

# LAWYER ALERT

## 5

### Stopping Medical Injustice

## SIMPLE STEPS FOR CREATING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN YOUR LAW FIRM

The comment was undeniable. A lawyer friend said words to the effect that, “We all have great ideas. It’s about executing on the ideas.” Ideas are worthless without execution. The objective is to take our goals and ambitions and turn them into reality. Easier written than done, right?

How do you take your goals and ambitions and make them real? Your team members have to be accountable for the goals and objectives. And where is there a better place to turn for guidance? A culture of accountability was created by Steve Jobs at Apple that is worth emulating by you.

### STEP #1: IDENTIFY THE INDIVIDUAL ON THE TEAM WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR A TASK (A/K/A, THE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL)

DRI (Directly Responsible Individual) is a title given to a person who is ultimately responsible to make sure a task is completed. Every task is assigned a DRI who is ultimately held accountable for the success (or failure) of the project/task. Seek to ensure a named DRI for each task.

DRI's remove ambiguity and ensure that you will never hear, “I didn’t know I was supposed to do that” by answering questions relating to tasks and ownership. When



sending email, the DRI is on the “To: List” and everyone else is cc’d.

“Any effective meeting at Apple will have an action list. Next to each action items will be the DRI. A common phrase heard around Apple when someone is trying to learn the right contact on a project: ‘Who’s the DRI on that?’”

**Apple Employee**

DRI's originated from Steve Jobs at Apple who demanded accountability within teams. Jobs made sure someone was responsible for every action item on every meeting agenda. At Apple, the DRI was where the buck stopped on a project. This is how Apple created a culture of accountability and responsibility.

### STEP #2: HOLD MONTHLY ACCOUNTABILITY MEETINGS

Schedule monthly progress meetings on active cases. A DRI is assigned to each team member and our accountability manager shares the DRI among the team. As action items/tasks are completed, the team member notifies our accountability manager.

The tasks accepted by the team members become their responsibility for the next 30 days.

Every action item gets assigned to someone who is directly responsible. It’s

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up to that person to get it done or find the resources needed to get it done. As stated by Julie Zhuo in *The Making of a Manager*, “Every task has a who and by when.” There is only one person responsible for getting a task done. There is no room for ambiguity. The person responsible is totally clear.

*The most brilliant plans in the world won't help you succeed if you can't bring them to life.*

Julie Zhuo, “*The Making of a Manager*”

Always leave meetings with action items or next steps and ensure a named DRI for each task. The monthly progress meetings ensure that every active file at your law firm is progressing, and team members are held accountable for specific tasks/DRI's. If a team member isn't doing their job, they will have to answer for it at the monthly progress meeting.

### STEP #3: DEFINE RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY CHART

Define the roles and responsibilities of your team members. Keep it simple and clear. Less is more. The accountability chart will leave no doubt as to who is responsible for the work at your firm.

*You are constantly looking for ways to replace yourself in the job you're doing.*

Julie Zhuo, “*The Making of a Manager*”

With an accountability chart, there is no confusion about each team member's responsibilities and roles. Make sure your team knows what's expected of them and if a specific task does not get done, they will be responsible for it. Your accountability chart doesn't have to look corporate—keep it simple.

### THE NEW YORK INJURY & MALPRACTICE LAW FIRM, P.C.

**Serena:** Scheduling and confirming depositions. Ensure that depositions are completed within the deadlines set forth in the court's preliminary scheduling order.

**Antonia:** Onboarding new clients and retrieving medical records. The onboarding of new clients includes the retrieval of employment records and tax returns as well as the identification of potential lay witnesses relative to damages/injuries.

**Kelly:** Case management for active files, including the preparation of discovery demands and responses and expert responses. Ensure discovery responses and

expert responses are timely served and we meet deadlines in the court's scheduling orders.

**Maureen:** Assign DRIs for tasks for every active file at our monthly progress meetings and hold team members accountable. Each member of the team is accountable to Maureen for their action items identified at the monthly progress meeting.

**Rachana:** Follow up with our potential clients regarding the status of their case and update them as we make progress in our case evaluation. Follow up with our referral partners on the status of cases that our law firm refers to them.

**Carly:** The gatekeeper for John's schedule. Coordinate John's schedule and ensure that he is not interrupted by unscheduled distractions.



### STEP #4: THE POWER OF A DAILY HUDDLE

Every day our firm has a “daily huddle” with my direct reports. This is a quick meeting (e.g., 15 minutes) and everyone is asked to be prepared. Start and end on time. Don't put too much into the daily huddle.

Here's how it works: each team member begins by expressing a positive focus, namely, something in their life that they are grateful for. Next, each team member expresses their top 3 goals for the day. Don't go too far into details unless absolutely necessary.

*The daily huddle can save everyone an hour or so of needless email updates and ad hoc interruptions.*

Verne Harnish

What does this accomplish? First, you are accessible to your team on a daily basis. If a team member has questions or is facing obstacles, you will be accessible to answer them. None of your team members can say that you are not accessible. At the end of

the meeting, you should ask, “Where are you stuck? Do you have any concerns?”

Second, the daily huddle creates alignment around the firm's top goals. Everyone knows what the other team members are working on, and if you need adjustments, you can adjust on the fly. If your direct reports are not working on your highest priority cases, you can redirect them.

### STEP #5: THE WEEKLY GOAL MEETING

Similar to the daily huddle, my direct reports meet on Mondays to discuss each member's top 5 goals for the week. This is where you focus on making progress toward your firm's highest value cases and strategic opportunities.

The weekly goal meeting is also where your team members are held accountable. Are they repeating the same goals every week? Have they achieved their goals from the previous week? If not, the team member will report the same goals every week, and that might become embarrassing.

### BONUS PRODUCTIVITY TIP: Break Large Projects into Small Action Items

Treat big projects like a series of smaller projects and break them into small action items. If you've got a trial coming up, break up the tasks into small action items and document a “12-Week Plan” to ensure that progress is being made every week during the 12 weeks leading up to trial. By the final week before trial, your work will be done.

*A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week.*

General George Patton

Let's say you have an ambitious goal for your law firm. What exactly needs to get done? Write it down and then assign DRIs to your team members. Identify the goal, result, obstacles and the action items.

**The New York Injury & Malpractice Law Firm, P.C.**  
(Powered by John H. Fisher, P.C.)  
September 8, 2023

### OUR VIVID VISION FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS

**#1: GOAL:** What goal, if achieved, will make the biggest difference for our law firm? What do you want to happen? Set a goal that clearly identifies your target. What is your most crucial one to three year goal. Be sure the goal is specific, measurable and achievable.

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Generate at least half of firm's revenue from non-medical malpractice cases by September 8, 2026.

**#2: RESULT:** Describe the actual result. The impact of having achieved the goal. What it looks and feels like when it's achieved.

Firm's revenue triples in 3 years and net income skyrockets. Our firm's revenue no longer vacillates with peaks and valleys and is consistent year to year.

**#3: OBSTACLES:** What is preventing you from achieving your goals? List all of the obstacles in our way. Obstacles could be a lack of time, money or resources. List all of the obstacles before moving onto strategies.

**Obstacle #1:** Our firm's 578 referral partners think of us only as a medical malpractice firm and consequently, we rarely receive referrals of truck wrecks and construction accidents.

**Obstacle #2:** Competition for truck wrecks cases is insane, especially

among large firms with big budgets.

**Obstacle #3:** Consumers do not think of our law firm for personal injury cases; instead, we are perceived strictly as a medical malpractice firm. This needs to change.

**#4: STRATEGY:** What are the top 3-5 things you can do to achieve this goal? Look at the obstacles and transform them into strategies. Determine an action or solution for each.

**Action Item #1:** Mail "Vision" guide/booklet to all plaintiff's lawyers in New York State.

**Action Item #2:** Open branch office in Bronx, NY. Establish a bigger presence in the New York metropolitan market, including Long Island.

**Action Item #3:** Launch digital campaign for construction accidents with Labor Unions in New York State.

**Action Item #4:** Post ads for books (*The Power of a System* and *The*

*Law Firm of Your Dreams*) in the print newsletters of bar associations throughout New York State.

**Action #5:** Add new referral partners into our funnel with the monthly print newsletter.

**Action #6:** Hire a business coach to ensure accountability for each action item and brainstorm ideas for expansion into new markets.

### DEMAND EXCELLENCE FROM YOUR TEAM

The best planning will not lead to the desired results without a culture of accountability. Be brutally honest with your team members when they're not doing what they are supposed to do, and if you're not following through on your DRIs, ask them to hold you accountable.

Demand nothing less than excellence from your team. Remember, you run a world class law firm and your clients deserve nothing less than the best from you and your team.

## What's John UP to?

Finally! On September 14th, John's new book, "*Win Today*", was published by Advantage Media and is available for our closest friends (you!). If you'd like a free signed copy, send an email to [jfisherlawyer@gmail.com](mailto:jfisherlawyer@gmail.com) and we will be happy to oblige.

We are sharing an excerpt of the introduction from the dust jacket from "*Win Today*".

As a senior in high school, I received a special gift from my father.

As I was about to leave home for college, my father handed me an eleven-page handwritten letter that contained his best advice for his son. The letter contained quotes from Shakespeare, snippets from classic literature, and candid confessions about things that my dad wished he had done differently.

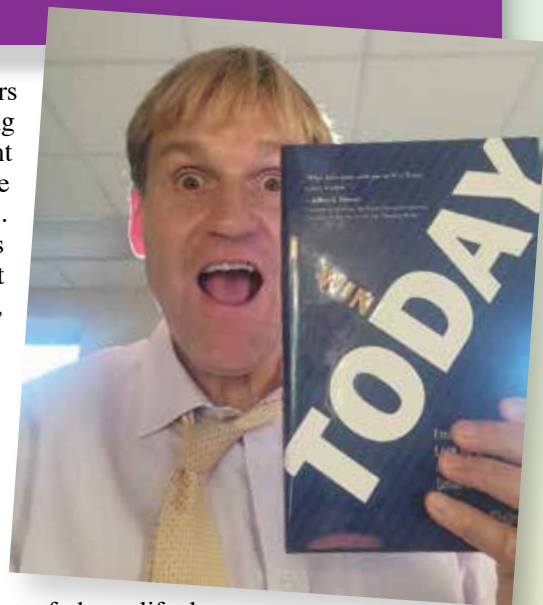
The letter was written by pen, but might as well have been written in granite. I still have this letter in a drawer in my bedroom closet and I read parts of it about once a month. To this day, I treasure my dad's words of wisdom.

As we get older, we realize that there are many lessons that life gives us. These lessons in life are invaluable. But these lessons in life are not serving anyone unless we share them with our family, friends, and even strangers.

Almost three years ago, I began writing the most important lessons that I've learned in my life. The life lessons range from almost every aspect of life, including health and nutrition, financial management, faith, professional goal setting and virtues such as perseverance, sacrifice and gratitude.

Ninety-seven percent of these life lessons are based upon abject failures, repeated mistakes, and in some cases, heartbreak, but our mistakes and failures make us who we are. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

"*Win Today*" was inspired by my father, James H. Fisher, Esq., who knew better than anyone that the greatest lessons aren't taught in a classroom.



THE NEW YORK

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(above) Grrr...Game day at Soldier Field. Go Bears!



(above) Having some laughs during the pre-mastermind architectural boat cruise in the Windy City.



(right) Where would our mastermind be without Seth Price?



(left) Toasting another mastermind with good friends at the House of Blues in Chicago.

(right) Where would our mastermind be without Seth Price?

*Practice Limited to the Representation of Seriously or Catastrophically Injured Persons*

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