

TOP TEN PROFESSIONALISM RESOLUTIONS

We have been in the new millennium for almost a full year, and the Y2K bug did not destroy our computers. Life has continued as before, and another new year is rapidly approaching. I hope you have kept all of the New Year's or New Millennium's Resolutions that you made last December. But if you did not, or if you are interested in improving your law practice and your personal habits, I encourage you to consider adopting the following TOP TEN PROFESSIONALISM RESOLUTIONS for 2001:

1. Return every phone call you receive within 24 hours. Failure to return phone calls is the number one complaint to the State Bar. In your initial conference with every new client, inform him or her that you will return their call within 24 hours, and if you are unable to do so, a member of your staff will return the call for you.
2. Treat each client and case as if it is the most important case in your office. Most clients only have one case in your office, and to them, theirs is the most important case you have.
3. Always be punctual with your clients and the court. If you are going to be late, call and apologize for the delay. Remember that your client's time is also valuable.
4. Establish a reputation as one who is honest and trustworthy. Let every client, lawyer and judge know that "your word is your bond."
5. Review all open files in your office every 30 days. Files that you ignore or neglect often become problem cases.
6. Always have a positive attitude and compliment your staff for work well done. It will make your office a much more pleasant place to work.
7. Share lunch and a good war story with a young lawyer who needs a mentor. Young lawyers know a lot of law but they need someone to assist them in learning how to practice law.
8. Make a favorable impact on the lives of others through *pro bono* and community service. Use your talents, education, and expertise to improve the public perception of lawyers by helping others.
9. Refuse to laugh at lawyer jokes and use that opportunity to extol the virtues of the legal profession.
10. Always take the "high road" in dealing with others. Incivility breeds incivility, and it is not always easy to take the "high road." But I believe that if you do so, others will follow.

Have a great New Year on behalf of the Chief's Justice's Commission on Professionalism.