

PUBLICATION

Baker's Dozen – Tips on the Way to the Top

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We asked for tips people would give to their younger selves.

1. The best advice I can share came from my daughter Stella Kate recently. When a particularly difficult case took many unexpected twists and turns, Stella calmly said, "Mom, it's just a bad day, not a bad life." That advice got me back on my feet as a reminder that rebounding from the ever-changing legal market and matter circumstances is often half the battle.

– *Katie Dysart*

2. My tip to my younger self is: You are enough.

– *Michaela Poizner*

3. Professionally, I would tell my younger self to learn to love participating in industry-specific conference panels. I'm not naturally comfortable with public speaking and used to dread being a CLE panelist (sometimes I still do!). However, participating in panels requires that you take the time to learn more about your clients' businesses and current issues. It's a great way to sharpen your skills, as well as giving you visibility as an "expert."

– *Amy Elder*

4. Be inquisitive! If you don't understand how your role fits into the broader context of the matter, ask for an explanation. Not only will you learn something, but you are also almost certain to do a better job with the task assigned to you.

– *Drew Yonchack*

5. Put down your sword. Instead of being defensive when challenged, use these opportunities for self-examination and self-improvement. Figure out what motivates the other person and look for common ground. Avoid defaulting to "no." Be curious and find ways to answer questions in the positive.

Also, find and embrace tools that help you be the best you possible. Read, listen to podcasts, see a counselor, hire a coach. Invest in yourself and your personal growth. Your professional growth will follow.

– *Ivy Cadle*

6. My tip to my younger self would be to embrace everything about yourself that makes you different. Those differences are your magic. First in your family to go to college: "You belong, young Jamie." Only feminist among your friends: "Rock on, young Jamie." Not going to change your name when you get married; "That is

as valid as any other choice, young Jamie." If I had embraced myself, I would have felt less alone in 100 different moments.

– *Jaime Ballinger*

7. Be yourself. As a young litigator, I often doubted myself and questioned whether I needed to change my personality to be an effective advocate. Over my 15 years of practice, I have learned to lean into my strengths because those are what make me successful.

Give yourself permission to unplug. Early in my career, I never let myself unplug. I either missed part or all of family vacations, and if I did go, I would work half the day and always respond to emails. Burnout is real, and if you don't allow yourself to unplug, you will suffer from it. You will also miss out on precious moments with friends and family.

– *Tessa Vorhaben*

8. This is easy: make a point to understand **the business** of a law practice. As a religion major, you may think you can't do this or, for some reason, don't have to do so. Regardless, dive into the numbers to understand the business side and how you can make yourself invaluable.

It doesn't matter how much your colleagues like you, how much pro bono work you do, or even how great a mentor you are (although those things **are** important). Always keep an eye on your numbers and, especially, your profit margin and what you're bringing to the table.

– *Blair Evans*

9. My advice to my younger self as a new attorney would be "Don't work on vacation." As professionals with little control over when client needs rise and external deadlines fall, we allow ourselves so little true vacation time. Guard it. Do not spend that week in Dublin confined to the hotel room. It is not worth the lost opportunity to refresh and restore yourself, to reconnect with your personal identity outside of your professional one, to remind yourself it is possible to go through a day without checking email every 15 minutes, and to assure your travel companions of the value of their company.

That being said, my next tip is to always bring a mobile Wi-Fi hot spot with you!

– *Marisa Dorough*

10. Relax – you are not going to get fired. In my experience, it is the people who think they are going to get fired who actually end up succeeding. By the time you are a second- or third-year attorney, you should have a better idea of how you are really doing, and if you are getting good feedback, then it is time to enjoy the confidence of a job well done and grow into it. I waited way too long in my career to really own that I was a competent, able lawyer.

– *Carla Preacher-Ryan*

11. Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek clarification when you need it. The saying that "There is no dumb question" is true, and it is much more beneficial and efficient for everyone if you ask the question(s) rather than waste time spinning your wheels.

– *Alison Schurick*

12. Time is a finite resource. Look at how you spend your time as an investment. Like any financial investment, invest your time efficiently and in things that will provide returns, but don't always focus on monetary returns. The non-pecuniary returns from the time you invest in yourself and with the ones you love are invaluable. Financial stability and performance are important, but always strive for a balance.

– *Mark Frilot*

13. Learn from failure but don't obsess about it. Everyone fails. Successful people turn failure into opportunity.

– *Mysty Blagg*