

Senioritis: Diagnosis and Treatment

I. Two Weeks More and I'm Free! But how can I possibly last two more weeks??

You've landed your dream job and you're a mere two weeks away from leaving your current firm, taking that tropical vacation, and then making a fresh start at your new position. You feel exuberant, on top of the world, like you could do anything. There's a bounce in your step and a playful smile hovering around your mouth as you begin cleaning out your office with unleashed enthusiasm. You've got Radiohead's new album on and you're making rim shots into the industrial sized trash can that would make Lamar Odom weep. The world is yours.

That is, until your intercom buzzes and suddenly your play time is interrupted by a junior partner needing some research done ASAP on a case you've already sent to the file room. Crashing back to earth, you sigh, push aside the legal detritus that's accumulated onto your desk, and sign on to Westlaw. You've got senioritis, and you've got it bad.

Senioritis is a completely normal affliction that varies in degree; it's power over you is directly affected by a number of factors such as (a) the excitement you have for your new job; (b) your desire to leave your current position; (c) the emotional roller coaster of your job search; (d) the fabulousness of your so-close-you-can-almost-hear-the-waves-vacation; and (e) the fact that you may be just plain worn out.

Continuing to do strong work in a job that you are ready to cast off is extremely challenging. Unless engaged in a trial or a deal that you've been working on for months, you're more than likely to fall victim to senioritis. Senioritis is an affliction that results in feelings of ennui towards your normal routine coupled with a galloping excitement about what the next job/adventure will bring. But not to fear, there is hope! The important thing to do with senioritis is to diagnose it then treat it. Diagnosis is easy. Treatment takes some effort.

II. Part One: Diagnosing Senioritis

Ask yourself the following questions and any number of affirmative responses is a likely indication that you have it.

1. Has a certain malaise come over your attitude to current tasks?
2. Are you (unpleasantly) surprised when called upon and expected to engage in rigorous critical thinking and/or brain numbing document review?
3. Does your lunch time actually resemble a small party? That is, do you gather friends together, frequent a place with real silverware and perhaps enjoy an adult beverage?
4. Do you go to the gym when not reveling in special lunchtime parties?
5. Do you come in at 10:00 am?
6. Leave at 5:00 pm?

Now that we've established the diagnosis, let's discuss treatment.

III. Treating Senioritis



The important thing to keep in mind when treating senioritis is that it's temporary, and, generally, harmless. However, to ensure that there is no damage done to either your reputation or your networking relationships, bear in mind that it is your goal to leave your current firm with well-wishers and potential business contacts. You want to be missed. Not shown the door.

To do this, we recommend keeping in mind the following guidelines as you make your way towards the finish line.

1. Remember the original excitement that you had when you accepted your current position. At one point in time, it was your dream job.
2. Remember that your current firm invested in you and you developed your current, marketable skills under their tutelage.
3. Remember that you are still being paid. While supervisors understand and anticipate a certain amount of slacking off, it's very important to complete the tasks that you've been assigned and to do them well.
4. Remember that "this too shall pass." Senioritis is infamous for the death grip it can have over its victims, but again, it's only temporary. You're going to get through that last brief, last depo, last review of a purchase and sale agreement. Just hang in there!
5. Make the rounds. Now that you have some free time, use it to your best advantage. Pop in to offices, make some small talk. Chances are that people have been talking about your departure so beat them to the punch.
6. Thank people. Be sure to make your gratitude known to all the people that you've worked with during your time with the firm. Practice groups are like little colonies and it can be a difficult time when one of the members leave. Some folks may be taking on more work to cover you and a recognition of that fact goes a long way.
7. Be sensitive. While you are now starting a fresh chapter in your life, others are left behind slogging away. So, while a certain level of excitement is expected, be careful not to go overboard. Firms have feelings too. No tap-dancing on the conference table at your last calendar meeting.
8. Be proud. You've obviously done a terrific job at your current position which propelled you into the new one. Take a little time and think about all that you've accomplished. Remembering your achievements can also help any nervousness and fear about the next step. But that's another article.....