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## A Celebration of Women Lawyers: The Second Leadership Academy

BY CHRISTIAN TORGRIMSON

In its 80th year, GAWL finds itself in a unique position – it stands on the verge of being the bar organization for women lawyers to become leaders around the state. GAWL is helping women lawyers obtain not merely a seat at the table, but a place at the head of the table. According to recent studies, women lawyers believe they are missing out on mentoring and training that would better equip them to be leaders in their firms and communities. The GAWL Leadership Academy is designed to give 16 women lawyers a crash-course in the subjects they need but have been missing. They will get training, and will be able to network with other rising stars from across the state, as well as with leaders within the state bar.

At GAWL's monthly luncheon last month, 5 graduates from last year's inaugural Academy spoke about benefits they received from the program, including:

- Eye-opening results and information about their individual communication styles, and

how they affect their careers;

- The ability to recognize and effectively lead others with different communication styles;

- Practical skills on negotiating, goal setting, and mentoring;

- Leadership opportunities they would not have known about;

- Creating long-term relationships with other Academy members;

- Networking opportunities with influential leaders from across the state;

- Mentoring from women trailblazers.



Christian Torgrimson

Everyone at that lunch recognized the tight bond shared between these women – none of whom knew each other before the Academy.

Today, the graduates are putting into action everything they learned during last year's Academy. Each and every one of them is assuming and excelling in leadership positions both inside and outside the legal community. One is the president of a GAWL Chapter. Another one is even running for elected office. The benefits from the Academy are immediate and real.

GAWL is now accepting applications at [www.gawl.org](http://www.gawl.org) for the next leadership Academy class. This year's program is going to be even more dynamic with speakers such as Robin Sangston of Cox Communications, and an interactive session with actors from the popular improv theater, Dad's Garage.

If you have been practicing for at least 6 years and are interested in realizing your leadership potential, do not miss this career-changing opportunity. I hope to see you in this year's graduating class!

*Christian Torgrimson is the current GAWL President and a partner with Pursley Lowery Meeks LLP, practicing in eminent domain and real estate related litigation.*

### Georgia Association of Women Lawyers Hosts its First Annual Mid-Year Dinner and Meeting Celebrating its 80th Anniversary and Women Negotiating in Business - November 17-18, 2008

GAWL will host its First Annual Mid-Year Dinner and Meeting in Atlanta on November 17-18, 2008. This inaugural event will kick-off with the Mid-Year Dinner on November 17th at 103 West. At the dinner, GAWL will celebrate its impressive 80 year history as a pioneer for women lawyers. The Mid-Year Meeting will be a day long event for women in business on November 18th at Alston & Bird, the sponsor of the event, and will focus on negotiating, diversity, flexibility and other topics important to women in business. GAWL is offering discounts to the events for law students, the judiciary, public interest attorneys, and members of the Association of Corporate Counsel.

The Keynote Speaker at the Mid-Year Meeting is Deborah Epstein Henry, the Founder and President of Flex-Time Lawyers LLC, a national consulting firm advising law firms, corporations and lawyers on work/life balance and the retention and promotion of women attorneys. Henry will speak about work life/balance issues and will lead a panel discussion among Sylvia A. Smyth, Principal with Deloitte Financial Advisory

Services, L.L.P., Maria Goldsholl, COO of MomCorps, Dorian S. Denburg, General Attorney with AT&T South, and Diane L. Prucino, Co-Managing Partner in charge of attorney resources with Kilpatrick Stockton, LLP.

Other topics to be addressed at the Mid-Year Meeting include the following:

- "The Impact of Global Diversity on Lawyers, Clients and Practice Management" presented by Vicki Flier Hudson, President of Highroad Global Services, and Karen Weinstock, Managing Attorney of the Atlanta office of Siskind Susser P.C.

- "Valuing the Differences Between Us" presented by Nancy A. Thigpen, Senior Vice President and Premier Banking Sales Manager in Bank of America's Global Wealth and Investment Management division

- "Building a Business Based on Diversity" resented by Willard "Chuck" Lewis, President & CEO of One Georgia Bank

- "Managing an In-House Law Department, Outside Counsel, and Your Career" moderated by Audra A. Dial, Partner with Kilpatrick Stockton, LLP. Panelists include Robin H. Sangston, Vice President and Assistant General Counsel with Cox Communications, Inc., Catherine Hilton, Vice President, UPS Capital Corporation, and Margaret ("Peg") A. McCue, Associate General Counsel and Southeast Regional Manager of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company ("MetLife") Real Estate Investments section of the Legal Affairs Department, and Andrea L. Phillips, Vice President, Associate General Counsel and Compliance Officer of AdvanceMe, Inc.

\*\* CLE accreditation in Georgia is pending. GAWL is seeking 6 CLE credit hours, including 1 hour of Professionalism Credits. \*\*

**Register by November 6, 2008 to take advantage of significantly discounted pricing! See pricing information at [www.gawl.org](http://www.gawl.org).**

# YOUR PERSONAL VISION STATEMENT

## A TEMPLATE FOR CHANGE

By Anne H. Whitaker

“I have learned this, at least, by my experiments; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

-Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Are you living your life your way? Is your career what you want it to be? How do you feel when you think about going to the office? Is it with a sense of excitement and anticipation for what you will be doing, or does it feel like drudgery and something that you have to do to make money? This series is all about what you can do to ensure you have the kind of life you want—where you wake up and look forward to your day, and at the end of the day feel fulfilled and satisfied with what you have accomplished. You can have your life and your career your way. Over the past months, I have taken you through a process of thinking about various aspects of your life by considering eight critical success factors that make up your Personal Vision. I hope you have been able to do all or even some of the exercises and explored how you envision your life, picking up information about yourself along the way. The next step is to combine what you have learned and integrate those pieces of information into a Personal Vision Statement. Your Personal Vision Statement is a unique, complete expression of what is important to you and how you want your life to be. It will be the guide for crafting your life going forward.

### You Need To Both Analyze and Synthesize

The creative process for creating a Personal Vision uses both the left and the right sides of the brain. Almost all of the exercises I have recommended previously have tapped into the left side of your brain, the part that is logical and arranges things in order. As a lawyer, you use that part of your brain even more than most people. Every time you analyze a client's case, research, write a memo or brief, prepare for a deposition or for trial, or simply debate, you are relying heavily on the left side of your brain. The left brain operates like a computer and works through words; it plans, figures things out and tells you what makes sense. But you also have to engage the right side of your brain, which thinks holistically, solves problems in a nonlinear fashion, and discovers new ways to put together disparate elements. The right brain is not tied to the present, to facts or realities; it has insight into new possibilities and can solve different problems simultaneously. I'm sure you have had times when you are more relaxed and all of a sudden a solution to a problem you have been wrestling with springs to mind, seemingly out of nowhere. That is your right brain providing you with an insight. It has been behind the scenes subconsciously working on the problem for you.

Many lawyers I work with are skeptical at first when I talk about using their right brains. But the right brain can be a great friend when you are creating a life that is truly yours rather than continuing down the path that others have set for you. You'll need both sides of your brain to write your Personal Vision Statement—and you can do it in three steps.

### Step One: Gather Information

First you need to put your left brain back to work again. Gather together the results of all the exercises you have done. (If you have not done them all, then take some time and complete them before doing this.) Spread them out in front of you so that you can see what you have written. There should be information about you in all eight areas: your abilities (hard-wiring), personality, skills, interests, values, goals, stage of adult development, and family of origin. You can create a Personal Vision Statement without one of those areas, but it will be incomplete. It's very much like preparing a recipe and leaving out an important ingredient—you won't get what you really want.

Once you have the information in view, think about what your purpose is for creating a Personal Vision Statement and write that at the top of a blank sheet of paper. Some examples are “What I need to be satisfied in my life” or “What I need to have balance in my career and personal life.” Next, take your time and look through the information you have gathered about yourself in each of the eight areas. Select the key things in each area that you want to have in your life and write them on your sheet. You may also identify some key things you know you must avoid, so put those down, too. For those who crave more organization, create a grid with a “must have” and “must avoid” box for each success factor. However you do it, complete your list and then set it aside for the moment.

### Step Two: Conduct a Guided Imagery Exercise

Now, switch gears and focus on your right brain. It already has been working behind the scenes over the past months, during the self-discovery phase, as you completed the exercises.

To access the insights you've gained, try the following guided imagery exercise: Make sure you're alone and that you won't be disturbed. Sit in a comfortable position, take some deep breaths and relax your muscles, and tune out the world around you for the time being.

Then, ask yourself to envision your ideal day. Imagine that you woke up one morning and found that someone had left you millions of dollars, no strings attached. You have a virtually limitless bank account that you can draw on any time you want with no need to worry about earning money again. You can start each day asking yourself, “What do I want to do today?”

Now read over the following text and questions and think about them each, without writing anything down. See what images come to mind as you ask yourself the questions. You can also speak and record your answers and play it back while you listen with your eyes closed.

“Imagine yourself in your bed waking up in the morning. Imagine yourself thinking about your day ahead and feeling curious, excited and energetic about what is to come. Today is your ideal day.

- What is your relationship like with your spouse or partner?
- What is your relationship like with your children?
- What is it like with your parents?
- Who are your friends?
- What things do you do together? What do you talk about?
- How do you feel about your life? Now describe what a typical day would be like and picture yourself preparing for your day, however you would like to.
- What would your routine be?
- Where would you go?
- What would give your life and career meaning?

Imagine what your work day surroundings are like.

- Where do you work?
- How is your schedule arranged?
- What are you doing?
- Who is in your day?
- Which talents are you using?
- What are you working to accomplish and what are your activities?
- How much variety do you have?
- What is the pace of work like?
- How much challenge is there?

What gives your day and life the most meaning? What would be the most important thing you would do with your life? This is the end of the guided imagery.

Open your eyes and write down, tape record, or tell someone all that you can remember about your answers to the questions. (This brings your left brain into the process as it translates what the right brain has summoned up and is trying to communicate.) Include any images that came to mind with as much detail as you can; don't leave anything out even if you don't understand its meaning. It does not have to make sense right now.

You may have to repeat this exercise or try additional integrative exercises before you understand the message your right brain is trying to give you. (I'd be happy to send you some other guided imagery exercises if you email me.) I hope the ideas and images you gain from them will help you start to crystallize a vision—an image of what you want your future to look like and how you want to live in it.

### Step Three: Write Your Personal Vision Statement

Even if the details of what you've learned so far are unclear, you can use

the left side of your brain to start to develop your Personal Vision Statement. Refer to what you have written for the exercises above and think about how you want your life to be. Picture it as if you are living it already.

Start writing your Personal Vision Statement by describing that life in detail in the present tense. For example, write, “I am...,” “I have...,” “My family is...,” and “My career includes...” Make sure you incorporate all eight factors, and include who is in your life, how you spend your time, and what you are doing for work (both paying and non-paying). Afterwards, you can create a vision statement focused just on your career, but first craft one about your whole life. This will probably take a great deal of reflection and refinement, so don't expect it to come out fully developed the first time.

### A Personal Vision Statement Helps You Make Concrete Changes In Your Life

This statement can help you in many ways. One of my clients realized from the exercises that he had chosen the right career path but needed to make some focused and strategic changes in the way he was practicing law. His Personal Vision Statement was his template for those changes; it helped him add meaningful and interesting aspects to his practice and let go of some of the more tedious aspects. His feelings about his work changed dramatically and he was able to move out of the stress cycle into the balance cycle without revamping his entire life.

Another client, we'll call her Melissa, was at a turning point. She was ready to leave the practice of law, and used her Personal Vision to craft what her new life needed to look like. The insights she gained from doing the exercises gave her some creative ideas to explore. Using her Personal Vision as a template for making choices about her next steps, she eventually left law for a new career that was more fulfilling.

If you still are vague about what it is you want to do, or you have some ideas but are not sure if they are pure fantasy or real possibilities, take heart: there is a process that you can go through to clarify your ideas and insights. We will explore those in the next article when we also discuss ways to turn your dream into reality.

In the meantime, unplug from the day-to-day routine when you can and tap into your creative side. You may be pleasantly surprised at the new ideas that come to mind—get ready to listen.

*This is one of a series of ten articles exploring The Eight Critical Success Factors necessary to create a Personal Vision for your life and career by Ann Whitaker, a long-time member of GAWL. Ms. Whitaker, vice president of Counsel On Call's Atlanta office, has more than 20 years of combined experience in coaching, consulting, marketing, law and education. To contact Ms. Whitaker, visit [www.counseloncall.com](http://www.counseloncall.com).*

# GAWL Spotlight on Leaders

Each month, the Leadership Committee identifies a GAWL member to feature in our Leader Spotlight. This month, Kelli L. Wolk caught our eye....

## LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT ON KELLI L. WOLK

This month's leadership spotlight is on Kelli L. Wolk. Kelli is a 2008 graduate of the inaugural GAWL Leadership Academy, and also Leadership Cobb. She is currently running for the Cobb County Probate Court judgeship that opened up when her mentor and long-time probate court judge, the Hon. David Dodd, decided to retire. Kelli clerked for Judge Dodd for two years after graduating from the Georgia State University College of Law. In 2001, Kelli joined the Cobb County office of Moore Ingram Johnson & Steele, where her law practice has continued to focus on probate



Kelli L. Wolk

litigation, guardianship issues, estate planning, and general civil litigation. For the past three years, Kelli was named a Rising Star by Atlanta Magazine's Super Lawyers, and in 2007, she was featured by Cobb Life Magazine as one of Cobb County's Top 20 under 40.

In addition to her law practice, Kelli is a frequent speaker on the subjects of probate, guardianships, estate planning, advanced directives, and administration of estates at continuing education seminars for lawyers and other groups, including social workers, medical professionals, mothers' groups, and senior citizens. Kelli worked on the revision of Georgia's Guardianship Code and has also testified before the Special Judiciary Subcommittee of the Georgia House of Representatives.

"Running for Cobb County probate judge has been an amazing process," Kelli says. "It has enabled me to put into practice many of the leadership, communication and networking skills we studied at the GAWL Leadership Academy." Campaigning has given her the opportunity to meet a huge number of talented people and to do things she never would have

experienced had she not thrown her hat into the ring. From attending forums and fairs and lugging 200 pound signs around the county, to taping television commercials, "Nothing brings home more just how large Cobb County really is than trying to meet all of its citizens," says Kelli. Through her experience first as law clerk, then as a fulltime litigator before the Probate Court, Kelli has become passionate about the court and the services it provides to people in need and in crisis. Kelli's enthusiasm for running for probate judge has kept her energized and on her toes.

Although integrating her law practice with campaigning has been a challenge at times, Kelli says she has been able to maintain a full client load by focusing on her clients' needs during the workday, and returning campaign-related calls and emails from early evening till bedtime, and then again at the crack of dawn. Which can make for a very long day. Kelli firmly believes, however, that because of her background and temperament, she will make an excellent probate judge. "There will be plenty of time to catch up on sleep after the election on November 4," says Kelli.

One of Kelli's strengths is her ability to

communicate complex legal issues in a way that makes them understandable. Her communication skills go way back. Kelli did her undergraduate work at Missouri State University, where she earned a B.A. in Communications. Between college and law school, she worked in television production for nearly ten years.

If elected, Kelli will bring a wealth of leadership and community experience to the bench. Kelli volunteers with Habitat for Humanity in Cobb County. She is a former member of the Cobb County Bar Association's Board of Trustees, a past member of the Cobb Justice Foundation Advisory Board, past chair of the State Bar Young Lawyers Division Elder Law Committee, and is past president of the Elder Law Section of the Cobb County Bar. Kelli is active in Rotary, and headed the Marietta Rotary Boys and Girls Club Literacy Program, "Bookville." She also currently serves on the Board of Directors for MUST Ministries, which provides education, counseling, shelter, and other services to assist those in need to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. You can find more information about Kelli at [www.kelliwolkforprobatejudge.com](http://www.kelliwolkforprobatejudge.com).

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Nov. 5th** – John Marshall Law School Panel discussion and networking event. GAWL-JMLS will be hosting a panel discussion on effective networking - what works and what doesn't - on November 5th, 2008 at 5:00 PM at John Marshall Law School.

**Nov. 6th** - Gwinnett NNB. The first Gwinnett Neighborhood Networking Breakfast will be at 7:30 a.m. at the Singin' Bean Coffeehouse, located at 195-B North Perry Street, Lawrenceville, GA 30045 (on the Historic Square). Please RSVP to Lisa Schrage at [lisaschrage@bellsouth.net](mailto:lisaschrage@bellsouth.net) or 678-407-1400.

**Nov. 8th** – Join fellow GAWL members at the Run for Justice at 7:45 a.m. The race will begin in front of One Step at A Time, 650 East Lake Drive. Register in advance or the day of – wear your GAWL or a pink(ish) shirt on race day.

**Nov. 12th** - **Perimeter Neighborhood Networking Breakfast**, Wednesday, November 12 at 7:45 AM **Alon's Bakery and Market** on Ashford Dunwoody Road across from the mall. [www.alons.com](http://www.alons.com). We look forward to seeing you there! RSVP directly to Kathy Simcoe at [ksimcoe@commanderpound.com](mailto:ksimcoe@commanderpound.com).

**Nov. 17th** – Mid-Year Meeting Dinner. Register by November 6th to pay "Half-Price." Dinner at 103 West.

**November 18th** – GAWL's Mid-Year Meeting and CLE at Alston & Bird in Atlanta. See [www.gawl.org](http://www.gawl.org) for details.

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