

## What was Your Best Day as a Solo?

I'm four months in to this new adventure and there have been some days when I question why I left my job with reliable income for something not at all guaranteed. The rest of the time, I'm more relaxed and happy about what I do than I've been in the last 21 years. Today was a really good day.

I'm curious, what is the best day you've had as a solo/small firm practitioner and why?

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The day I told my boss (me) that I am taking 2 weeks off for vacation in June to spend time visiting with family and friends and my boss couldn't complain or reject my request.

Matthew Rosenthal

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The day when my firm's cash inflows beat my all of cash outflows for the month and I told my wife, hey, this might actually work. To which she replied, it better. Regardless, for me, my worst day in business (and I've had some doozies) is better than my best day working for someone else.

Eugene Lee, California

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There are a few:

- Getting voted in as co-chair of my court's Bench-Bar Liaison Committee (that also happened while I was noticeably pregnant, so thanks to the awesome attorneys who didn't let a little thing like pregnancy get in my

way)

- Going up to the podium after my name was announced as President-Elect of my Inn

- Working a 4 day work-week when my son was little, so I had Mommy Mondays to spend with him, and my clients understanding that!

- Telling my clients they got their discharge. This never gets old. It is one of my favorite moments in each case. Other favorites, figuring out the math for a tricky plan, getting a case confirmed (again, never gets old), and those thank you notes and occasional gifts you get from thankful clients.

Being a solo has afforded me the time I needed to have a family, to volunteer, and to really be there for my clients. Oh, and let's not forget, I have the ability to turn down those red flag clients. Now, if I don't always turn them down, that's on me, but I have the choice to say "no thanks."

Corrine Bielejeski, California

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I don't know if there is a "best day."

From a legal perspective:

Winning my first (and only) appeal. Oral argument in my appeal, which is the only time either of my parents saw me in court. (My mom flew up.) Beating a cocky senior partner in trial for a client who was in the Navy.

From a personal perspective:

Never missing any of my kids' school events. Being able to go back to coaching high school soccer.

Jonathan Stein, California

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I am loving these stories!

My day was good because I am starting to feel the flow of the new practice and things are coming together on the business side and the work side.

Yesterday was a great day for a bunch of small reasons, nothing momentous.

-I sent out my first bill, which I figured out how to do through my accounting/time/firm management software and it looked very professional.

I was super proud because that side of the business was a little intimidating to me at first. I've held off sending bills while I was figuring out the systems but I should be able to send out a handful more and

- yay- have some cashflow!

-I was hired on some new matters that I'm excited about. The meetings with the plaintiff employment PCs were so nice because I could see them feel lighter after hearing that someone believed them and wanted to help.

-A new client called just to check with me on something. It was just a .1 call, but I felt so good that they trust me and it could be a great relationship long term.

-Maybe the best thing was being home in time to cook dinner for the kids and watch a movie on Netflix after a very busy day with no guilt about billable requirements.

I am finally starting to trust that this is going to be good for us after lots of ups and downs over the last few months!

Deena Buchanan, New Mexico

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My best day as a solo was the day we got a <sup>3</sup>not guilty<sup>2</sup> for a death-eligible capital defendant.

Eric C. Davis, Alabama

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There have of course been many "best" days.

I do litigation, criminal and civil. One of the consequences of that is that one (sometimes all) party walks out of the courtroom angry, disappointed, and ticked-off at the world.

Except after ONE type of court appearance, when everybody walks out happily - an adoption. It is invariably a magical moment. I seek them out and do them for free just because of how good they make me feel afterwards. Plus, you usually get invited to a lunch at Chuckee Cheese!

I've talked to judges who preside over adoptions, and they ALL feel the same way.

Russ Carmichael

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After thirty years of practice, my best day was just this past January. I had my first solo jury trial, and it involved a nuisance case where a neighbor was harassing my gay, middle-aged client. We won everything!

The neighbor has to pay my client \$27,000.00 after a campaign of harassment that has lasted ten years (straight from my closing). I have never had such a happy client. When the jury came back and we were waiting for a verdict, I thought I was going to have a heart attack.

I handle mostly construction matters, which can be quite emotional, but nothing like this.

Andrea Goldman, Massachusetts

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The day opposing counsel rang me up and prefaced his settlement offer (which my client would accept) with, "well, I just got yelled at by my claims rep"

L. Maxwell Taylor, Vermont

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The days when I help someone in a way that truly impacts their life. It might not seem personally that it would, but the work actually impacted them in a positive way because of what I know how to do. That's a good day.

Reta McKannan, Alabama

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I had a client fighting a mortgage company to save her house. They agreed on a loan modification but did not process her payment until after the deadline. They tried to foreclose twice despite a preliminary injunction pending. I filed and they agreed to stop. They started again and I stopped it permanently.

In another case, the deed and deed of trust were a mess. One of the parties was in bankruptcy (I took on the mortgage issue for her case). Another party was in a home with potential mental capacity issues. A third party was in chapter 7. All three were related. We settled after mediation and the mortgage company and attorneys realized they couldn't beat us.

Mitchell Goldstein, Virginia

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As someone else said, I could not point to THE best day. I have been solo for 35 years, so there had better be more than one really good day, and there were. A few stand out.

When I announced that I was leaving big law to go solo, I was shunned by my now former partners. They openly wished me failure. One really good day was about 15 years later when that firm imploded over money. Just sayin'! . . .

Every time a client has been appreciative of the difficulty and therefore cost of the work done, and yet paid promptly, and added a thank you, was a really good day. One such client in particular was a client long enough to experience that the "quick and dirty" work he sometimes asked for, to save money, which I refused to do, would have been a mistake. Years later when the shit coulda, woulda hit the fan but for. . ., he openly recognized it and thanked me profusely. That sort of recognition was a great day.

Six months ago I announced my impending retirement. Some clients I have yet to hear from, but each time I received one of the half a dozen or so handwritten notes, congratulating me and thanking me for being there for them in times of real need, was a really great day. It told me I had made a difference. The best was a client who called immediately and left a simple message: "Congratulations. But I find your decision totally unacceptable."

Henry R. Reckler, Colorado

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When I won the first case I ever had and got a beautiful thank you note that now hangs in my waiting room.

When I declined my first obnoxious client and remembered what it was like having a corporate boss who would tell me to get along with bullies (impossible!).

Anytime I'm burnt out and I take off, leaving my phone behind, and go shopping for an hour. Being able to take care of personal matters such as appointments whenever I darn well please.

All the lovely clients I am privileged to serve, most of whom greatly appreciate me.

Being able to use all my skills (business, marketing etc.) not just legal.

Being able to have my own personal touch in marketing materials. Having a business that reflects who I am as a person and what I value most, and doing only the type of law I most enjoy (estate planning and elder law planning, no litigation).

So much freedom and happiness comes to me from being solo, I would never in a million years do anything else.

Margaret Wadsworth, South Carolina

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What a great answer. I, self-appointed judge, award Margaret first prize.

Shell Bleiweiss, Illinois

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Having been a solo for 25-1/2 years, I have had a lot of professionally satisfying days, which are not directly related to being a solo. The things that have been great about being a solo:

- Being able to attend every just about every sports and school event, be a "Classroom Parent" to help with parties, pick up my son from school every day, and just "be there" while my son was growing up in ways that I would not have been able to if I was working for someone else. Now that my son is in college, it is just great to be able to have flexibility in my schedule without having to answer to anyone.

- Being able to make every decision without having to listen to someone else's opinion - particularly hardware and software purchases, and office policies and procedures, but also accepting and keeping clients. This is a biggie for me because it would drive me crazy to see a better way to do something and have to wait until it gets through some approval process to even have a prayer of getting it done.

- Memorable day - the first day I opened my office, a client from the firm I had worked at called me at 8 am to be sure to be the very first client I signed up.

For some reason, moving from a regular guaranteed income to one that is reliant on client payments never really bothered me. I did make a resolution when I started that I would send out invoices on the first (or closest business day) every month, and I have kept to that.

Caroline A. Edwards, Pennsylvania

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