

Your Guide to Getting Started

Ok, well done on getting through *The Solicitor's Guide* and, more importantly, on taking the next steps to implementing the ideas contained in the book by accessing these resources to help you do that.

This guide is designed to walk you through what you need to do to get started straight away and then provide you with some practical tips and techniques that you can put to use immediately to get you on your way.

First: your goals.

Yes, you need to set them and there's no way of getting around this. You have to knuckle down to this first.

Earl Nightingale said that there were two types of people, goal people and river people. Goal people are motivated by and oriented towards goals. River people are not necessarily driven by goals but they live and work in a river of interest that they love. And river people are so good and productive just doing what they do in their river of interest that they are generally very well rewarded as a result. Funnily enough, many of the most successful lawyers are probably river people.

The point of all of this is that you don't have to have some big shining mega goal that you strut about thinking (and talking) about all of the time. You might do; and some highly goal oriented people are driven by such goals, but you don't necessarily need that.

However, you do need to know where you are going. Even if you are a river person, you need islands in the river that you are aiming for along the way; so that you know that when you have reached them you are making progress in the right direction. A boat drifting aimlessly will probably just end up on the rocks as opposed to one steering a definite course to a pre-determined destination.

Money is good as a goal. I say this not as a particularly money oriented person. Money may not drive you, but money is a really easy thing to keep track of. If you chose a number you want to hit in turnover or cash in the bank, well you can measure that. And you can check how you're doing from time to time by reference to your ultimate goal. So setting a financial target for yourself as a goal can be a very simple way to start if you're struggling with the idea of goals per se.

Remember think short, medium and long term in your goal planning. And get some clarity on why you are doing all of this; your vision. Pick something big that you're going to aim for within the next three years, with an interim goal each year that is going to take you in that direction. Then set short-term goals for each quarter of each year. That way you will immediately have a goal to be achieved within the

next three months, which the perfect time frame and as it gives you time to get something substantial done but is also close enough to be real.

So right now, start and set your goals, use the pages that follow to write down your goals and remember you can have work goals, personal goals, family goals and health and fitness goals, in fact you should have goals in each of these areas and you should be careful to ensure that one does not conflict with another. If they do you will have to resolve that conflict and decide which goal is more important to you.

As we discussed in Chapter 19, your goals should be S.M.A.R.T.

Let's look at that in a little more detail here:

Specific – You have a much better chance of realising a specific goal than a general one. To move from the general to the specific ask yourself the six "W" questions:

- Who: Who will be involved?
- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Where: Where will this happen?
- When: When will it be accomplished?
- Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- Why: State the reasons why you are pursuing the goal and the benefit you expect by realizing it.

For example a general goal might be to "get fit" whereas a specific goal might be to "start running at least 3k three times a week from tomorrow and complete a 10k in under one hour by 1st October".

Measurable – Establish simple numbers that you can use to assess your progress toward each of your goals. Measuring your progress keeps you on track and tells you how you are doing in terms of your target dates. Hitting your numbers as you go along will give you a feeling of accomplishment and will encourage you to go further. On the other hand, having clear, simple numbers keeps you accountable; if you're not hitting them you'll know you need to intensify your efforts or change how you're doing it.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions like: How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable – When you identify goals that are really important to you, your mind starts working on ways to make them happen. Once you then put in the work required to implement that, you will start to develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You will then start seeing opportunities that never occurred to you before that will accelerate your progress toward your goals.

When this happens your rate of progress can start to increase exponentially. The key is to start and build momentum as you go.

You can attain almost any goal that you set for yourself once you really want it, you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may seem very far away and out of reach now will gradually and inexorably move closer and become attainable; not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and your capacity for achievement grows along with that. When you set and write down your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that enable you to realise them.

Realistic – To be realistic a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both *willing* and *able* to work. A goal can be both big and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how big your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A challenging goal can be more realisable than a mediocre one because of the motivational force that the ambitious goal exerts on you.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly *believe* that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

Time Based – A goal without a deadline is a mere wish. If you want to lose a stone, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" doesn't require you to do anything right now. But if you set yourself the deadline of a specific date, you'll know the rate of progress you'll have to make each day and each week leading up to that date in order to achieve your goal. And you'll be far more likely to do so successfully as a result.

Ok, enough talking about this, now you've got to take action.

Perhaps more important than anything we've spoken about up to this point is the act of writing down your goals. Print as many copies of the pages that follow as you need and write down your goals. You can use the sheets for your personal, business, financial or health goals or any other goals you may have. Just print one for each.

Do this with pen and paper. One of the reasons I've given this to you in PDF rather than Word format is so that you'll have to print and write on the goal sheet rather than work on a screen. There's something about the hand and the mind working together and the fact of ink on paper afterwards that makes a difference.

So, off you go, get started!

My Personal/Business/Financial/Health Goals

Name:

Date:

My Vision: Why I'm Doing This and My Associated Lifetime Goals

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

My Three-Year Goals: Where I will need to be in three years from now to best accomplish my Lifetime Goals.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

My Personal/Business/Financial/Health Goals (contd.)

Name:

Date:

My Twelve-Month Goals: What I need to accomplish in the next twelve months to hit my Three-Year Goals.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

My Immediate Quarterly Goals: What I need to do in the next three months to hit my Twelve-Month Goals.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Next, think about the components required to achieve your goals.

What are you going to have to get done or put in place to make them happen?

Break it down into modules. If you are going to achieve a certain fee income from a certain practice area, where is it going to come from? Who among your existing clients might be in the market for this or alternatively what new clients you are going to have to acquire? What are you going to have to do to make this happen? What preparatory work is going to have to be done to enable you to do it?

Once you are clear on the ultimate objective, ask yourself “what is the biggest single thing or combination of things that I can do that will accomplish my objective”? Get clear on that.

Then break that biggest single thing down into steps and decide on the order in which they need to be taken.

Then set accomplishing the first step as your first interim goal with a deadline for achievement and go on from there.

Now you should have a clear first step. And if you’ve thought this through, this is the first step towards the biggest single thing that you can do that will achieve the goal that is most important to you.

So doing this thing has to become the highest priority thing in your working life.

Now you need to go through the process of listing everything that needs to be done referred to in Chapter 19 of The Solicitor’s Guide. List everything that needs to be done no matter how trivial or how long it has been waiting to get done. Run through the list and categorise the task as A, B or C in relative order of importance. Now run through the A’s and do the same exercise again and then list the top priority A tasks in order of importance.

Use your results to create an Action Plan along the lines of the following. Identify the task required, establish who is going to do it, set a deadline and keep track of its status: either in progress, done or late.

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Task	Person Responsible	Date Due	Status
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Now there's a lot to get done.

And you might start to consider the question of time management. But here's the thing: time management as a concept is based on a false premise.

There is no point in managing time, unless the tasks that you perform within that time are the most important tasks that are most likely to produce the outcomes that you want in terms of your ultimate goal.

Do not manage time; manage effort.

Concentrated and highly focussed effort is the most powerful thing that you have at your disposal. And if you ensure that all of your efforts are focussed on what is really important to you, you can achieve anything you set your mind to.

Parkinson's Law states that the work will expand to fill the time allowed for it. And there is a corollary to this in that we can get a surprising amount of stuff done when we are given a limited period of time within which to do it.

Think about what happens when you have to get a certain number of things done before a court hearing on a particular morning. Once you know what has to get done, you will come in with unrelenting focus and just knock each one off after the other and then show up in court. You don't have any choices on the deadline; you've got to be there. You know the same thing happens with transactions that have to get closed before Christmas or jobs you've got to get done before you go on holidays. You'll get an extraordinary amount done within an unusually short space of time because there is a pressing deadline and you've got to hit it.

So, do the same thing with those B tasks that have to get done but are not going to take you directly towards your goals. Give yourself a specific, limited period of time each day to get these tasks done. Compress the time available for these tasks and focus your effort on them relentlessly within the time that they need to get done.

If you allow yourself all day to do them, it'll take all day.

Success is the progressive realisation of a worth goal. A successful year is a series of twelve successful months; a successful month is a series of four and a bit successful weeks; a successful week is a series of 5-7 successful days. And so on.

So, success in terms of the long term goals you have set for yourself is nothing more than doing the things that you have determined need to be done to build towards those goals incrementally day upon day, week upon week, month upon month and year upon year.

And if you have planned what success will mean to you in terms of the outcome from the year, you need to plan each week and then plan each day in order to make that success happen. So finish your week before you start; plan it out in full in advance.

Don't start the week checking the post, the email and the phone messages. That is just reacting to what others are doing and someone else is driving your agenda. Set your agenda in advance and determine what it is that you will do that will make each day a successful component in a successful week, month, year etc.

Let's assume 5 productive hours in a day. There are 8 hours in a traditional working day (and you may of course spend a lot more time than that working but let's plan this in such a way that you still have a life). But don't schedule the entire 8 hours of the day because there's going to be stuff that just happens and has to be dealt with that's going to throw things out of whack if you don't allow yourself wriggle room. Schedule 60% of the time and then be really ruthless with that scheduled time.

Of the 5 hours that you schedule each day, devote 2 of them to B tasks. Things that just have to get done but are not strategic in terms of your progress towards your goals; things like handling correspondence, phone calls, email and routine client work that has to get looked after. Devote 2 of the 5 hours to A tasks. In those two hours, start on your most important A task and just keep working through it until you have it finished and can't progress further without some outside intervention. Then move on to the next most important A task. Use the 5th hour for overflow. If you can get all of your B tasks done in the two hours allocated for them, the 5th one just gives you more time to continue your work on your A tasks.

Part of what you should be doing as part of your A tasks is developing systems and procedures to enable B tasks to get done more efficiently by others. So that as you work this system over time, there should be fewer and fewer B tasks requiring your direct attention.

You want to get to a position where in true 80/20 style you are spending 4 out of your 5 hours on the most important stuff. For now you're in transition and it would be unrealistic to expect you to move from a cold start and squeeze everything that you've been doing before now into 20% of the time you have available to do it. But ultimately that is where you want to go with this.

During these blocks of time, work in stages. Give yourself 20-25 minutes of really concentrated effort, then take a break for a few minutes. Do another intensive session and take another short break. Do this again but next time followed by say a 15-20 minute break. All of the time you are working make sure you are doing so in a distraction free environment. This combination of concentrated effort and short break allows you to keep doing what it is most important for you to get done most effectively.

What is vitally important here is that you work on things in their true order of priority.

Determine what *the* most important thing is, i.e. that which is going to make the biggest difference to you in terms of progress towards your goals. Then work on that first and do not move to the next thing until this is well and truly done (or you've come to a point that requires outside input or you've hit a technical problem – but don't cop out on this.)

Sticking to the order of importance is critical. When faced with a list of tasks there is a natural tendency to pick off the quick and easy ones and do them first, no matter how relatively unimportant they may be. If you do this one after another, you can then find that you've spent some very busy time but you've been doing things that were not the most important.

The most important tasks can often be the biggest and most forbidding and perhaps the ones with which you are least familiar. If you come to that last, you'll probably just say that it's too big to start at this stage and leave it for next time; which becomes next time and so on and so on. Therefore, always start with the most important thing

One of the things you may encounter when you start this is that you can't decide whether to do something or not because you haven't done it before. It might be a particular marketing test or a new idea that you've had.

Ideas can be great but only when they are implemented. No amount of thinking about it is going to get it done. And you can end up endlessly worrying about whether it's going to work or not or what might happen as a result. This can lead to stasis, particularly when you are doing this on your own.

The best thing to do is to simply write down what it is that you are considering at the top of a blank page. Then draw two vertical lines under what you have written to create three columns on the page. Head one column, "The Best", head one "The Worst" and one "The Most Likely".

Now write down the best things that you think could happen as a result of what you considering under that column heading. Write down the worst things that you think could happen in that column and write down the most likely things that you think will happen in that column.

Now, you need to decide if you are prepared to accept and able to live with the worst that can happen. You then need to consider whether what you are planning is worth the effort based on the best and most likely outcomes that you can expect from it.

Then you just either do it or discard the idea and move on.

Ultimately there is very little that is truly fatal. And obviously you wouldn't choose to do something that will pose an existential risk to your life or your business.

But in many other cases you are only going to find out by doing it and in many cases the best approach is the Nike one: just do it.

There is going to be some value in learning what doesn't work. Educated guesswork and trial and error are par for the course in this stuff.

If the Best/Worst/Most Likely analysis doesn't do it for you, just use the Benjamin Franklin method and draw a vertical line down the middle of a blank page and write Pros on one side and Cons on the other. Then decide whether the Pros outweigh the Cons or vice versa.

If you have no way of deciding and have simply no idea what the best thing to do is, just toss a coin. In many cases, once what you have in mind does not pose a serious threat to your business, you're going to be better off making a decision and moving on one way or the other rather than getting bogged down in endless "what if" conversations with yourself.

So, the important thing is to set your goals, create an action plan around the most important tasks that need to be need to move you towards those goals and then get started.

And here's to your success in doing it.