

Podcasting Makes Me A Better Lawyer

By **Donna DiMaggio Berger** (March 12, 2026)

In this Expert Analysis series, attorneys discuss how their unusual extracurricular activities enhance professional development, providing insights and pointers that translate to the office, courtroom and beyond. If you have a hobby you would like to write about, email expertanalysis@law360.com.

The first thing podcasting taught me was to stop talking.

As lawyers, we are trained — conditioned, really — to fill silence. We explain. We persuade. We advocate. We anticipate the next question and answer it before it is asked. Silence, in our world, often feels like weakness or uncertainty.

However, when I launched my podcast in 2021, I learned quickly that silence can be powerful. A pause can invite clarity. And listening — really listening — can reveal more than any carefully prepared argument.

What began as a creative outlet and professional passion project ultimately makes me a better attorney, leader and counselor. Not because podcasting made me more articulate — I already had plenty of practice there with webinars, panel discussions and keynote speeches — but because it fundamentally changed how I listen, how I ask questions and how I connect with people.



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Why Lawyers Need Something Outside the Law

The legal profession rewards intensity, precision and endurance. Those traits are valuable, but they can also narrow an attorney's field of vision. Many lawyers define themselves almost entirely by their work, and over time, that singular focus can dull creativity, patience and perspective. Burnout doesn't always arrive as exhaustion; sometimes it shows up as rigidity and repetition.

I didn't start podcasting to become a better lawyer. I started podcasting because I was curious about people and their stories beyond the typical community association realm where I practice.

I have asked my podcast guests about their personal and professional interests, how they navigate conflict and what trends excite and frighten them in their respective industries. I wanted to find a new space that was unscripted, conversational and human. What I found was a laboratory for skills that law school doesn't teach, but should.

From Legal Advocate to Podcast Host

Hosting a podcast is deceptively simple. You invite someone to speak, you ask questions, and you let the conversation unfold. In reality, it requires discipline, humility and preparation of a different kind. You must research without scripting. You must guide without

dominating. And you must remain fully present, even when the conversation goes somewhere unexpected.

Early on, I realized that my legal instincts worked against me. I was too quick to respond, too eager to clarify, too focused on where the conversation should go. Podcasting forced me to unlearn some habits that served me well in my legal practice, but not in conversational dialogue. Over time, those lessons followed me back into my legal practice.

The Art of Listening — Really Listening

Podcasting sharpened my ability to listen without interrupting or prejudging. When a guest is speaking, my job is not to prepare my next question while they are talking; it is to absorb what they are saying, notice what they hesitate over, and hear what they don't say.

I also learned that the tone and cadence of my voice can elicit even greater information from clients, experts and opposing counsel. Client meetings have changed since I took up podcasting. Clients don't always lead with their real concern. Sometimes it is buried beneath frustration, fear or embarrassment. Learning to sit comfortably in silence, to allow a client to finish a thought fully, often reveals the true issue — and leads to me crafting a better legal solution.

In board meetings, that same skill allows me to read the room more effectively. Who is uneasy? Who is disengaged? Who wants to speak but doesn't feel safe doing so? Podcasting trained me to pick up on those cues, and to respond thoughtfully rather than reactively.

Asking Better Questions

Lawyers pride themselves on answers. Podcasting taught me the value of better questions. On the podcast, the most compelling moments rarely come from the questions I planned in advance. They come from the follow-up: "Tell me more about that," or "What made that moment so difficult?" Those questions invite depth rather than defensiveness.

In my legal practice, this has transformed how I approach conflict. Instead of leading with conclusions, I ask questions that encourage reflection. Instead of assuming motives, I explore context. This approach often diffuses tension and leads to more productive discussions — especially in emotionally charged community association disputes where personalities and politics can overshadow the legal issues.

Discussing Complex Issues Without Talking Down

Podcasting also improved my ability to translate complex concepts for a nonlegal audience. My listeners include board members, managers, owners and professionals who want clarity, not legal jargon.

If I cannot explain an issue clearly on the podcast, I probably don't understand it well enough myself. That discipline has made me a more effective attorney. Clients do not need a lecture on statutory interpretation; they need to understand their options and risks in plain language. Podcasting reminded me that clarity is not oversimplification, it is mastery.

Letting Others Shine

One of the most humbling lessons of podcasting is learning to step back. As the host, my role is not to be the star. When I have guests discussing topics in my wheelhouse, it is my

job as the podcast host to create space for my guests to share their expertise and experiences. That requires confidence, restraint and trust. As an aspiring law firm leader, that lesson has been invaluable.

Effective leadership cannot be about controlling every conversation or having the last word. It's about elevating others, recognizing strengths, and guiding outcomes without dominating the process. Podcasting reinforced that leadership can be collaborative without being passive.

Being Mindful

Podcasting demands presence. You cannot multitask, as tempting as multitasking can be in our busy lives. You cannot check emails or texts in the midst of taping an episode. You must be fully engaged.

That level of focus has spilled into my professional life in meaningful ways. I am more intentional in meetings. I am more aware of how I show up. I am more comfortable being myself rather than performing a role. It also reminded me that preparation doesn't mean scripting every outcome. It means being ready to adapt. In law, as in podcasting, the best results often come from flexibility rather than rigidity.

Practical Takeaways for Lawyers

You do not need a podcast to reap these benefits. But you do need something outside the law that activates different skills — creativity, curiosity, empathy or reflection.

My suggestions would be to choose a hobby that:

- Requires you to listen more than you speak;
- Challenges your long-held instincts;
- Forces you to be present;
- Reminds you that growth doesn't only happen at your desk.

Consistency matters more than intensity. You do not need to be exceptional at your hobby; you just need to show up. Every episode of my podcast "Take It To The Board" begins with a conversation, but ends with insight — often unexpected.

The same is true in my legal practice now. I listen more. I ask better questions. I leave more space. And in doing so, I have become not just a better advocate, but a better legal adviser.

Ironically, the hobby I pursued outside the law brought me closer to what law, at its best, is meant to be: a human profession grounded in understanding, judgment and trust.

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