

## Christine Vanderford: Slight Edge Means Smooth Sailing



It's 11:10. The interviewer realizes she's gone over schedule by 10 minutes. Apologizing, she picks up her things and leaves attorney Christine Vanderford, who hasn't said a word about going late. Christine typically thinks more about the needs of her clients—or interviewers—than herself. She admits this habit used to cause huge time management problems. These days, she still gives of her time generously, but her business is sailing along smoothly, so she can afford to.

Christine credits her effective business habits to Leadership Resources, where she has used the company's business planning services, productivity courses, employee workshops and coaching sessions—every service offered except hiring tools. The result has been no less than a doubling of profit, the addition of four employees and the anticipation of another doubling of profit in two years, with more attorneys in the practice. All this and she works fewer hours than before, getting home on time more often.

“Law students are trained to be competitive in the practice of law, but not in business practices,” Christine explains. “And I've realized the only way to be successful is to run a good business.” She first looked into Leadership Resources as something she might recommend to her own clients to help with their businesses. Once she learned more, she realized she needed it as much as her clients. “I knew if I didn't have a good business model, I couldn't provide good service to my own clients,” she said.

Christine is the first to admit that change didn't happen overnight or all in one big obvious wave. It was more like the delayed turning of a ship long after the captain changes headings. Good things happened in small increments or, as she has learned to say, changes made in the way she works daily gave her a “slight edge” that has added up to big advantages.

In fact, one of the most interesting things about her Leadership Resources experience is that the combination of services she received created a synergy that supported her goals from many different angles. Material from the first few coaching sessions, for example, was used to formulate her business plan. The things she learned in the Effective Personal Productivity (EPP) course were passed on to employees and then reinforced in on-site workshops.

Christine continues to gain a “slight edge” with monthly coaching sessions that give her the advantages of efficiency, organization and accountability. “My coach asks me what has gone well and what hasn't, then helps me think through strategies to solve problems and continue to grow my business,” she says. Christine's coach acts as an advisor, helping her pull specific skills from the course to address problems and giving her fresh ideas for making her business the best it can be. She has learned to focus on marketing, for example, one of the biggest reasons she has increased the number of clients she serves.

In particular, Christine says that the monthly coaching sessions have helped her overcome a tendency to put off self-development, which she knows is important in order to provide the best possible service to clients. “The coaching helps me stay accountable to developing myself, my staff and my business.”

Christine is thrilled to be accomplishing the dream of owning her own legal practice, and happier still that the choppy waters most business start-ups experience have calmed considerably. “I wanted to own a successful business, but I didn't want it to own me,” she says with a wink.

She won't allow herself to get complacent, though. She'll continue monthly coaching indefinitely, so she can keep a weather eye on the horizon and stay ready for anything this adventure brings her way. ①