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When One Door Closes ...

Skills and Professional Development



This is my last article as a regular columnist for the *Docket*. For the person I was six years ago, this would be a sad occasion. But I have grown tremendously as a lawyer and an author in that time, which is allowing me to walk away from this gift and amazing opportunity with more than I ever would have imagined.

I remember clearly the day I received the email from the Docket's previous managing editor. She simply stated that the magazine would be making some changes and that she admired my take on things and wondered if I would be interested in writing a regular column on women and leadership. That meant 10 columns per year with a regular production deadline. Writing a regular column was not something that I had done before and, honestly, the thought of committing to that scared me almost to the point of paralysis.

All kinds of thoughts ran through my head. I was beyond excited, but truth be told, I was filled with fear and trepidation. Who was I to say anything about leadership? Who would want to read what I wrote? And where would the ideas come from month after month? My husband and younger sister convinced me that the words would come if I would simply get out of my head and say "yes."

Initially, I don't think I had a vision for the column but imagined that I would write for a year and then move on to something else. Fortunately, that year turned into six years of ideas and columns that I believe have edified the ACC membership and Docket readers worldwide, as well as helped me solidify my thoughts and philosophy surrounding leadership.

You've no doubt had similar experiences where something you've been doing has come to an end, whether by your own choice, someone else's, or the original design. Everything eventually comes to an end; how we embrace the ending is just as important as how we embraced the beginning.

At the start, you may have been filled with glee and anticipation about all the possibilities. But when it comes to endings, we tend to see things differently, particularly when an ending is not something we were expecting. But the beauty of endings, like beginnings, is that they open us to new possibilities. It's easy to fall into a comfortable space and forget that growth is an important part of life. While we can grow in things we've mastered, it's minimal. However, the potential for growth is magnified, exponentially even, when we are outside our comfort zones. Separating from the Docket is my opportunity to, as author Gary Cardone would say, "10X" my growth.

I'm not suggesting that you need to leave your job or company to grow, but rather I'm suggesting that you examine where your career is, whether you have traded continued growth for comfort, and whether the things you really want require you to step outside your comfort zone. You can grow where you are by doing something different than what you are currently doing. You can take on more challenging projects or explore how to make a difference or impact in your department by stepping into a leadership role. That doesn't necessarily mean management, but it does mean exploring how you can be of service to the next generation of in-house counsel both inside and outside your organization. As you grow, you have a deeper well from which to draw upon for your current role.

Remember that to fully be who you are, you must let go of who you were, which is the very essence of change. Nothing is as sure to happen as change. You can accept that change or fight against it and watch the change that is bound to happen leave you behind. Instead of being stuck in the past, embrace that open door to the future, and walk confidently into what life has for who you're evolving into.

I don't know what the future holds as it relates to my writing, but I know that everything I've gained

from my years of writing for the Docket has prepared me for this next phase. There are audiences outside of the law that will require me to stretch in order to connect with them.

As I step into my new chapter, I want to encourage you to continue exploring and growing so that you can step into your greatness as a lawyer, a team member, a leader, and whatever other roles are before you

[Whitnie Wiley](#)



Former ACC Docket Columnist

Whitnie Wiley was a long-time columnist for the *ACC Docket*, where she wrote the Lead the Way

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