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Law Practice Management
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ASSIGNMENT – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

For the final project in Law Practice Management, each student will submit a Professional Development Plan (PDP, sometimes referred to in class as a “business plan” or “career plan”). This document sets forth the requirements and expectations for the PDP.

Submission deadline

Submit your PDP via the course Camino page no later than April 28, 2017 at 11:59 P.M.

Assignment

Draft a professional and business development action plan for yourself. Your PDP should cover the time period between the end of this semester and 3-5 years in the future.

There is no “one size fits all.” Your plan will vary depending on the form of law practice (solo, government, in house, firm, etc.) and the substantive area of law practice in which you want to practice 3-5 years from now, and the many other factors discussed in class. If you have not yet decided what type of practice you want to have 3-5 years from now, your plan may be one that sets out a plan for your career as you gather the information to make that decision.

Required elements

Your PDP must include the following six elements:

1. a professional (not personal) mission statement;
2. a description of your practice (think of these first two as your home web page);
3. your plans for substantive knowledge development;
4. your plans for skills development;
5. a client development plan; and
6. a financial plan.

Your PDP must be actionable. Attached to or embedded within the plan should be a timetable with at least two planned actions you intend to do (realistically) within 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 180 days, and 1 year after taking the bar exam. In other words, you should list two actions to complete within 30 days of taking the bar exam, two actions to complete within 60 days of taking the bar exam, etc.

Format and Length

- Your PDP must be typed. The plan must be 12-15 pages, double spaced, 12 point font, 1.25 inch margins (or the default Microsoft Word margins).
- The cover page and table of contents, which we encourage you to include, does NOT count as part of the 12-15 pages.
- You may include graphics, figures or tables in your PDP. However, they should make a substantial, substantive contribution to the content if you intend them to count as part of the

12-15 pages. Stock images, cartoons, and tables with much “white space” will not count as part of the 12-15 page requirement.

- Appendices are permissible but will not count as part of the 12-15 pages.
- You may format your PDP however you wish, subject to the requirements above. We do not care about reasonable deviations from the formatting requirements (e.g., headings with a font that is larger than 12 point). Use your judgment in determining whether your plan meets the length requirement of 12-15 pages.
- Please carefully proofread your PDP before submitting it. A PDP with significant typographical errors, grammatical errors, or poor formatting will automatically be marked down by at least 20% of the points available. We expect you to complete your PDP sufficiently early that you have time to proofread it and correct formatting, typographical, grammatical, and other problems that can give the reader a negative impression of you.

Additional Guidance Regarding the Content of Your PDP

The following are some thoughts and examples that you may want to consider as you draft your PDP.

Your Goal

Your PDP must either (1) set forth an overarching goal you intend to achieve 3-5 years from when you take the bar exam or (2) set forth how you will decide on an overarching goal for the 3-5 year time frame. Your goal can be virtually anything related to the career you would like to have as a lawyer. Examples of overarching goals include, but are not limited to:

- “My goal is to have a solo practice in the area of X by June of 2020.”
- “My goal is to land a job in a large law firm in location Y, working in Z area of the law within 5 years of taking the bar exam.”
- “My goal is to be an in-house attorney at Company A within five years of taking the bar exam.”
- “My goal is to try a case no later than four years after taking the bar exam.”

These are simply examples of the types of goals you might choose. The universe of goals is limited only by your imaginations.

For those students who have not yet narrowed their choice to one specific type of practice or substantive area of law, your plan may have a more general statement of your career goal(s). However, your plan must still identify the goal(s) you are considering as well as how and when you will reach a decision to focus on one goal.

You should choose a goal that is meaningful to you and that you sincerely want to achieve, because your plan will need to set forth exactly how you plan to achieve that goal.

Your Actions to Achieve Your Goal

Your PDP must set forth specific actions and steps you intend to take as you work to achieve your stated goal. These should be specific and concrete actions and steps that will help you reach your goal.

Your PDP must tell us *what* you plan to do as you strive toward your goal and *how* you plan to do it. A poor PDP will simply say, “From 2016-2017, I will improve my advocacy skills” without setting forth exactly how the person plans to improve his/her advocacy skills. A good PDP will say, “From 2016-2017, I will work to improve my advocacy skills by taking the following actions: (1) I will do A in time period X; (2) I will do B in time period Y,” etc. A good PDP will also explain why the selected actions will help you achieve your goal. Your PDP must give you a way to determine during your selected time frame (i.e., the time period you have selected within the 3-5 years after the semester’s end) whether you are executing your plan. Therefore, your actions and steps must be concrete, and the results must be measurable. For example, a PDP that simply says, “From 2016-2017, I will improve my advocacy skills” does not include any way to measure, at the end of 2017, whether the person’s advocacy skills have in fact improved. On the other hand, a PDP that says, “I will work to improve my advocacy skills as follows: During each quarter of Year Y, I will do X,” or “No later than Time T, I will have done Z.” Then when you look back on Year Y, you will know whether you accomplished X during each quarter, or at Time T you will be able to tell whether you have done Z.

For those who have not settled on type of practice or substantive legal area

Some students might not yet be committed to a type of law practice or substantive area of law and/or may be weighing different options. For those students, there are at least two possible approaches to the PDP:

- (A) Some students find it helpful to choose just one of the options they are considering and use the PDP to explore that choice. Remember – it is not a binding decision!
- (B) Other students may want to explore two different career options.

Your plan may focus more on clarifying what the decision is, when it will be made, the criteria you will use to make the decision, and the action steps you need to take to be able to make the decision. As you discuss the different elements of your PDP such as skills development or knowledge development, you may want to focus on those that will apply regardless of the ultimate decision you make – in other words, how can you most efficiently spend your time when the career choice has yet to be made. You still must include all of the required elements of the PDP.



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