



How Do You Quantify Success?

by Fellows **Jean Kuei**, Partner at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, and **Ashley Wicks**, Partner at Butler Snow LLP

What does career success look like for you?

Jean Kuei: I define career success as finding a profession or job that fulfills one's purpose and passion. Although there will be peaks and valleys in every profession/job, the key is to find true satisfaction during the peaks such that the valleys become much more tolerable. If one's career is not as rewarding as s/he would like, however, it can also be used as a means to achieve a person's true purpose and passion until those two worlds intersect.

Ashley Wicks: I think that career success looks different at different stages of your career, and at different stages of your life. When you are an associate, you are focused on moving up in the ranks towards partnership. I think at some point you have to take a deep breath and figure out if partnership is success to you. For an in-house lawyer, it may be figuring out if you want to take on a general counsel role or if you want to move to the business side.

Currently, career success for me is continuing to develop new relationships and my expertise, and to mentor and develop other lawyers. Career success also means making the time to do those things that I really want to do personally.

How did you set, then and work toward, a specific career goal?

Jean: I have been fortunate enough to be able to consult with a personal "Board of Directors" that knows me well and has my best interests at heart. They hold me accountable and make sure that I am working and living with intention and purpose. Through their wisdom and my own self-reflection, I have been able to put together a career plan that includes progress markers and check-ins to ensure that I remain fulfilled in both my career and personal life.

Ashley: Every year I take some time and think about what I want to accomplish throughout the year. It may be a conference that I want to attend, a new area of practice, or a new client relationship. I write down the steps that I will need to take in order to achieve that goal. Mid-year (usually around my birthday), I gauge where I am with respect to that goal. At the end of the year, I either mark it off of my list as complete, mark it off of my list as no longer a goal, or roll it over to next year's list. Unless the goal requires a substantial amount of time, I try to only include a goal for two years.

What are your suggestions for younger lawyers as they identify and work toward their own career goals?

Jean's Tips:

- Assemble a personal Board of Directors that can help set your career goals and hold you accountable.
- Write down your goals and be intentional about how you will achieve them.
- Self-reflect often, as goals/plans/desires may change.
- Enjoy the journey and make sure that you are taking time for yourself!

Ashley's Tips:

- Take the time to think about your career. Most of the time, as lawyers, we are busy acting and reacting to the demands of our clients, firms, or companies. You need to take the time to think about what you want and the type of career that you want.
- Be honest with yourself. If you are not happy with what you are doing, be honest with yourself. If you are not happy with the people with whom you work, be honest with yourself.
- Identify individuals who are working on the type of matters on which you desire to work. If it is possible to meet with them, ask them for coffee. If it is a high profile person or you do not have a connection to them, you may want to connect with them on LinkedIn and follow them through news articles.
- This is a marathon, not a sprint. You are building a career and not a job, so this takes time.
- Do not be afraid to change course or take risks.
- The ultimate goal is your happiness and not the perceived expectations of others.

2016 Fellow **Jean Kuei** is Partner at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP in Washington, DC, specializing in labor and employment. She advises clients ranging from small businesses to Fortune 50 companies across a wide array of industries. In 2019, she was recognized as a BTI Client Service All-Star, and in 2016, she received the Greater Washington Urban League's President's Award for exemplary legal, community, and pro bono service.

2018 Fellow **Ashley Wicks** is Partner at Butler Snow LLP in the Business and Services and Public Finance groups. She represents qualified active low-income community businesses, leverage lenders, guarantors, source lenders, state credit investors, and community development entities in \$250+ million federal New Markets Tax Credit transactions. Ashley also serves as Treasurer on the Board of Trustees of the Community Foundation of Mississippi.