

7 Habits of Wildly Successful Barristers



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#1 She gets to know her client

Clients are the oxygen of your practice.

A wildly successful barrister knows the profile of her ideal client and concentrates on identifying potential clients who fit that profile. She understands what keeps her client awake at night, and can describe in detail her client's decision-making process for selecting a barrister. She can predict her clients reactions and responses because she has a deep understanding of what makes her client tick.

This kind of insight enables her to deliver a service which exceeds her clients' expectations and guarantees her long-term and loyal professional relationships.

When you know the profile of your ideal client, you can expend your time, attention and energy on providing an excellent service to specific clients who need your unique combination of skills, experience and expertise. You won't waste any more time trying to convince the wrong people to buy your service.

Create a simple Ideal Client Profile based on the clients who instruct you regularly. What are the common characteristics of your best clients? Where can you find more of these types of clients?

#2 She develops her expertise

Clients pay for expertise. They google the rest.

Looking at the CVs of the most experienced QCs in your field, what do you notice? Aside from a long list of reported cases you will see that over time she has narrowed the range of her work and is now considered a specialist in one or two areas of law. She no longer gives general advice to clients because she can command premium rates for advising in her area of expertise.

Every expert starts as an amateur. Even if you have a general practice now, pick one or two areas for which you would like to be known as an expert in a few years time. Commit to learning everything you can about your subject in order that you become known as **the** expert.

By all means, continue to work on pay-the-bills instructions, but focus all your practice development activities in your primary area of interest. Attend seminars, write papers, give talks and contribute to discussions. Be strategic about communicating your successes.

If you don't want to work in the area in which you are currently being instructed, don't shout too loudly about your cases in this area. Instead, make sure everyone knows about your successes in the area in which you want to work in the future.

#3 She maintains her inner circle

Your inner circle is your personal sales force.

An inner circle relationship is built on trust, authenticity and integrity. It endures for the long-term and is defined by mutual respect. Members of your inner circle recommend you formally and informally to their own network.

A savvy barrister understands that she doesn't need a vast network of clients to build a thriving practice. She chooses to develop strong relationships with a small group of clients and invests time and energy to ensure those relationships sustain for the long-term.

Your lead time to win new clients in the legal sector is long. Professional relationships built on confidence and trust don't appear overnight. Keep in mind at all times that your client management skills are as important to the creation of a wildly successful career as your legal expertise.

Your inner circle comprises 5-10 clients - the number will depend on your practice area. Make a list. Who else should be on there?

Stay in touch with your Inner Circle. These are the people you will call when your latest case settles unexpectedly and you would prefer to start work on something new immediately.

#4 She networks, frequently

A well-designed network brings in the work for you.

A successful barrister is a well-connected barrister. She has contacts in law firms, universities, industry, professional associations and the media. She manages those contacts actively, online and in person.

Nothing replaces personal contacts in professional services but there are many different and efficient ways to network which do not require you to stand around for hours in oak-panelled rooms with a glass of wine at the end of the working day.

Designing a simple networking strategy will save you hours of wasted time. Think about where the people in your Inner Circle hang out. Go there, online and in person, regularly and at least twice a month.

In Jurilogical's programmes, we provide networking templates to help you focus your outreach efforts on events, activities and forums where you are more likely to meet people who will instruct you.

#5 She is her own rainmaker

You are the best person to communicate your value.

The upsurge in Direct Access instructions indicates that clients are keen to speak to barristers. Touting for work is a smart move in the digital age.

A wildly successful barrister takes on the role of rainmaker with passion and enthusiasm. She is excited to be able to go out and meet people whose problems she is uniquely positioned to solve. And she never, ever blames the clerks when the flow of work dries up.

Choosing to be the rainmaker for your practice is the single decision above all others which will put you in control of your career. It is largely a matter of adopting an attitude of curiosity about your clients and communicating how you can help.

Regardless of your year of call, make the decision to own your client relationships. Step up and take responsibility for bringing in your own work. Doing this doubles your sales force to two people - you and your clerk. Prepare a 1 minute, 3 minute and 5 minute introduction to your practice and learn it by heart for your meetings with potential clients. But don't make these introductions all about you. Instead, pack it full of examples of the value you have conveyed to your clients.

#6 She tracks her finances

The price of financial illiteracy is bankruptcy.

A successful barrister is a practising barrister. She hasn't left the profession because of a cash flow crisis. She tracks her finances and pays all her taxes, insurances, Chambers fees and pension contributions on time. She has a budget for spending and lives within her means.

The number of barristers who leave the profession a few short years after joining, having invested a lifetime of savings into training and qualifications, is astonishing but not surprising.

Business finance and planning isn't part of the self-employed lawyers professional training and it's a serious omission.

Interview at least three qualified accountants or financial planners before selecting one who can provide the necessary support to keep things on track.

Commit to taking control of your personal and practice finance sooner rather than later. Don't be the barrister who is forced to go cap-in-hand to the Bar Benevolent Fund.

#7 She chooses wild success

A wildly successful barrister isn't so by chance.

If you choose to dedicate your time and energy to your practice to enable you to reach the top sooner rather than later, commit your time and money to get you there, starting today.

If success for you means part-time working to enable you to pursue other priorities, your task is to create the conditions to enable you to do that. You just need to decide what you want and commit to making it happen.

Take a moment to visualise what "wild success" means for you.

Would you rather re-balance your workload away from court to reduce your work stress?

How much money do you want to earn and save, and why are those numbers important to you?

Who will benefit from you achieving your own definition of success?

The more compelling your vision of wild success for yourself, the more likely you are to commit to the necessary action to achieve it.

Further resources

Steve Peters | Optimising the Performance of the Human Mind | TEDx | YouTube

Will Smith | Face Your Fears | Youtube

Amy Cuddy | Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are | TEDx | YouTube

Eric Enge | 21 Reasons You Must Become an Expert

H. Townsend & Jon Baker | The Go-To Expert: How to Grow your Reputation, Differentiate Yourself From the Competition and Win New Business.

Susan Cain | The Power of Introverts | TEDx | YouTube