers are happier and more engaged in their work, they are more productive, more profitable and they're better employees.