

# Inter Alia

## State Bar of Michigan Young Lawyers Section

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### Inter Alia

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Have you ever wasted time looking for a client file? Have you ever spent the better part of a day looking for a yellow sticky note that has a phone number you absolutely must have? Have you ever spent hours looking for notes from a client meeting that you know *should* be on the corner of your desk?

The Brits have a wonderful saying for these moments. They call it *faffing about*.

If you answered “yes” to any of the prior questions, here’s some good news. You’re not alone. We all *faff* about, at least to some degree. But the difference between highly-productive attorneys and everyone else is the amount of time spent *faffing*. The more efficient you become, the less time you’ll waste.

The first step to becoming efficient is to clear up the clutter in your life. Clutter is anything that’s not

where it’s supposed to be. Clutter is everywhere – on your desk or in your office, in your e-mail inbox, in your “to be filed” pile, etc. Believe it or not, most of your clutter is stored in your head. Consider all the things you think about everyday – on-going projects at the office and home, commitments you’ve made, communications, projects

yet to be started, meetings, errands, health concerns, upcoming events and on and on.

To handle all the clutter, you need to get clear on what’s most important to you. To prioritize, you need to ask yourself: What’s important for me at work? With my significant other? With my family? With my

friends? Financially? With my health? What else is important? Then ask, what are my priorities among those areas of my life?

For instance, if your two highest priorities are spending time with your family and billing hours at the office, it becomes much less important to spend an hour everyday gabbing at the office with a colleague down the hall. The free legal magazines you’ve saved (which you know you’ll never read) become much less important to store. And there’s certainly no reason to waste time with needless e-mails and phone calls.

Once you have a good understanding of your priorities, you can now do two things that are essential to

time management. The first is to start saying “no” to things that aren’t important. “No” is the most powerful weapon in the time management arsenal. You can say “no” directly or indirectly. Certain situations demand one approach or the other – and there are secrets to success for both.



## Faffing About

By Timothy D. Batdorf

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# Editor's Note

By Alexandra Matish

Another summer has passed. Many of you who are familiar with the Young Lawyers' Section (YLS) know what that means: the start of a new year of programs sponsored by the YLS.

The YLS starts the fall with their annual section meeting at the State Bar of Michigan's Annual Meeting in Lansing. This year's YLS meeting takes place on Thursday, September 30. The Regeana Myrick Outstanding Young Lawyer award will be given out at that time. The Outstanding Young Lawyer award honors the young lawyer who has shown a strong commitment and dedication to public service. I encourage any of you who have made that type of commitment in your career and in your lives to apply.

This fall also will see the return of the popular YLS Financial Planning Seminar and the Race for Justice, as well as the start of a new program, "Legal

Writing for Young Lawyers". Whether they are new or old programs, the YLS' goal has always been to provide quality programming for its members.

This is my last Editor's Note and, coincidentally, one of my last responsibilities as a member of the Young Lawyers Section Council. Before I leave the YLS Council, I wanted to encourage all of you to get involved with the YLS. The YLS is the oldest and largest section of the State Bar of Michigan. I am constantly amazed at how much the YLS offers its members and the community at large.

Programs such as the Imprint Mentoring programs, the Habitat Builds, Outreach Clinic *Pro Bono* Day, and the Holiday Dinners for the Homeless demonstrate the YLS' strong commitment to assisting those who may be underrepresented and often overlooked in society. Programs such as Financial Planning for

Young Lawyers and Alternative Careers for Young Lawyers provide career and life planning and assistance to you, the YLS community. Finally, programs like Winterfest allow young lawyers to meet their fellow young lawyers in a social setting, network, and have a little fun in the process.

If you want to use your law degree to make a difference in someone's life, the YLS has a program for you. If you want to learn how to become financially solvent after years of student loan abuse in law school, the YLS has a program for you. If you want to improve your skills as a lawyer or find a career outside of the law, the YLS has a program for you.

Bottom line: the YLS has so many programs that can benefit you. I hope you, at some point in your career, take advantage of what is out there. I can guarantee you will find it incredibly rewarding.

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## Faffing About

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The second is that you can sort through all the clutter. There are five possibilities for the clutter in your life:

1. trash it (literally or metaphorically);
2. file it for reference;
3. deal with it immediately;
4. deal with it later; or
5. delegate it.

If you decide to deal with it later, you'll need to make sure that you have a system you trust to remind you what needs to be done. For most people, the basics of that system are a project list

and calendar. If you choose to delegate, be sure to have a clear agreement with the person to whom you are delegating so you both know exactly what's expected and by when.

So ask yourself right now: Are you doing your most important work? Do you even know what it is? Do you say "no" when you want to? Do you have a system you trust so that you can empty your head of all its clutter and think about what's truly important to you? Start using these strategies. You'll be gobsmacked by your success.

*Timothy D. Batdorf is the Principal of LawMentor, Inc., a lawyer coaching and consulting company. Tim is a practicing attorney, a trained career coach through the Coaches Training Institute and a licensed trainer of Create the Space Booster Shots, a training program to increase impact, productivity and efficiency. Please contact Tim at 248.585.3043 or [timbatdorf@comcast.net](mailto:timbatdorf@comcast.net) if you are interested in attending a workshop intensive.*