

## Lawyers on Caffeine

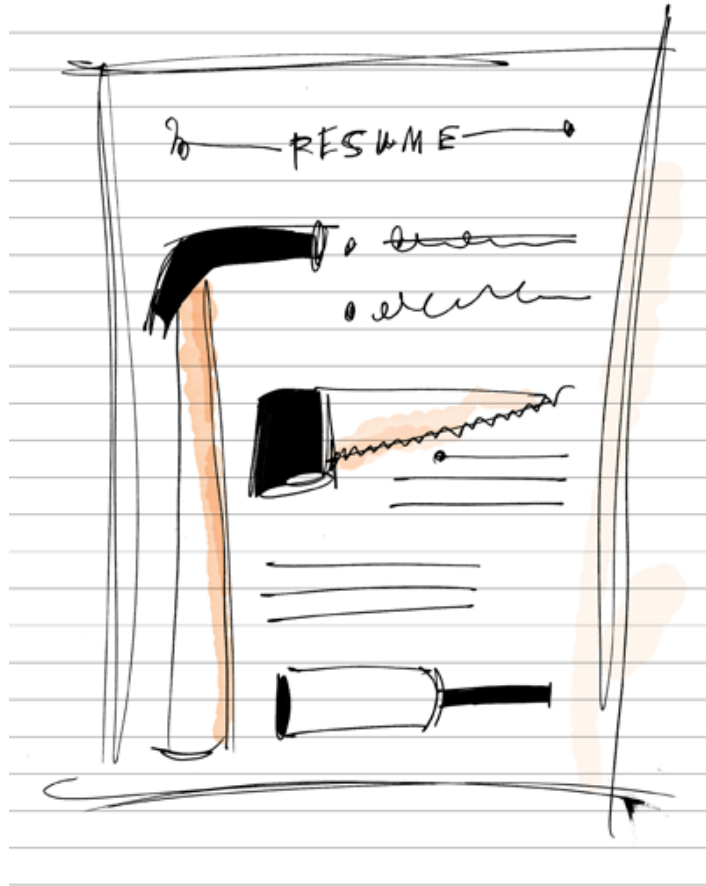
*By Melanie G. Lammers*

We've all heard different versions of the Ecclesiastical statement "There is a time for everything." In fact, the adage was immortalized in The Byrds' song "Turn, Turn, Turn" decades ago—so much so that other musicians, such as Wilson Phillips and Dolly Parton, have covered the song in their own unique styles.

No matter where you have heard it—and I guarantee you have—the principle is the same: everything in life has its time and place, and there is a time and place for everything. This also applies to your lifestyle as a legal professional.

Before we get started, stop right now and take a quick breather because you have absolutely nothing to prove to me. The firm you work for may be pushing for more billable hours or an expanding book of business, but my primary concern is your livelihood. And when I say "livelihood," I do not mean your income; I mean your quality of life.

"Who is she," you might ask, "to care about my quality of life? She's a resume writer and, as such, should primarily concern herself with my employment documents, not my personal life."



Well, I've got news for you, folks. Your personal life is, indeed, my business because your personal life affects your professional life in more ways than you could possibly imagine. The billable-hours struggle, for instance, is of top priority to me, not just because billable hours can reach a certain quantitative point where they become especially impressive but also because too many billable hours can affect the quality of your work. In the long run, this is my business because it affects your reviews and references from past employers, your alertness and enthusiasm on the job, and, most importantly, your resume!

For this reason, I am requesting that readers of this week's article take a moment to seriously consider their intake of items such as caffeine. You think I'm kidding? We haven't even crossed the threshold of the seriousness of this issue.

Pushing yourself too hard can cause you to lose focus in your current position as well as in the job search, but a caffeine push can also result in a resume on which your "cup runneth over" with fluff information and bulk text that no one will ever read, want to read, or be able to completely grasp if he or she actually attempts to read your document.

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The bottom line is that even if you're not on caffeine or any other stimulant, excessive enthusiasm for portraying absolutely everything you have to offer on a single page will do more harm than good.

If you think you are a quality lawyer, prove it on the page by using your argumentative skills and resourcefulness rather than with masses of jumbled case listings and documents drafted. Among all professionals in all industries, you should be the one who is best able to sum up the important points quickly and efficiently.

Prioritizing material is important. We have already discussed the fact that accomplishments take precedence over responsibilities, so first attempt to summarize your responsibilities in categories of duties (i.e., include no more than one bullet point about the documents you drafted).

Next, be sure to remain apprised of what the individual employer is looking for. If specific qualities are mentioned in an ad or posting, mention them when describing your own skill set.

Lastly, *delete* all unnecessary information. If you ramble on for pages, your resume will most likely be dumped rather than slipped into an HR file.