

Exercising On My Peloton Bike Makes Me A Better Lawyer

By **Andrea Kirshenbaum** (January 8, 2025)

In this Expert Analysis series, attorneys discuss how their unusual extracurricular activities enhance professional development, providing insights and pointers that translate to the office, courtroom and beyond. If you have a hobby you would like to write about, email expertanalysis@law360.com.

Change can be scary, especially if you are risk averse, which is a quality that many lawyers possess. I certainly fall into that category.

And inertia can be a powerful force. All the more so when, like me, you love what you do. The day-to-day busyness of practice also makes it challenging to take a step back and reflect. This was surely the case during the pandemic, when I was often advising healthcare clients on employment challenges stemming from COVID-19.

Exercise has always been an outlet for me to manage stress. When the gym closed in March 2020, I turned to daily walks before my workday started, as well as long hikes near Wissahickon Creek in Philadelphia on weekends.

Then, in December 2021, my husband decided to buy a Peloton bike. I had never done a spinning class before. And when I tried to clip in and out of a bike in the showroom at the mall, I had a hard time. My husband asked if he should even order me cycling shoes with the bike. I said that he might as well, and I would try it and see how it goes. It took me a bit to get into the flow, but once I did, as they say, the rest was history.

While I came to the Peloton bike for exercise, it quickly became much more. I gravitated to several instructors, including Christine D'Ercole, who rapidly became my favorite. And, what I immediately saw was that the encouragement to undertake and complete challenges on the bike during class was about so much more than the bike — it was a way to open opportunities for growth and change off of the bike.

At a particularly challenging point in a ride, Christine would share her mantra: "I am. I can. I will. I do." Then, she would invite you to complete the mantra with your own words. For example, "I am strong. I can finish this ride. I will ascend this hill. I do make myself proud."

Christine teaches riders to approach situations with curiosity, or, as she says, with "a balance of determination and detachment." And she encourages riders to ask, "What if I can?" She also shares reminders throughout class, like: "You have no idea what you are capable of," and "Words are powerful, especially what we say to ourselves."

I know that it may sound corny, but riding the bike simultaneously provided me with clarity and fuel to pursue my goals. It pushed me out of my comfort zone on a daily basis. And being out of that comfort zone emboldened me to consider making a change; to take a risk. Or, as Christine would say, to "choose challenges" and "practice agency."



Andrea Kirshenbaum

The practice of law can be all-consuming. It is easy to get lost in the flood of deadlines and to-do lists. Riding the bike regularly gives me the space and opportunity to zoom out and consider things from a different perspective.

We all need to find at least one thing outside of the law that fills our cup, gives us strength and makes us smile. Practicing law is a marathon, not a sprint — although, sometimes it can feel like both. Making the time on a regular basis to do something outside of the law is a long-term investment in sustaining a legal practice, as well as professional and personal success.

Many of Christine's teachings on the bike serve as a road map for how to practice law thoughtfully and mindfully.

You need to know where you are in order to figure out where you want to go.

The first step toward any goal is to be honest with yourself on where you are. Only then can you begin to make a plan to move in the direction you would like to go.

Whether it is changing firms, developing subject matter expertise, becoming involved in a nonprofit board or reaching any other professional goal, you can only make progress after taking stock of where you are and then working to develop a plan on where you want to go.

Don't fight it, invite it.

Progress often requires us to put ourselves in positions where we are uncomfortable: to push our boundaries and to learn new things. For example, we have to believe that we can handle a new complex litigation, even though we've never done anything like it before.

More than 15 years ago, when a new wage and hour case came in at my firm, I raised my hand enthusiastically and volunteered to be on the team, even though I had never litigated in that area before. And I have never looked back. I have focused a substantial portion of my practice on wage and hour law, especially class and collective action cases, like the case I handled in 2009.

Stay in it and push through.

On the bike, Christine often teaches that you have to stay in a challenging effort long enough to give yourself a chance to succeed. Give yourself the opportunity to sit in the struggle long enough to make a thoughtful decision as to whether you should continue to stay where you are or alter your course.

Have the audacity to believe in yourself.

This is of course easier on some days than others. But it is essential to the successful practice of law. How will others believe in you if you do not believe in yourself?

Seek and accept support.

This idea is inspired by one of Christine's motivational stories. When she was going up a hill during bike training years ago, she began to doubt herself. But then, one of Christine's teammates gently pulled alongside her and put a hand on her back. The teammate was not pushing Christine up the hill, she was letting her know that she was there to support her.

In the practice of law, you need to find mentors and sponsors who will do the same. I know that this has benefited me at several pivotal moments of my career. Whether at your firm or elsewhere, find the people who will champion you, even (or especially) when you are not in the room.

Be grateful.

In the everyday rush it is easy to lose sight of gratitude. It's important to express gratitude for the mentors and sponsors who helped you get where you are, and gratitude for the opportunity to practice law and make a meaningful impact on the lives of others.

And, of course, it's important to express gratitude through our actions that give back to our communities, whether by serving on a nonprofit board, providing pro bono legal services, or mentoring and sponsoring colleagues.

Conclusion

As I made my way through 2022 riding my Peloton bike, I asked myself, "What if I can?" and I pushed my risk-averse self to get out of my comfort zone. In January 2023, I made the leap and changed firms. Now, as I near my two-year anniversary at my firm, I am incredibly grateful that I took the risk.

The exceptional platform and my wonderful new colleagues have provided me with tremendous opportunities to grow my practice and to be on the front lines puzzling through cutting-edge legal issues. At my first shareholder meeting, our president and managing director spoke of our team as a peloton, i.e., a group of cyclists in a race working together to support one another. So, you could say that I have made the journey from my Peloton to a peloton.

The three years I have spent exercising on the Peloton bike continue to play an important role in my life — pushing me on a daily basis and giving me the opportunity to reflect on all the lessons I have learned since I first clipped in. And, climbing mountains on the bike emboldened me this past summer to climb Mount Norquay in Canada. Even more significantly, as I manage the trials and tribulations of life and legal practice, riding the Peloton bike continues to teach and reteach me the importance of resilience, persistence, strength and perspective.

In July 2023, I went to the Peloton studio in New York for a live ride with Christine. It is a ride I have gone back to on the streaming platform again and again. During the ride, Christine said, "So let us remember to follow our instincts and do the things we're afraid to do. Because not only will we discover we can, we will also make ourselves incredibly proud."

Those are certainly words to live by in the practice of law, and in life.

Andrea Kirshenbaum is a shareholder at Littler Mendelson PC.

The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of their employer, its clients, or Portfolio Media Inc., or any of its or their respective affiliates. This article is for general information purposes and is not intended to be and should not be taken as legal advice.

