**Meeting Minutes**

Navigating COVID through Practice Adaptation and Agility

WLF Webinar: June 10, 2020: 12:00 – 1:00 pm

CPD Credits: 1.0

Participants: 60

Minute Taker: Olena Gavrilova

Speaker: Linda Parsons, QC

* Linda will address the Hero’s Saga Phase – this is the next phase of the Change Cycle referred to by Allison Wolf during the June 5, 2020 webinar;
* COVID-19 is challenging to all of us in multiple ways but you can be agile and adapt to these new circumstances to change and grow. You’ve already demonstrated significant adaptation and agility! Look at your history and everything you’ve survived so far – even if you just got called to the bar. If you’re more than a 5-year call, then you’ve already experienced significant adaptation. Think about all of that and congratulate yourself on how far you’ve come. Embrace your Inner Sage and ignore your Inner Critic – you have already shown resilience in the face of obstacles;
* We are in a profession that requires constant re-invention and change;
* Is COVID-19 really a bigger disruptor than all the other things the law has had to deal with in the last 30 years? Probably yes, because it affects us personally and professionally, it has multiple consequences and it was a very sudden rather than gradual change. It’s a dynamic force that keeps changing over time. It has a domino effect on serious political and social issues. It’s a global issue, not a national or local one and it threatens everyone’s health and safety;
* The Columbia Coaching Model asks 3 questions: What’s Up? What Matters? And What’s Next? Find your own answers to the gap between where you are and where you want to be and how to go about bridging that gap?;
* Resilience in the face of adversity is not just dealing with obstacles but thriving through them;
* So look at the challenges you’re dealing with now due to COVID-19 and ask yourself: What’s Up? What Matters to me? How do I get there? What’s Next?
* The What’s Next phase is the most important because you will start to put a plan into action. This will make you feel more in control. Create a plan, be accountable to your plan and start to close the gap between where you are and where you want to be.
* So how do we garner the courage and resilience to face this disruption and grow and thrive? Linda will address this through 3 specific, anonymized stories of specific women lawyers:
1. “Sarah” – 12-year call & an income partner in a national firm in labour and employment. Has been very busy during COVID. Has 2 children at home (6 and 8) and her husband is also a lawyer. She has taken on the domestic work and more of the childcare and education. Sarah’s mom initially helped out when COVID broke out. She doesn’t feel comfortable bringing back her childcare helper because her partner is a nurse. Her practice has been an avalanche of legislative change since COVID. One of the partners at her firm has been sick since COVID and her main associate is on mat leave. She has a hard time with setting boundaries and is dealing with a lot of work. She is finding it hard to be efficient due to the learning curve. What matters for Sarah? She loves her work, loves to feel indispensable, wants to spend more quality time with her children, wants to relieve the anger and frustration she feels toward her husband, wants to take better care of her own health and to take better care of her mother. So what’s next for Sarah? She needs to ask herself what she can control and what she can change. She can better control her work flow and delegate. She needs to challenge the assumption that asking for help is a sign of failure. She also needs to challenge the assumption that she’s the only one at home who takes care of business and needs to lean on her husband more. She’s decided to conduct a file audit to determine which matters are more urgent. With her mother and husband, she’s re-set the entire family schedule. She and her husband went to counselling and have been able to talk more constructively about how to share the household responsibilities more. Sarah talks to her mom and they make a plan about how often she’ll be over looking after the girls – Sarah’s mom surprises her by being willing to help out much more. The family buys a new printer and improves the home office. They commit to ordering groceries.
2. “Laura” is a 6-year-call in mid-sized firm. She is a solicitor and is drawn to wills and estate work but wants to challenge herself to move into more complex estate work. She doesn’t feel experienced because the more senior person she usually works with doesn’t call himself an estate expert either. The learning curve is large and she is concerned with her billables. Laura doesn’t feel particularly connected to the people at her firm – 2 of the associates she was close to have left the firm. Her workload has gone down since COVID and her productivity has suffered because she’s not good at working from home. Her finances are “okay” – she’s single. She feels that her practice is re-active at all times. She’s lost sight of her focus on her formerly active lifestyle. She feels listless. What matters to Laura? She went into the law because she wanted to help people and got really good grades in law school. She gets excited about becoming really good in a particular area of law. She’s thought about going out on her own or joining a different firm but is afraid and doesn’t know how to start. She needs a sense of purpose and confidence. Exercise used to help with her feelings of fear. Laura decides to free up Fridays to really explore the estate practice. She delegated some of her files to less busy associates with her firm’s agreement and has carved out Fridays. On this “day off” she does online research and learns more about estate practice. She joins the Wills and Estates section of the CBA. She contacted some sole practitioners who do wills and estates to pick their brains – some were very receptive and gave her more information about running her own practice. She also contacted some mid-sized firms and reached out to recruiters. She realized she was lonely so she created a weekly Zoom call with her colleagues. She looked into further education options. She started attending online fitness classes and resumed playing tennis with a friend. She hasn’t made any concrete plans about leaving her firm but has much more confidence and is gathering more information;
3. “Jane” is a 9-year-call and has her own firm in PI, criminal law and medical malpractice. Jane’s practice was already in trouble with No Fault and has now been unable to proceed with 3 trials due to COVID. She had to lay off 2 staff members and move her associate to part-time. Her life partner lost her job & her mother due to COVID-19. What matters to Jane? Supporting her life partner and salvaging her practice. She’s also really needing some hope and release from stress – she’s really suffering. What’s Next for Jane? There is a lot that Jane doesn’t have control over, but she does have some things she can influence. She can apply for financial relief for her business and staff and for her own mortgage. She could settle some of her personal injury files because her clients needed financial relief as well. She can explore the growth of her medical malpractice work. She reached out to some inspirational mentors and started learning how to mediate in order to envision better days and take strength from that practice. She reached out to family and friends for help.
* These 3 stories are examples of women who have navigated COVID by using a specific method to build resilience. Through this, they found they had the strength to survive and grow.