

Wellness

Wellness: Sometimes losing is winning | Darryl Singer

By Darryl Singer



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(June 25, 2019, 9:40 AM EDT) -- I recently ran in the Law Society of Ontario bench election as one of 73 candidates vying for 20 Toronto seats. I was unsuccessful in my campaign.

That said, I do not consider that I lost, even though I failed to win a seat at the table. The campaign kicked off in February and ran until the voting closed on April 30.

I spent much of those three months electioneering. I gave interviews to various legal publications and podcasts. I wrote articles. I spent countless hours making phone calls and sending emails to personal contacts, visiting law firms for face-to-face campaigning, and attended numerous campaign events organized by the various legal associations and other stakeholder groups.

I was invigorated every moment that I campaigned. With every phone call, e-mail, personal meeting or attendance at an all candidates event, I felt a renewed sense of connection to the legal profession. The campaign made me realize two things:

1. This is a great profession full of amazing people.

Of all the candidates I met, including those with whom I disagree, one thing was clear: the people who put forward their names and stood for election all had the same goal in mind. We may have gone about it in different ways and had different policy ideas as to how to achieve the end goals, but everybody was united on the fact that we want to make this profession — both as a whole and for lawyers individually — as good as they can be. I met a lot of great people on the campaign, many of whom have become friends. I already knew many others and have reconnected and reaffirmed my relationship with those.

2. We often think we are a lonely island, but we are not.

This wellness column came about as a result of the public profile I have developed over the years talking about my own issues with addiction and depression (and my recovery therefrom). As I continue to write this column monthly and speak at various legal organizations on wellness issues approximately every two months over the last few years, I regularly have people reach out to me seeking help for themselves, a friend, a colleague.

When I speak to these people there is one unifying theme — they think they are alone. But they are not. If there's one thing that I was reminded on the campaign hustings it is the fact that even when we feel lonely, stressed and like we are the only ones dealing with this, our profession is bigger than any one of us. And there are a lot of people out there willing to help those in trouble.

One of the themes in my wellness seminars is the fact that from every bad can come good. I went through the worst imaginable experience in 2009, taking almost an entire year off to deal with my recovery as a result of hitting rock bottom. Going through the recovery process I not only rid myself of addiction and mental health issues, but I made myself into a better person. I always conclude my talks by discussing the three life lessons that have given me the gift of a great life today:

- Lose the ego and replace it with humility.
- Lose the envy and replace it with gratitude.
- Lose the fear and get out of your comfort.

The campaign resulted in a win in that some good can come out of it for me. As I campaigned, I received dozens of unsolicited phone calls, e-mails and personal approaches from people telling me how much all of speaking and writing on wellness issues has made a difference to them or someone they know.

Knowing that many lawyers not only were prepared to vote for me but to make personal appeals to their colleagues to support me meant a lot. It's one story for people who know you to support you, but when they are prepared to vouch for you, that is the ultimate compliment.

This outpouring of support that I received has fuelled a fire in me to continue to be the best lawyer and the best person that I can be. We often live in our own little cocoon nestled among only those who like us and echo our views.

I realized in this election that the level of respect I have throughout this profession goes above and beyond the people that I deal with on a daily basis, the people that are in my firm, or the people in my immediate social circle. Many of those people who expressed admiration and respect for me are people with whom I do not agree politically, people with whom I have had very difficult and adversarial litigation over the years or people I didn't even know.

As I reflected on the loss, I thought about how I have been validated for things that I do. This has certainly had a positive impact on my ego and encouraged me to continue to do what I do. As a result, I don't feel like a loser in this election campaign. I feel

like a winner.

I think I speak for many of the other losing candidates that we will take from this election the positive support received to encourage us to continue to carry on in our goal to make the legal profession as great as it can be and to continue to carry ourselves as the best lawyers and people that we can be.

And that my friends, is no loss at all.

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