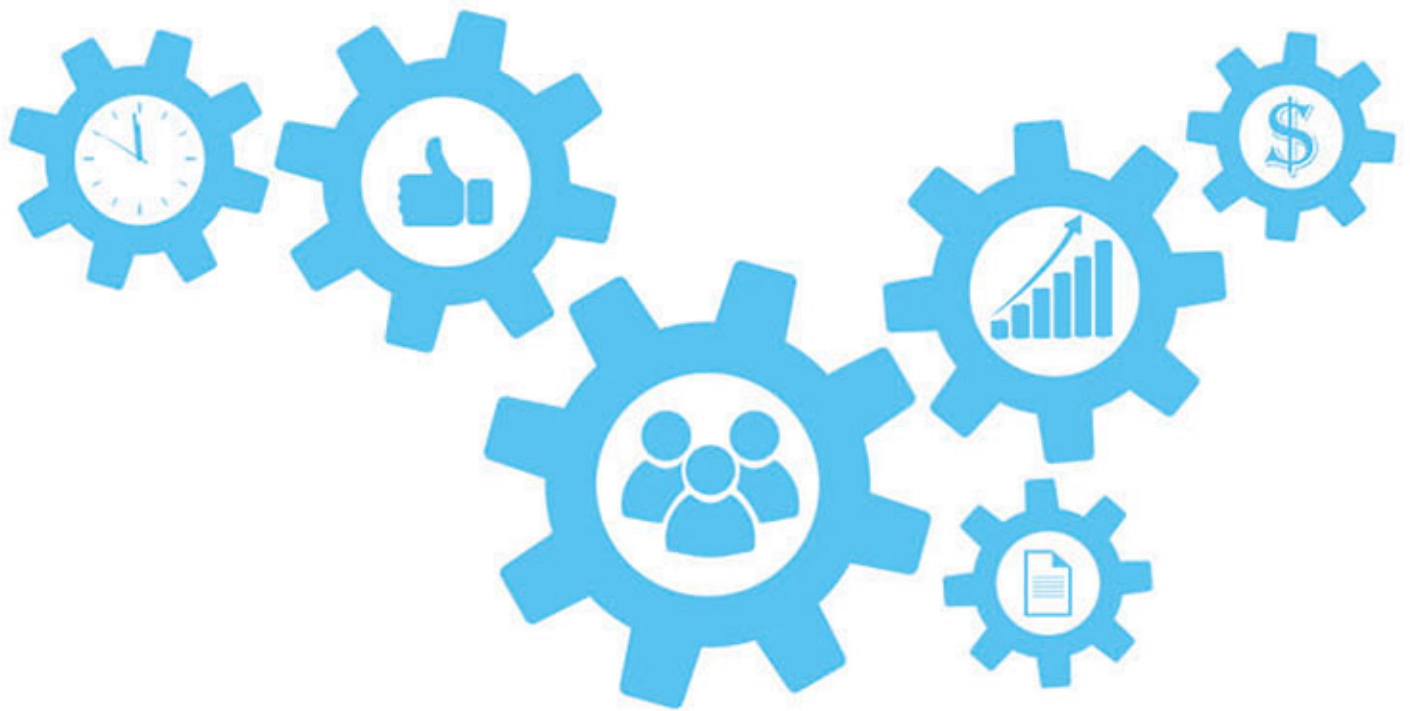

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The Right Stuff

Skills and Professional Development



Growing up we often spent holidays visiting my grandmother. She lived in a modest two-bedroom house, and whenever our family visited, the living room couch became the third bedroom at night. We never stayed in a hotel, we would just “make do.” As a teenager during the Great Depression, my grandmother and her family — like many other families — learned to “make do” with the resources they had. I did not fully comprehend the impact this had on her life, her way of thinking, and growing up that way.

It always seemed curious to me that my grandmother never used the coffee maker we bought her, even though she drank coffee every day. When we visited, my father would always have to get the coffee maker down from the top shelf of her pantry, wash it, and make fresh coffee. She would always enjoy the fresh brew when we made it; but without fail on the last day of our visit, we would be asked to put the coffee maker back into its box in the pantry and she would go back to making do with instant grounds and a carafe of heated water on her stove

For years, we would buy her new appliances and it would take months before she actually used them, if at all. She was so accustomed to doing things the hard way. How many of us struggle by trying to “MacGyver” our way through a task instead of taking advantage of the better tools because WE are accustomed to making do? I know I am guilty of this girl-scout mentality of “making a fire out of flint instead of just buying matches.”

[MacGyver](#) is an American action-adventure television series which ran from 1985 to 1992 about a secret agent named Angus MacGyver who solved complex problems by making things out of ordinary objects.

Equipping ourselves with the right tools can make all the difference in our approach and even our

enjoyment and productivity.

For the longest time, I have held on to a sizable gift card for a local gourmet kitchenware store. Waiting to buy just the right thing with it, I delayed using it. During the post-Thanksgiving holiday sales, I stopped in the store with my husband. One of the salespeople was doing demonstrations with chef 's knives, and the demonstrator encouraged me to try out various knives to see what suited me. I ended up buying my first real chef 's knife and it promptly sat in the packaging on the counter for a week before I allowed myself to use it.

I was trying to cut through an uncooked roast with one of my old standby knives. I spotted the new knife on the counter and decided "What the heck, I'll just open it." As I slid the knife out, I had not noticed that I was pulling the blade through the hard outer plastic packaging because it came out so easily. Once I realized what happened, I was amazed. The knife edge was so sharp that the plastic seemed non-existent. So I washed the knife and immediately set out to cut a roast, which became like butter under the blade. Since then, hardly a meal gets made that I don't get out my new knife. Even though I enjoy cooking, my new knife has made it a real experience.

Small law practitioners are no strangers to making do. We pride ourselves in our resourcefulness. Many of us are hamstrung by resources, time, or both. Maybe many of us are hamstrung because we are programmed to working under "Great Depression" circumstances and we haven't realized that circumstances have changed. It may be time to invest in the right tools — such as a decent legal research subscription, contract management software, or even the right laptop or mobile device. Finding the right "match" may just be the thing we need to reignite our "fire."

"Your life is an occasion, rise to it." – From *Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium*

Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium is a film about a magical toy store owner who wills his toy store to an employee who is struggling to become "unstuck" in life.

With the right stuff, we can graduate from "making do" to "making a difference."

[Maryrose Delahunty](#)



Vice President and General Counsel

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