

# WOMENLEGAL

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## WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH...

Fighting the effects of  
economic stress.

### **SPECIAL FOCUS**

Women still make up fewer than 16 per cent of equity partners. The US National Association of Women Lawyers, reveals why.

### **OPINION**

How do I get into the 'old boys network'? Your business development questions answered.

# All change

**Marianne M. Trost**  
‘The Women Lawyers’ Coach’ reveals how to use change to your advantage.

CHANGE IS HERE AND it is likely to have widespread implications. So how is it possible to use this change as a positive catalyst for transformation in your own life and the lives of others?

## **Stay positive**

Make certain that the motivation for change in your life stems from a desire to improve or grow. Making a change fueled by fear rarely results in a desirable outcome. Your perception of life and how you view your circumstances is a powerful tool. Limit the amount of time you spend engaging in conversations about the inability to create change. Be selective about what you read, listen to and think. Seek out people who are positive and working towards making a difference.

## **Ease into change**

If you are not fulfilled in your practice, try not to assume that you should leave the practice of law entirely. Rather, distinguish carefully between what you like and what you don’t like. Then begin to address the less satisfying aspects. As you do so, the root of the dissatisfaction and your options for the future will become clearer.

## **Do something fulfilling**

The process of getting into, and excelling through, law school, getting an offer from a good firm or employer, achieving billable hours targets and so on, has left many lawyers without much time for anything else. It is not unusual for lawyers to be out of touch with the non-professional activities that inspire them. Take time to think through things you have ‘always wanted to do’ – and then try one. While the activity may take another hour or two out of your week, the positive benefits that you will gain from the experience will be worth it.

## **Re-align your community involvement**

If you are sitting on a board or participating on a committee that is no longer fulfilling,

then identify another cause about which you are more passionate and focus your talent there. The vacancy you leave behind may be the opportunity that someone else has been waiting for.

## **Learn from others**

If you do decide that you want to consider a career transition, talk to people who have made the shift. No job is without its challenges. The key to satisfaction is to find an opportunity where the challenges or down-sides are not critical to your sense of fulfilment. Make certain you know what your preferences are, so that when you make a change you are making it with eyes wide-open.

## **Keep your options open**

When making a change, do your best not to close the door on the future. Even if you have no intention of ever returning, the colleagues you leave behind may be the valuable resources you need in your next step along the career path. It’s a small world. You never know whether someone with whom you once worked will one day be opposing counsel or even a potential in-house counsel client.

## **Live your life with purpose**

Whether your focus for change is on learning something new or committing to make a difference in your firm or in your community, the bottom line is the same: life is meant to be lived with purpose. Change helps us do that.

Indeed, in the words of Marian Wright Edelman, the first African American admitted to the Mississippi Bar and the founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, “if you don’t like the way the world is, you change it. You have an obligation to change it. You just do it one step at a time.”

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