

# Mentors in Inspiration

Eighteen essays offer pearls of wisdom for the restless legal professional

## SUCCESS BRIEFS FOR LAWYERS: Inspirational Insights on How to Succeed at Law and Life

Edited by Amiram Elwork  
and Mark R. Siwik  
The Vorkell Group; Gwynedd, Pa.  
204 pages, \$26.95

Reviewed by Michael Sean Quinn

These days, reasons and hypotheses abound for the low level of job satisfaction enjoyed by a sizable segment of the legal profession. The fact that law is also a business is one, as is the sheer number of lawyers, which would seem to make some level of dissatisfaction inevitable. Still, with all this smoke, perhaps there is also some fire.

Amiram Elwork, a psychologist and director of the law-psychology graduate program at Widener University near Philadelphia, and Mark R. Siwik, senior counsel at Risk International Services in Richfield, Ohio, certainly think so. And, with *Success Briefs for Lawyers* they are trying to do something about it.

### Role Model Roll Call

The book's underlying thesis, notes the introduction, is "based on the idea that modeling is a highly effective behavioral tool, and that inspiration is a powerful motivator." Thus, "[i]f you want lawyers to achieve personal and professional satisfaction ..., find lawyers who have done it and learn from them."

"Them," in this case, refers to the 18 lawyers who contributed to the book. Among them are judges, trial attorneys and transaction lawyers from all over the country.

The essays are mainly humanistic in tone. A few suggest that one important route to a satisfying life in the law is to utilize images and insights drawn from Asian philosophy and religion. One essayist also makes the American Indian idea of

*Michael Sean Quinn is a shareholder in the law firm of Sheinfeld, Maley & Kay in Austin, Texas.*

the wheel of life—with its emphasis on maintaining balance—central to what one should count as success.

Several of the authors also underscore such Western ideas as the importance of tapping into genuine passion, and the centrality of caring and kindness in the good life. They stress that lawyers can—and should—see themselves as peacemakers,

way to excellence and satisfaction.

Another splendid essay is by George W. Kaufman, who has practiced law for 40 years and serves as vice-chair of the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, a retreat center in Rhinebeck, N.Y. Although, for me, that last association doesn't necessarily augur well, the essay is quite worthy. It emphasizes the importance of mentoring and the role of true listening and true teaching.

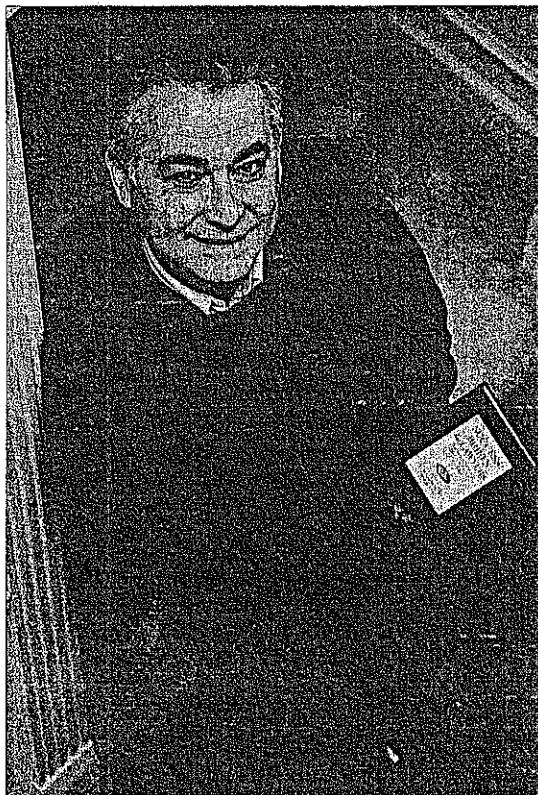
Law is an incorrigibly expansive and generalistic profession. Hence, not only the young but also the old need mentoring if they are to grow.

Not all the pieces in *Success Briefs* are essays. "Ode to Oliver" is a poem. It may not be the best verse ever written, but its central symbol is inspired. The idea is that the truly successful lawyer would be the sort of person in whose office a languid, graceful house cat would feel at home.

The perspective of humanistic psychology on how to thrive and flourish while working is a noble one. In this regard, *Success Briefs* relies upon the work of David H. Maister of Boston, a management consultant for professional service firms, and the even more current thinking of *Transforming Practices* author Steven Keeva, (an *ABA Journal* assistant managing editor in Chicago).

But the humanistic outlook raises a profound question: What if the world is much more Machiavellian than the humanists would like to think? If the social reality of law firms inevitably involves discrepancies between appearance and reality and if the denizens of larger firms always strive to maximize their self-interest, then the inspirational thoughts of the Elwork-Siwik essayists can never constitute real insights in those contexts.

The key questions are as deep as they are old: What is the world really like? To what extent can it actually be changed? ■



AMIRAM ELWORK focuses on a humanistic perspective, including Asian and American Indian religious thought.

and that active listening is an essential skill in relating to clients and other lawyers.

For my money, the best piece in the collection is "Leading the Way," by Daniel E. Wathen, chief justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court. One of his central notions is that lawyers are leaders and leaders must always be out front.

By definition, therefore, the leader will not automatically know the way and must tolerate a high level of internal confusion. I suspect that difficulty with precisely this sort of tolerance is one of the things that blocks young lawyers on their