

**Ernie Svenson:** Hi everyone and welcome to another episode of Law Firm Autopilot. In the last episode, I gave you a quick overview of a success blueprint for creating a great practice. We talked about the three main parts of the blueprint which were; one, the foundation. Two, the profit engine or marketing which is about getting great clients steadily and easily, and three, operations or how do you make the practice run smoothly in a way that gives you the greatest peace of mind.

Today we're going to focus on the foundation piece of the success blueprint. As I mentioned in an earlier episode, the foundation part contains three sub-components. One, what is the vision for your firm? What is your success plan? Then getting guidance in terms of implementation and ongoing development of your practice. First, we're going to talk about the vision piece. Okay, so I mentioned that in the vision piece you need to understand what kind of practice you're trying to create.

What we need to focus on here are two key things under the vision part and that is; one, goals, and then two, mindset that supports achieving those goals. All right, when we say goals which is we're going to talk about next we're talking about two different kinds of goals overall which is; One, what are your personal goals for yourself generally in life, like what do you want your life to be like.

This is why I said last time, that not everyone is going to have the same vision for their practice because some people want a different kind of lifestyle in general and so they may operate their practice differently, like what kind of life do you want? Do you want to travel? Do you prefer to go to an office?

Do you like being around people at work? Do you like only working four days a week or less like three days a week? That's an example of somebody else might prefer to work five days a week, or some people might want to only work two days a week. How much do you want to work? That's one thing, and of course, a lot of folks want to work less because they want to spend more time with their family or their friends, but whatever it is you want to do that's fine but what is what is the kind of life you want.

Now, we'll talk about why you may not think that this is important in the mindset component, but you do need to know like what kind of life do I want, and then you can look at your practice goals. What are the goals for your law practice, because if your law practice goals don't work in compatibility with your personal goals, you're going to be unhappy or you're not going to be as happy as you could be.

So you want a practice that supports your personal goals and you have to ask yourself what kind of practice would support your life goals, and if you're starting out, you're answering this question for the first time you can look at things and say, "Well, do I want to be a criminal lawyer or do I want to do estate planning?" A lot of people just say, "well I picked that one thing because I like-- I know that criminal law I did it in law school when I took clinic, and went to do that or I have a friend who did it."

We tend to just kind of go with the flow and wind up doing something because of a lot of reasons that weren't strategic, but if you were starting from scratch you should ask yourself, well, do I like the lifestyle of a criminal lawyer- meaning clients immediately in trouble they need you immediately, they're going to seek you out at

any time in the night or day, and you're going to have to help them at any time of the night or day, as opposed to a state planning, for example, where clients don't suddenly beg you in the middle of the night to create a will, it's a much more relaxed kind of practice.

You do have to get clients in a different kind of way, but if you want the more sedentary lifestyle, you want to be able to get out of the office and not have things blowing up all the time estate planning is a better practice area. Then, if you're in a practice area, what are your goals for that practice like? Do you want to make a lot of money? Do you want to make just a certain amount of money? Do you like to grow it and have lots of people around you? What are the goals for your practice, you need to be very clear about these goals and write them down and be very specific.

Now, one thing to note is if you have been practicing law for a while and you've already kind of gone down a path and you say, "I'm not starting from scratch," here's the thing, you can change your goals any time. If you're not practicing law the way that you want, you can change that. If you decide you no longer want to practice law at all, you can use your lawyer skills in a completely new way like I have, but if you want to keep practicing, then you need to figure out what your vision for success is exactly, and build a practice that supports that vision.

That's the goals part of what I call the vision component- under its foundation. The next part of this number two is the mindset. Now, once you've identified your goals, but even this comes into play as you're identifying the goals because you'll sometimes- you'll just come up with an unrealistic assessment, so you have to be realistic that's the first thing. There really isn't a way to create a successful thriving practice in a very short period of time, I mean the faster you try to do this the more problems you're going to encounter and it's just not going to go well.

So there's no overnight success and this get-rich-quick thinking that some people have if you adopt that it will just make you vulnerable to charlatans who will take advantage of you, or it will make you vulnerable to damaging distractions, it will take you away from your goal, so you have to be realistic. I would say for most people a generally realistic frame of reference would be like assume three years that you could get 80 to 90% of the kind of transformation done.

If it's not a lot of transformation you need, depending on what your goals are, it might take less, you might be in a position to get some things done faster, you might be able to hire people to help you more quickly, or you might have to do some of it yourself, but you're going to take time and you're going to be patient. Now part of the realistic appraisal is the technology is going to play a part in this. Technology is crucial we've already talked about this, but you don't need to be super tech savvy to implement this success plan, you just need ongoing guidance from people that can help you use technology sensibly and strategically.

You don't need to know everything about technology, but you do need to be clear about what your goals are and you need to be focused on attaining those goals over time. Now, one other thing about the mindset is you really- you need to believe that this is possible and that you are able to accomplish this.

There are a lot of people I know this because I've worked with them and I've seen this, who say, "I don't know if that's possible," then you show them well no, there's a lot of lawyers that are doing this, look at them all, they're all happy, they're running successful practices, some of them are solo, some of them have small practices.

They're extremely happy their practices run smoothly, they make a lot of money, they have a lot of time off, you can do this too. They'll say, "well no but I can't do that," and then "well why can't you do it?" If you have this disbelief, if you are insecure about your ability to achieve things, which by the way- it's normal, it's not something you need to feel bad about because lots of people have this feeling.

I have had this feeling in many different times in my life as I was growing my practice and doing different things. Now, I realize that was just a little voice in my head telling me things that discourage me rather than encouraged me, and so if you feel discouraged or you feel like you're just not able to do it you can get guidance with that as well, because if you follow this path, if you follow the formula you're strategic about it and persistent you will succeed.

You need to be persistent, that means you need to be patient and you need to have confidence so a lot of the confidence is going come from having this plan and from staying focused and seeing that as you move forward, you're getting results because you will get results. You won't- you won't get results perfectly every time the first time, but you will get results because this process is the same one that other lawyers have used, it's just you need to plug it in and make it work for you according to the vision and the goals that you have.

As I said, you'll be confident if you stay focused on a long-term goal and for this to happen you need, what I would call, a success plan. The success plan is needed because in order to achieve success you can't just wave a magic wand, it's not-- success is sequential as my friend Mike Kim likes to say, it's not simultaneous. In other words, you have to follow a path and some things have to be done before other things, or should be done before other things, in order to maximize the benefits of those things that come later and to avoid frustration and chaos and so forth.

You need a plan that lays things out so you can follow the plan and address the challenges that come up in a methodical way without a feeling of being overwhelmed. The plan will give you guidance, especially if it's a success plan used by the lawyers like you and if it's proven to work in the real world in real trenches conditions that will give you some confidence.

The plan will also help you clarify options and opportunities because in today's world we're easily distracted. We have all kinds of people telling us look if you do this, things will improve or look-- Check this out or look this technology over here is amazing and if you have a plan it will help you understand 'well, is this something that I should do?'

It keeps you on track because you always know what to do next.

It gives you clarity and it helps you avoid distractions because, as I mentioned earlier, you are vulnerable if you can't avoid the common distractions in today's

world, that's another benefit of the plan. Now, the plan should include measurable success metrics. When you're formulating your vision of what you want your practice to be like and let's say you say well I need to make X amount of money per year and that's one of the things I want, then your metrics need to be well okay, to make that happen, how much money do you want to make per month?

How much-- what's the monthly part of that equation look like, and then what are your current fixed monthly costs because you know you need to meet those every month in order to feel ease, you need to know you're going to hit those numbers plus the additional numbers that give you the profit and part of that equation will involve how many clients do you need to sign up per month to stay on track with your monthly goal. That's an important thing to measure those kinds of things.

It's important for you to take the time to record these key performance indicators or KPIs. I'm sure many of you have heard of the phrase KPI and you have to take the time to record these, decide what they are and then monitor them. There's a great article out there by someone named Wendy Wit, who wrote for a practice-- who wrote a blog post for Solo Practice University. If you Google KPI small firm attorney or small law firm, you'll find that article.

It's an article about the 20 KPIs of a successful law firm and I'll try to put those in the show notes as well, but that is something worth reading, just so you get a sense of what do KPIs look like for a small firm. The main thing though that you need for your firm to thrive is a steady flow of great clients and we're going to talk about that in the profit part of the equation. Lastly, under the foundation piece which is number one, we're going to talk about implementation guide.

We talked about vision, we talked about the success plan and now we're going to talk about implementation and guidance for doing implementation. You'll need ongoing guidance and advice, you have a plan once you create it, but that's probably not going to be enough for most people. You're going to need ongoing help, you need encouragement, you need camaraderie even and frankly that's the kind of thing, the camaraderie and some of the help, that's the thing that bar associations use to help solo small firm lawyers with more but as the practice has become more complicated and things have changed, bar associations really haven't been able to keep up.

I don't think they've ever sat down and said, "here's how you run a successful practice, I'm giving you a success blueprint." You need help from someone and ideally this would include one, some consultants, some technology consultants if it's for technology or business consultants. Then number two, besides the consultants, the people who are experts- you also need a community of like-minded lawyers who are doing the same things that you are to bounce ideas off of but you need these folks to have the same mindset and goal-seeking as you.

They can't just be random solo and small firm lawyers that you meet, you want them to be following the same path that you are. Now, you know, the bad news is that finding the right group of consultants or the right community is super hard, the ratio of bad and useless information out there to helpful information is very low. It's very

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easy to find bad information or useless information although many times it will appear to be useful. You have to learn to recognize when it's not but it's very hard.

You need strategic guidance, you need guidance on like which KPIs to monitor, how to market your practice effectively, how to improve law firm operations, how to use technology sensibly and you're going to need this on an ongoing basis. Now I will talk in the next episode and that's some of this, this is a close look at the foundation piece of a success blueprint and future episodes we're going to dig deeper into all aspects of these areas mindset, assess plan, KPIs, things like that and with technology and marketing and so forth.

I think the best thing to do is an episode here and then in the next episode we're going to get into something else. Now, in the meantime, of course, you can hop over to [Law Firm Autopilot.com](http://LawFirmAutopilot.com) and sign up for membership and the free VIP program which will give you some immediate guidance beyond what I've covered here but that's it for this episode of Law Firm Autopilot podcast and the next episode, I'm going to talk about the five keys to finding the good consultants or guides that can give you ongoing help.

As I said, it's hard, but I'll give you the keys to finding those folks and I'll also tell you the folks that you should avoid and what they look like, so that you don't get into trouble with those folks. That's it for this episode of Law Firm Autopilot podcast, in the next episode I will talk to you about getting that guidance and I look forward to seeing you then and until then, I wish you the best both for your personal life and for your practice, okay take care.