

## THINK LIKE A LAWYER

When I was 21-years-old, starting law school and rather naïve, my goals were simple: graduate law school, pass the bar, get a job and practice law well. After several years out of law school (ahem), I now see there was a 5th, more important, goal that I did not realize as a new law student: *think like a lawyer*.

I recall the transformation of my way of thinking that started after my first year's classes and my initial understanding of the law:

My landlord wants to terminate my lease? *Not without 30 days' written notice. And by the way, landlord, you are violating the implied warranty of habitability by your failure to properly maintain this low rent apartment.*

Your car hits my car on the way to a football game? *You better have enough auto insurance coverage.*

After more time in law school, and thereafter, several years in the practice of law and a clerkship for the Tennessee Court of Appeals, my ability to think like a lawyer became more complex and nuanced. In fact, my thinking became highly critical and analytical and was crucial to my career as a practicing attorney.

For the past 6 years, I have been fortunate enough to work for Cobra Legal Solutions as one of its US Managing Attorneys, which requires me to manage projects and serve as the US point of contact for our clients around the world.

While I am no longer a practicing attorney, my ability to think like a lawyer has proven to be a valuable, transferrable job skill for my work with Cobra. I see our Cobra India attorneys apply their ability to think like lawyers in every project. Our critical thinking and legal training provides value to our clients in several ways:

### PROFESSIONALISM

I intentionally placed this attribute first because our Cobra US and India attorneys are true professionals. We "think like lawyers" because we are lawyers. We are trained professionals who have spent countless hours honing our critical thinking skills and our ability to create and maintain excellent client relationships.

When I started my position with Cobra in 2012, I immediately saw the high level of professionalism that Cobra maintains. I work daily with our Cobra India attorneys and have witnessed first-hand the care and attention that our attorneys have for every project. We take our jobs very seriously and maintain our professionalism the highest level, which in turn, makes for happy clients.

### "PROCESS THINKING" IS BETTER THAN "FIXED THINKING":

I am borrowing this phrase from a psychologist friend of mine. It's how the lawyers at Cobra operate; how we think. *Process thinkers* understand that a large project is possible to complete, so long as the project is broken down into a reasonable course of action. *Fixed thinkers*, on the other hand, will see a large project and become overwhelmed by the project's size, causing them to freeze and thus become ineffective.

As a former practicing attorney who's handled numerous cases in various stages of litigation, I learned quickly to break things down into steps (i.e., processes) so that my focus, from the time the file was opened, was set on getting to the finish line in the most efficient way possible. This is how the Cobra US and India lawyers engage in every project, through process thinking. We can see the big picture of a project then break it down into manageable bites so that we meet the client's requirements efficiently and in a timely manner.

### COMMUNICATION

Starting day one of law school, lawyers are taught to communicate effectively. Called on by our professors in nearly every class, every day, we're expected to intelligently follow-up and discuss the previous night's reading assignment. Practicing attorneys are ethically required to communicate with their clients. We regularly are required to effectively and professionally communicate with judges, regulators, other lawyers, clients and expert and lay witnesses.

The Cobra US and India attorneys provide regular written updates that give the client a status of the project and a summary of what the team has completed or has questions about since our last client communication. We pride ourselves on maintaining a high level of communication with our clients and value the questions and feedback we receive from clients about our work.

### LAWYERS DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT IN ALL AREAS

Our training allows us to quickly grasp new concepts, make connections and draw distinctions in areas that are new to us. I am not a physician but had to cross-examine physicians in their area of practice on numerous occasions. I am not a roofing contractor or manufacturer, but I had to learn roofing design, roofing materials and how to roof a structure so that I could intelligently make an argument on my clients' behalf.

Likewise, for our Cobra clients, we quickly learn our client's industry and/or internal departmental needs. Our ability to learn our client's business and project's needs and make the necessary connections and draw distinctions is an asset that we use in every type of project.

With Cobra's stable of well-trained US and India attorneys, who ALL **think like lawyers**, Cobra is equipped with excellent communicators who use their critical thinking skills to efficiently and effectively deliver excellent work product to our clients. I am proud to be part of a team comprised of such a high level of professionals.

Sincerely,

*Tonya R. Willis*

The Law (aka: Tonya Willis)