

Classic Career Advice and Why You Can Dump It

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You don't have to be bold or go out of your comfort zone to advocate for change.

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Maybe you landed your dream job at an AmLaw 200 or a nonprofit that was made-for-you. Maybe you just hung a shingle in your hometown. Maybe you can't find a job, and you're contemplating selling your plasma with (fingers crossed) COVID-19 antibodies. Whatever your current job situation, you're new to the profession, and you want to be successful. There is no shortage of advice on the topic, but it's not all created equal. Below, I take the classic career advice and explain why you can dump it.

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Bad Advice: Emulate Your Boss

When you start working at a new job, it's only natural that you try to fit in. Chances are, there is at least a decade between you and your boss, but probably closer to three. No doubt, they have a neverending supply of legal knowledge to share with you, but you may have more to offer them than you think.

New Advice: Be a Boss at Tech

I just heard a well-respected attorney ask a colleague, "did I computerize that research?" Nope. Nope-ity, nope—just no. Do not get stuck in the technology rut that the Gen Xers have created. If your boss is "computerizing" things wrong, run. If you can't run because you need a paycheck, spend some time on the front end discussing the issues and finding a method that's best for everyone involved. Let your boss know that it will probably involve the "cloud." Give him or her time.

Bad Advice: No Phone at Work

I've heard rumors about law firms prohibiting associates from being on social media or limiting access to social media on work computers. LOLz. ROTFLMFO.

If you're not posting on social media, how do people know that you're a lawyer? The only people perusing the bar directory are spambots. You probably aren't making enough money (yet) to pay the Google algorithm for your face to pop up in lawyer searches. Quite frankly, if you're *not* on social media, you'll miss the work. If your firm is not on social media, its days are numbered.

My Advice: Claim Your Face-Space in the Algorithm (and Bill It to "Client Development")

When our firm was moving offices, I spent way too long on an Insta story about my new office and my RBG action figures. I was self-conscious that I was bragging about my new fancy office, but my RBG-induced joy needed to be shared (and I'll take all the attorney superheroes I can get, am I right?). The next day, I got a call from an acquaintance who said her friend needed an attorney, and "your name came to mind." *Did it now?* When we communicate on social media, [we become part of the algorithm](#).

While writing articles about legal developments is a great way to distinguish and market yourself, it takes a lot of time to create quality content worth reading. Spending 15 minutes to make a lawyer joke with a cute picture of your kid on Instagram is less time consuming, and frankly, a lot more fun. Your phone can be an unnecessary distraction, but you can easily turn the 10 minutes it takes to scroll mindlessly into an investment. Spend time reminding your audience (friends) about your work. Let them know when you're at a CLE conference, staying up late working on a draft (but, please, don't share the actual draft), going to court, and living the lawyer life. Be yourself (following the applicable ethical and professional rules).

Bad Advice: Don't Talk Politics

When I first started working, admittedly my first soiree into the professional world, it was jarring realizing that certain, seemingly benign, topics were off-limits. I know the age-old wisdom says to avoid politics, religion, and sex, and that's mostly true. It's illogical to me that the most educated individuals—who are, by definition, trained to think critically—should actively avoid discourse on something as critical as politics.

My Advice: Be an Advocate for Change

Did anyone else find themselves oddly anxious in May and June? Like, one minute you're reading emails about your firm's back-to-work policy and contemplating if you need to shower (it has been three days, after all) for a client-call in 30 minutes and, the next second, you're crying at your home-office desk (which smells like feet because your closet was the only place available for your office) because of the videos you saw the night before of black men and women being murdered by vigilantes and police officers? That was a new stress for me.

Then a friend confided in me that for the black community, it was so much worse because of the added stress—and very real safety risk—that communities of color were being hit hardest by COVID-19. I was so full of pain and frustration and anxiety that I couldn't focus on work. So, I spent a day drafting an email to my female colleagues to talk about Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and COVID-19, reminding them to check in on their black colleagues and to speak out about what is happening. Out of that came a lot of pain, [discussions](#), [community](#), and eventually a book club.

You don't have to be bold or go out of your comfort zone (though I highly recommend it) to [advocate for change](#). If you feel like talking about politics, don't be discouraged by your jaded husband, who thinks that social media comments are the downfall of civilization (I love you, Dustin). People are changing their opinion based on what they see on social media. Just ask Russia. You can be part of that. *But with great power comes great responsibility*. If you have seven years of higher education, you are decidedly too educated to make your point with a meme. Sharing an academic article with a reputable source is much more productive, and your audience may even read more than just the title. On second thought, make sure you cite check the meme.

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