



New Year, New Career: Five Self-Investment Strategies for Enhancing Your Happiness at Work

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The only thing more consistent than making New Year's resolutions is breaking them. Year after year, we set lofty goals to better ourselves, but by March, we sink back into old habits. Women in particular can struggle to invest time in self-improvement. For a variety of historical and cultural reasons, women tend to prioritize the needs of others over their own aspirations. Particularly where children are involved, juggling work with home responsibilities can leave little time for self-improvement. Relying on routine is the easy fallback, but too much of the same leads to a lack of motivation and morale.

Don't continue to rely on old habits! Start this New Year, and new decade, by investing in making your career rewarding. Take the time to align your talents with your passions to achieve more fulfilling workdays, new opportunities, and even higher income.

Here are five ways to invest in reinvigorating your career:

1. Discover New Interests

Attorneys strive to become niche experts but dealing only with repetitive issues can be tedious and contributes to “burn out.” If you are intellectually under-stimulated, learn about topics that pique your interest. Look for classes, podcasts, or webinars that intrigue you, even if outside your usual practice area. Go to CLE programs that address unfamiliar issues. Attend conferences that cover a variety of subjects and sit in on sessions you may not have otherwise attended.

2. Diversify Your Workload

Inspire creativity by applying your professional knowledge to newly discovered interests. Identify those at your company who regularly deal with issues that intrigue you, then discuss how your respective expertise can enhance each other's work. If you have a passion outside of your practice area, consider taking a pro bono case to explore a different area of the law and apply your skills to meaningful projects about which you feel passionate. For example, animal lovers may find a local animal welfare society in need of legal assistance, and veterans' organizations regularly seek volunteer attorneys.

3. Hone Your Talents

Think back through your education and career to experiences that made you feel confident—what talents were you utilizing, and how can you incorporate them into your current work? If you previously enjoyed public speaking, apply for speaking engagements at conferences or look for an adjunct position at a local law school. If writing is your passion, contact a legal publication for authoring or editing opportunities. Regularly capitalizing on your talents can increase your satisfaction with your work.

4. Establish a Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Find a mentor who has accomplished similar career goals to your own. Mentors can provide invaluable, personalized advice and help you set achievable goals and stay motivated. By learning from another's professional experiences, you can avoid common mistakes. Finding a mentee can be just as fulfilling for a more experienced attorney. Mentoring increases job satisfaction, as it allows the mentor to reflect on her own practice and relationships.

5. Prioritize Financial Education

Though women continue to make great strides in business, with more female CEOs and college graduates than ever before,¹ studies show that their financial confidence has actually declined.² Women continue to be paid less than men, and fewer women report asking for a promotion or raise than just a few years ago. Dedicate time to becoming more financially literate and practice your negotiation skills. Look for local or online courses that focus on personal finance, investing, and applying financial knowledge in the workplace. Books, magazines, and podcasts can be valuable sources of information, and there may be government-sponsored resources available to you. For example, the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities recently announced its “Investing in Women” initiative to educate women about banking, credit, saving, and investing through presentations across the state.³



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Endnotes

- ¹ Maya Salam, *College-Educated Women Are the Workplace Majority, but Still Don't Get Their Share*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (July 2, 2019), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/02/us/american-workers-women-college.html>.
- ² *Despite Rising Influence, Women Report Steady Decline in Financial Confidence*, ALLIANZ LIFE INS. CO. (June 24, 2019), available at <https://www.allianzlife.com/about/newsroom/2019-press-releases/women-report-steady-decline-in-financial-confidence>.
- ³ *Investing in Women: An Initiative to Reduce the Gender Gap for Investment Participation*, PA. DEP'T OF BANKING & SECURITIES, available at <https://www.dobs.pa.gov/Consumers/Learn/Pages/Investing-In-Women.aspx>.