



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to welcome back Jeremy Richter, attorney and now author of the book, *Building A Better Law Practice*, soon to be published by the ABA. I'm your Law School Toolbox host, Alison Monahan and normally I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to de-mystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website, [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girls Guide to Law School](#).

If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach up via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolbox.com and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today we're excited to welcome Jeremy Richter, attorney and now author of the book, [Building A Better Law Practice](#), which is gonna be published by the ABA around the beginning of July. So welcome Jeremy.

Jeremy Richter: Thanks. I'm excited to be here.

Alison Monahan: It's our pleasure to have you. So the last time we spoke, we were talking about [being an introverted lawyer](#), which is a great episode, we will link to it. But, tell me about what you've been up to professionally since then, and if you would give our listeners a sense of your overall background and where you're coming from.

Jeremy Richter: All right so, what I've been doing lately is a lot of writing, for my book that's coming out. Which fits really well with my introverted tendencies. And, I am an insurance defense lawyer in Birmingham. Most of the work that I do is defending car wrecks, general liability, premises liability stuff with stores when customers slip and fall, and some worker's comp stuff here and there. And so that involves a lot of written discovery and depositions, and occasionally some trial work. Although most everything settles before it ever gets that far.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. And how long have you been doing this?

Jeremy Richter: I am in year number six. So I started in 2012. Right when there were still no jobs for people coming out of law school. So that was fun.

Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And I think we talked about that a little bit on the other podcast. About how you got that first job. So we're not gonna necessarily revisit that. But now you're smooth sailing. Have you been at the same place the entire ... your career?



- Jeremy Richter: Yes. I am one of, I think, probably the few people in my class who have been at the same firm for six years now. And, barring some unexpected things, I don't have any plans to change that, ever.
- Alison Monahan: Wow. Well that's a strong statement these days.
- Jeremy Richter: Yeah. It fits who I am and how I like to work. And, couldn't have been a better fit for me.
- Alison Monahan: That's great, yeah. It sounds like you got pretty lucky right out of the gate.
- Jeremy Richter: For sure.
- Alison Monahan: Do you think it was a lucky break? Or do you think ... As I recall, it doesn't seem like you had a really strict plan for what you were gonna do as soon as you graduated.
- Jeremy Richter: Oh yeah, you're right. When I went into law school I thought I was gonna do criminal prosecution. And, after my first clerking summer at the district attorney's office, I knew that, that is not what I wanted to do. So, after that, everything was just ... I didn't have any answers. But I had a bunch of questions. So, I did a bunch of different clerking experiences. My third year, during the year, I clerked for a couple of solo folks. And we knew from the outset that, they weren't gonna be able to take me on because they just didn't have that kind of volume. But, one of the folks I was working for, got contacted by the managing partner at the firm where I am now, saying, "Hey, do you know anybody?" And he said, "Well, yes I do." And so, we went through a interview process and here I am.
- Alison Monahan: I think that's a great story. Because so many people think like, "Oh, if I don't get a job during on-campus recruiting, my days of working in a law firm are over." Or, "I'm never gonna be able to get a job." Or they have to plan everything out. But I think honestly, my experience in life has just been, a lot of this is kind of random. And you have to put yourself in a position to get that call.
- Jeremy Richter: I totally agree. Because, if I hadn't done good work and been dependable where I was then I never would've got suggested as ... He wouldn't have stuck his neck out for me and said, "I think Jeremy can handle this for you."
- Alison Monahan: Right. Or never would've even met you, because you were just like, "Oh I don't have time to get a job. I'm too busy looking for a job, I can't actually work."
- Jeremy Richter: Right, right.



- Alison Monahan: All right so, tell me a bit about this new book, Building A Better Law Practice. Who is it for and, why did you decide to write it?
- Jeremy Richter: For a couple years now I've been writing a law blog. And-
- Alison Monahan: And where can people find that?
- Jeremy Richter: They can find that JeremyWRichter.com.
- Alison Monahan: Okay.
- Jeremy Richter: And so, when I started that out ... And part of this ties into the book. Especially the fourth part where I talk about marketing a bit. But, insurance defense is tough. And, there's a lot of gray haired guys that have a hold on the market. And so it's hard to break in as a young lawyer to develop your own clients and develop relationships. And so, I knew about me that ... First of all, like we talked about last time, I'm a bit introverted so I needed to take a different path. I don't have family connections in the Birmingham area. I don't have one of those personalities that people are just going to remember. But, I do like writing and I feel like I'm fairly good at it.
- And so, I looked around to see where there was a hole in the market that I might be able to fill in that capacity to develop a platform. I didn't really have a plan for it when I started. But, I wanted to do something that would build a platform for me to speak from. And just give people an opportunity to learn who I am and what I have to say before I ask them to hire me to do their work.
- Alison Monahan: Which makes sense.
- Jeremy Richter: Yeah. So I started the blog. And then, the book kind of developed out of that. Because when I started writing on the blog a lot of it was very practice area specific. So as I did more reading then, I got a lot more interested in thinking about, and writing about, practice management and managing my case load, and managing my clients. Which are the things that ultimately the blog has evolved into, writing about those topics primarily. And that's the content that makes up the book as well.
- Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And we're gonna talk in more detail about the different parts of the book in a second but before we do that, let me just ask you one additional question. So, we've been doing a lot of mistakes episodes, lately, on the podcast. Particularly talking to an ex big law recruiter about the different mistakes people make and all kinds of, being a summer associate, an OCI, callbacks, all those kinds of things. What kind of mistakes do you see young lawyers frequently making early in their careers? And how can people start to avoid ... Not necessarily the specific pit falls but, big mistakes over all?



Jeremy Richter: You could probably spend a really long time talking about that.

Alison Monahan: Well yeah, just answer that, how can people avoid mistakes? Come on Jeremy, give me what you got here. Yeah.

Jeremy Richter: So, I would say mistakes that young lawyers are making as they enter their career.

Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeremy Richter: Is, thinking they know more than they do. And projecting that they know more than you do.

Alison Monahan: That's a great one. Yes, definitely.

Jeremy Richter: It's okay to not know answers to things. And, I don't think that any reasonable employer is going to expect you to know how to practice law on day one. They plan to teach you that. And so being open and coachable is hugely important. There's a lot of really important things. If you're closed off and not able to adapt and learn as you go and be able to receive criticism and feedback, then that's really gonna hinder your growth.

Alison Monahan: I think that's a great point. We were talking yesterday with someone on the podcast about ... Because people who come into firms ... Apparently she had one summer associate tell her on the second day, "Well I'm gonna be running this firm one day." And she's like, "Just don't do that."

Jeremy Richter: Wow that's really ambitious.

Alison Monahan: It's kind of ambitious but it's also sort of obnoxious. You don't know anything. You don't even know if you like it here.

Jeremy Richter: Yeah, for sure.

Alison Monahan: Yeah so she probably just went there and was just ... "It's really not gonna do anyone any problems if you just sit back and absorb things for a little while before you start making these pronouncements."

Jeremy Richter: Yeah, I think that's another good point. Is, to, absorbing things. That's a really good way to put it. Is, rather than coming in voicing your opinion, take the temperature of the room first.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. Just take a step back, it's a new environment. Well let's talk now in some more detail about the different advice in your book. So you've divided it into four different parts. And we'll just go through them and talk about each



one. So, in the first part, you really talk about managing clients and creating collaborative relationships. So why do you think this is so important?

Jeremy Richter: So, the reason this is important is, because if you don't have clients, then you don't have any work to do.

Alison Monahan: Very good point.

Jeremy Richter: And so, understanding what kind of relationship your clients want with you. And so for me, for every case I had two clients. I have the insurance company that's hired me and that I have a continuing relationship with, from case to case. And I also have, either the individual or the corporation that I'm representing, who, is almost my client. So, it gets really interesting from that perspective. So, as far as the company that hires me, the insurance company, I need to know how they want to work together and understand what their needs are so that we can have the most effective communication amongst ourselves. And, usually we have a lot of cases together. And sometimes it's with the same folks and sometimes it's with folks I haven't ever worked with before. But I just need to be really receptive and communicative for us to handle our cases in the best way possible.

Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And, what type of things should lawyers be thinking about as they start to work directly with clients? Either in this institutional capacity or really, literally, directly with the guy who had the accident?

Jeremy Richter: Yeah. So I think that listening skills are hugely important. And, recently I've started ... Had a few conversations with Jennifer Romig who is a professor at Emory University and she has a blog called, [Listening Like A Lawyer](#). Which I think is a little bit tongue-in-cheek because, historically, we are not good listeners.

Alison Monahan: That interesting since that's what we're supposed to be doing.

Jeremy Richter: Right.

Alison Monahan: She's great. She's written some stuff for us too. Love her.

Jeremy Richter: Good. I really like her. And she and I are gonna do some presentations at conferences on, how we can use listening skills as lawyers to more effectively communicate with our clients. So I think, something that's really important is listening, so that we can understand our clients needs and be able to provide the service that they need to meet those needs. And sometimes that's really case specific. And sometimes it's not. Sometimes it's a larger ... A 20 thousand foot perspective rather than the day to day operations.



Alison Monahan: Right. And I have to imagine, sometimes, you have some ... Maybe not necessarily conflict but maybe tension between, what the guy who you're defending on that day who had this accident might want and your bigger client might want. Is that true?

Jeremy Richter: It is true. And so, when stuff like that happens, I tell the insured; the guy that I'm actually defending. And I've had to tell the insurance folks before, also, my duty as an advocate is to the defendant. And, even if I'm later gonna get fired for doing what's in the defendant's best interest, that's what I have to do. And there's no question about that, there's no wavering on it. That's just the way it has to be. But that's something that has to be communicated to everybody is, I owe this guy zealous advocacy regardless of what is in your financial interest of the insurance company. And so, that is a really important part of an insurance defense, of that line of business is ... There's a tension there sometimes and you have to manage it and communicate with everybody about what it means and how it's gonna be handled.

Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And what are some ways that you think young lawyers can get better at working productively with clients? If maybe this is not a skill set they feel fully comfortable with?

Jeremy Richter: Sure and it's probably not because [crosstalk 00:14:15]-

Alison Monahan: Why would it be?

Jeremy Richter: Yes, exactly. Why would it be? I think one of the most important things I was taught early on is to, respond, and this sounds really obvious. But, sometimes the things that are really obvious are also obviously overlooked. Is, when you get an email or you get a phone call that you can't take from a client, respond within 24 hours. And the response may even be, "I'm gonna need some time to get an answer for you." But, your clients need to know that they're on your radar. And that you're prepared whenever they have something they need, to be there for them.

And, on the insurance side, I'll have clients who call me and say, "Hey, I have a question about this file. It's not your file and it may never be a case that you get, but I've got a question." So, as a service to my client, since there are tons of insurance defense lawyers that they can go to, my response is, "Always, always, always ... If you have any questions on whether something I will ever bill a minute on time on, call me and let me help you and answer your questions." So, being responsive, being available for your clients, understanding their needs. And sometimes their needs are things that will never turn into a dollar in yours or your firm's pocket. But it's just a matter of being a good business partner with them.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah I think that's right. We get similar things with our students, where maybe their parents wanna have a question about something, or somebody needs a referral for something. I'm not billing anyone for that but that's just something you do.
- Jeremy Richter: Yeah. A lot of time people think of lawyers as, highly affluent, really important. But, we're a customer service business.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Jeremy Richter: And we can't lose sight of that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah and I think the best people tend to be the ones who have that desire to be helpful. And it probably doesn't just stop at things they're getting paid for.
- Jeremy Richter: Yeah, I totally agree. And, that kind of flows into, you need to understand your client's business as a whole. Some people approach cases with a scorched earth mentality. And that can be really expensive, for one thing. But also, it may not serve other business goals your clients have. They may be in a litigation with a business partner of theirs who they still want to do business with after this resolves. Or, any number of things that don't directly effect the litigation but that need to be considered as a part of the client's relationship and how you handle cases.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I thought that was a really good point in your book that these are ongoing relationships, a lot of them. And, you can't just blow everything up and be like, "Yay we won." It's like, "Yeah, but."
- Jeremy Richter: That's right. And legal communities are small. Unless you're in one of the larger cities, for example New York...
- Alison Monahan: I worked in New York, they're still small.
- Jeremy Richter: Okay. So you're gonna deal with the same people for 30 years. And, you need to be able to have a good working relationship with those people. Regardless of which side of the case you're on. They may be co-defendants or it may be opposing counsel. That they've gotta be able to take you at your word. They've gotta be able to work with you from one case to the next. And so, burning everything to the ground isn't always a good option.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Unless you're gonna flee the country or something. Then go ahead, have fun. But you might want to come back. So, gotta be careful. So the second part of the book is about more practical considerations for a legal practice. So, what are the most important things that people should be thinking about here? And does this vary at all depending on the type of work environment you're in?



- Jeremy Richter: Probably it does. But, I think the most important thing from the outset is, learning your practice areas. For me, when I started practicing, I was doing almost exclusively, trucking defense litigation. Which involves laws and regulations that, unless you're a trucker, or a trucking lawyer, you'll never encounter or have any reason to know those things. And so, I had to do a lot of, non-billable homework to learn those things so that I could effectively handle those cases. And so I think that's probably gonna be true for whether you're doing medical malpractice, or product liability, or mergers and acquisitions. Then, there's going to be things that you need to know that you don't have any reason that you would know them at this point. And that they're just going to require a lot of effort in your off time or in non-billable time to develop that knowledge so that you can manage your cases like you need to.
- Alison Monahan: For sure. I ended up being a patent litigator and I never took a single IP class in law school. I think almost everyone's gonna get ... I had a background for it, I probably should've taken those classes. But they didn't seem interesting. So I didn't. I remember doing interviews in different firms and talking to people. And they're like, "Remember those car wheels, tires that were blowing up? That's what I do." And it's like, "Okay. If I worked with you, I would know nothing about this. But I would have to get up to speed on it."
- Jeremy Richter: Right. So I had a case where, this tractor trailer caught on fire going down the highway. And it turned out that oil bearings had leaked in the wheels and everything caught fire and just totally burned it up. Well, I don't know anything about wheel bearings. Or didn't, I do now.
- Alison Monahan: Is that a part of the wheel, I guess? Maybe the thing that turns.
- Jeremy Richter: I do some construction defect work. And so, I know a lot more about windows and roofs and things that I never thought I would know. But, you learned along the way, and it takes some effort. And, it can be kind of fun to learn about new things even if you'll never, ever use them again or never need to know it. But, it's just a part of the practice.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah I remember when I was clerking we had some patent case about window frames. And we had the actual piece of the window sitting on my desk. And I really wanted to take it apart to look at it more carefully and the judge would never let me do it.
- Jeremy Richter: From the fire case, I'm looking at it right now, this piece of aluminum that melted because everything that wasn't made of steel just burned up. And there were puddles of aluminum from engine blocks of cars. And everything else under there. So, yeah, I kept that as one of my little trophies.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah I think the one case I did that went to trial, was a hardware patent case about voltage regulators on a chip. Let me tell you, nobody in the courtroom except the two people who were electrical engineers, turned lawyers, had any actual clue what was going on here. But we all had to fake it.
- Jeremy Richter: Well yeah, that's another thing is, people tell you all these things you need to do to keep jury's attention and be interesting. And I even have some of that in this book and on the blog. And, sometimes it's just not very interesting.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, we had some great experts with fascinating ... A friend of mine actually who's a lawyer, who was also working in the firm and just happened to be at this trial was like, "I just feel like I saw Mr. Wizard. I never understood electricity before. These slides are amazing."
- Jeremy Richter: Oh, that's good.
- Alison Monahan: There was a lot of money spent on this trial. We had some good documents.
- Jeremy Richter: That's good.
- Alison Monahan: So, back to practical considerations. What else should people be thinking about besides, basically being really good at the areas that you're practicing in?
- Jeremy Richter: Wait, and I think we've done this a little bit. But, some of it just takes time to learn and to get experience. But, learning your client's business, which I think we hit on already. But, understanding your client's business, which takes time, is another thing that just can help you be a better advocate for them.
- Alison Monahan: And what do you think are some good ways to do that? Can you ask the clients to explain it to you? Or is this something you need to do some sleuthing on, on your own?
- Jeremy Richter: I think probably both of those things. When I got into insurance defense. I had car insurance, but I didn't know what uninsured, under-insured motorist coverage is. And so some of it is stuff you just have to learn and figure out. But there's also things like how insurance companies have to evaluate risk. And why it's really important for my budgets to be accurate or for my risk evaluations in cases to be accurate, because it effects how they do their business. And so, for a long time, and I think a lot of insurance defense lawyers don't understand that...particularly those two things. Budgeting and case evaluations, how it can effect their clients. And so, if you have a good relationship with a client, that's something they want to talk about. And say, "Okay, here's why this is important." Because we all know we have to do it on every case. But I may not have a good understanding of, if I don't do it well or if I don't do it timely, what negatives effects that could have on my client. So, yeah clients want you ... If



you have a good client and a good relationship, they want you to have an understanding of, some of these things we ask you to do seem arbitrary, but here's how they effect me. And so I think that is something that you can have a conversation about.

Alison Monahan: Okay. Interesting. And then the third part of the book you really start talking about this, how to develop your skills and really manage your case load as a young lawyer. So, from your perspective, other than what we just talked about, actually knowing the law. What are the most important types of skills people should be focusing on at this point? There are a lot of different things they could be doing.

Jeremy Richter: Yeah. Writing is really important. And, some schools, in my experience do a better job of teaching this than others. But, something that's taken me a while to figure out is, what do judges want? And judges are mostly your audience. When you're writing a brief, or whatever, you've got to use plain language. You only have a limited amount of time that they're paying attention to what you've written. And so you have to be concise and punchy and get to the point of what you're saying using the plainest language possible. And so writing skills are really important.

I feel like they're something that people who read more tend to have better writing skills. So, while it's not reading necessarily it's the skill that you have to know. The more you read and the higher quality stuff that you're reading, it's going to help you be a better writer just by absorbing all those things.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. Just by osmosis. You at least start to ... I would even sometimes just read briefs and things. Maybe not for fun, but kind of for fun. Just to check them out and see like, "Oh, how does this person do this? Or how does that person do this?" Because I think you can. The great thing about the legal system is a lot of this stuff actually is available. So you can always go back and look at it if you're curious.

Jeremy Richter: That's right. And there's a lot of examples of really bad stuff, too. That you can look at and say, "Okay. This was not good." And that's another thing is, to learn, we have to be good self evaluators. You might get feedback from your partner that you worked for, or your client. But, it's far better for you to be able to look at the work that you're doing and, first of all proof read it. And second of all, say, "Okay, here's what's good about this. Here's what's bad about it." Or, when you do get feedback, that you take the time to internalize and make changes as you go along.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, this is something we're always trying to work on with our bar students. Because, of course everyone says, "I want feedback on my writing." It's like, "We can't be there at the exam with you. You have to learn to do this for yourself,



basically on the fly. That's one of our goals here. That you can evaluate how you're doing. You don't always have to turn to someone else." And it's hard to do.

Jeremy Richter: And it's hard. It is hard. And it has to be intentional. And, that's something, when I started writing this book - and a lot of it was already written and I just had to make it better - is you can't be afraid to look at your own writing and slash and burn some of it.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.

Jeremy Richter: And so that's true of, whether you're learning to ... If you're a litigator, if you're preparing for a voir dire, or opening statements, you have to be really self-effacing and look at that stuff and say, "Okay, here's what went well. Here's what went poorly. And, based on that, here's what I can do differently next time to get a different result." And that's some of the stuff I talk about in the book about doing after action reviews. Where you sit down and figure out.

And one of my partners that I work with, she is prone to saying, "There's the trial you had, the trial you thought you were going to have, and the trial you wish you had."

Alison Monahan: Right.

Jeremy Richter: And that's all really important in a debriefing process. What you can apply to any area of your practice to figure out, what do we need to do differently next time? Or, what did we do well that we need to continue to do?

Alison Monahan: I think that's so important. It's important as a law student, someone taking the bar, and as a lawyer. This iterative process of really looking at, in a deliberative way, what did I do? How did it result? What do I need to do differently? What do I keep? Because some people just throw out everything. And it's like, well you're probably doing something okay. You got the title of the brief correct. Pat yourself on the back here. I think sometimes people just throw out the baby with the bath water. It's like, "I lost at trial so everything we did sucked." Well, that's not really necessarily true. You might've done an amazing job and you got some crazy jury. That's just what happens.

Jeremy Richter: Yeah, sometimes things just go badly.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean things happen. Anyone who's ever gone to trial I'm sure can tell you all kinds of crazy stories about the things that happened. And obviously the more you do it, the more crazy things happen, right?



Jeremy Richter: Yeah. And sometimes you think they're gonna go badly and they don't. We had a trial in October where we just felt the whole time like we weren't connecting with the jury. And everything was going really poorly. And so we were reporting to our client, "hey, this is not good." Yeah. And so, we keep reporting and there's a rep there. And, so everybody's just ready for a really bad result. And then the jury comes back and they gave a verdict for the plaintiff which was, unavoidable, it was gonna happen.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Jeremy Richter: But it was less than we had offered to settle.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Jeremy Richter: And so, we were super excited about that. And, we didn't know-

Alison Monahan: Why?

Jeremy Richter: We didn't know where it came from.

Alison Monahan: Yeah I had a fascinating experience when we were at trial. And we hired the fake jury thing and then, you present them all the exact same evidence, they're all in the same room. And then they split up into different juries. I think we had three different juries and we were recording. And they came to different results. And it was absolutely fascinating to have that video and see how this happened. I'm like, "You all watched the same thing. How can you come out differently on this?" And they just do.

Jeremy Richter: It's amazing. And juries are their own creature. And that's another thing to communicate about clients about is you don't know what a jury's gonna do.

Alison Monahan: Yeah it's totally unpredictable.

Jeremy Richter: That's right. Even when you think you know and you've got everything tucked away nice and neat, you just don't know what a jury's gonna do. And that's a risk that everybody takes going into trial. Both sides take. And that's why greater than 90 percent of cases settle. Is because you just don't know what a jury's gonna do.

Alison Monahan: Yeah I'm pretty convinced by and large that you have to be totally crazy to actually go forward at trial. Just my personal opinion. So finally, before we wrap up, so the final part of the book is really about developing yourself and your practice. So obviously a lot of this section is about marketing. Which, most lawyers dread. Can you share some strategies for actually doing the marketing that you need to do that maybe aren't so terrible?



Jeremy Richter: When I got into this, just kind of dreaded that traditional marketing of going out and wining and dining. And shmoozing. I just hate it. And so, it doesn't fit who I am and what my personality is. And so, I think I talked about this some earlier, that's how I decided to take this different approach of doing a blog, writing a book. That, while it hasn't necessarily ... I can't point to a client and say, "I have this client now because of these things." It has given me greater confidence.

And it's also given me an opportunity to provide valuable material to clients that's relevant to them, that I may not otherwise had if I hadn't been writing on a topic for the blog. Where I can say, "Hey, this just happened in Alabama. It's gonna effect the work that you do, in this way. And, let me give this to you to help you." And so doing things for clients that builds up trust equity is something that I'm a firm believer in. Because, wining and dining is fine but there's no value in that.

Alison Monahan: Right it's like, okay that was a nice dinner. But really, how is this helping me in the long run?

Jeremy Richter: Yeah. But if you can do things for clients that provide them a tangible benefit, then, that's the sort of thing that matters.

Alison Monahan: Right. And being that trusted resource that you were talking about earlier. Even if it's something out of scope of what you would normally do.

Jeremy Richter: Right. And so that's where I try to focus my energy in marketing is, providing a different kind of resource and benefit to them than what they might get from somebody else.

Alison Monahan: Which I think makes sense. And so how do you personally stay current and be sure that you're constantly improving your own practice?

Jeremy Richter: I do a lot of reading and listening to podcasts. That aren't just about law because-

Alison Monahan: I noticed that in your book. You had some outside resources.

Jeremy Richter: Yeah. And that's really important to me because, I try to keep abreast of things in my practice areas too. But it's far more important to me to be thinking about bigger picture items, business generally. Or marketing. Or even just for enjoyment and pleasure. And so I listen to a lot of podcasts and a lot of audio books and just do a lot of reading. Where I'm just getting different stimulation from different places in the market that's giving me ideas and things to think about.



Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And are there any books, other than yours obviously, or podcasts or other resources that you tend to recommend to people who are interested in these topics?

Jeremy Richter: So many books. We can probably do an hour on books that I like.

Alison Monahan: We probably should.

Jeremy Richter: I think that's a great idea. But, there's a couple books that I read on writing that were really good. I included some of these in my book. *Bird By Bird* by Ann Lamott. And Steven King's *On Writing*. Both have just some really solid writing advice. I recently read a book by Donald Miller who also has a podcast called, *Build A Story Brand*. Which has some really good ideas on marketing that I've incorporated. And it's about how we need to put our clients first. I think traditionally in marketing, people felt like it was really important to tell your client how great you were and how great your law firm is. And that's why they should do business with you.

Alison Monahan: When they're really like, "Okay great, what can you do for me?"

Jeremy Richter: Yeah that's exactly right. And so, his book and his podcast both talk a lot about those things and also anything by Malcolm Gladwell, I will read.

Alison Monahan: Yeah I think those are all great. I love the Ann Lamott. I think everyone should definitely read, *Bird By Bird* if they do any sort of writing, ever. If only for the idea of the really terrible first drafts.

Jeremy Richter: Oh, no doubt.

Alison Monahan: Makes everyone feel better. Like, "Oh, she's a really great writer and she struggles with this?"

Jeremy Richter: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: All right, well we're unfortunately running out of time. Two final questions, any final thoughts you want to share? And how can people learn more about you or get in touch with you? And also, I guess, get the book?

Jeremy Richter: Yes, get the book. Last thoughts are, one of the things I write about in the book is, taking care of yourself. And, I think that's really important. It can be overlooked because we are a busy profession that gets wrapped up in the billable hour. And I have to bill so much time a week to justify my existence. That sometimes we can let our personal lives just get out of sorts. And so, that's one thing I try to advocate is take care of yourself. If you have hobbies or passions, don't forget to pursue those.



I know a prominent first amendment lawyer who participates in opera because it's something that he loves. For me, my family, I have a three year old and very soon we will have a brand new baby in the house.

Alison Monahan: Oh, congratulations.

Jeremy Richter: Well thanks, and so, it's really important to me to be there. I get up at five and start working so that, I can spend an hour, an hour and a half working before I go to work. That way I can leave at five every day. And be home to help do dinner and take care of the family and do everything before bedtime and not miss out on those important parts of my life and my family's life. So, self care is really an important part of the profession too.

Alison Monahan: Yeah I think that's always an important point. Because it is so easy to feel like your life is just in these six minute increments. And then you wake up and it's 10 years later and your kids are in middle school or whatever and you're like, "Oh, what happened?" And I think obviously, it's a bigger question too, I think that's such a great point. Well Jeremy thank you so much for joining us.

Jeremy Richter: Yeah. And I think I forgot to answer where they can get the book.

Alison Monahan: How can people find you if they want to learn more about the book or about you or the blog or all those things?

Jeremy Richter: So my blog is my name, JeremyWRichter.com. The book, Building A Better Law Practice, it also has a website - Betterlawpractice.com. It's written in, ideally, six minute increments. So, I know we're really busy. I wrote it in a daily reader format. I kind of like to think of it as, a lawyer devotional. One day at a time, read a topic. They're mostly very practical and implementable to help you just, on a daily basis, be able to improve being a better lawyer. And so, Betterlawpractice.com is a website where that's at. And for the first couple months it will be available exclusively at the ABA website, which is ABAsite.org.

Alison Monahan: Okay great. Well thank you so much for joining us, we really appreciate it.

Jeremy Richter: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: With that, we are unfortunately out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. Because we'd really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. We typically release new episodes on Monday. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at Lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or Alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](http://lawschooltoolbox.com/contact-form) at lawschooltoolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.



RESOURCES:

- [Building a Better Law Practice](#)
- [Podcast Episode 116: Life as a Small Law Firm Associate \(w/Jeremy Richter\)](#)
- [Jeremy W. Richter Blog](#)
- [Listen Like a Lawyer Blog](#)