

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host Melissa Shanahan

I'm Melissa Shanahan, and this is *The Law Firm Owner Podcast*, Episode #176.

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Melissa Shanahan: Hi, everyone. Welcome to this week's episode. I am pumped that I have Aimee the Attorney here, Aimee Gromowsky. Hi.

Aimee Gromowsky: Hello, Melissa.

Melissa: Oh my gosh, I'm really thrilled that you came on. So, thank you for being willing.

Aimee: Absolutely. You can't see my smile, but I'm smiling ear to ear.

Melissa: Okay, well, before we get into what we're going to talk about today, will you share with everyone a little bit about yourself, where you are, your practice?

Aimee: Yes, absolutely. Aimee the Attorney is a law firm that helps people. We do traffic tickets, we do estate planning. I've got big dreams about it. But I am from Kansas City, Missouri, where I now practice; I have my law license in Kansas and Missouri. I am married and have three teenagers. Almost an empty nester; just have one left at home. And I absolutely love Kansas City, I'm its biggest booster. Will probably be its mayor one day.

I just love everything about this place. It's so beautiful, right now. It's the Fall and the colors are changing. We're getting that Christmas in the air. You just can't find a bigger booster than me for Kansas City. I have served on the Kansas City... I currently serve on the Kansas City election board, as appointed by the governor of Missouri.

Previously served on the Jackson County Sports Authority, as appointed by the governor. And then, previously thank that, served on the Kansas City Parks and Recreation board. Very involved in politics here in Kansas City, and just really like to have my thumb on the pulse of everything that's happening.

Melissa: That's so, so great. Yeah, you are all up in everything. You're also all up in Mastery Group, which I'm super pumped about.

Aimee: Yes, I, you know, I think being a solo... And I've been a solo now for 15 years, you don't really have that sense of community. And pre-COVID I sort of built that sense of community with my office mates; the people that I office shared with, in downtown Kansas City. Post-pandemic brought everything home, and did the lease there, and have built my team to be completely virtual.

But I love people, I love community, and Mastery Group is just a great way for me to be in community with people, and learn from them, and be with them, and support them, and have them support me. After I graduated from college. I did two years as missionary work; one year in Cincinnati, and one year in Chicago. And one of the greatest parts of that, in addition to helping people, was that we lived in community with other people that were doing the same kind of work we were doing.

I just made the greatest, best, lifelong friends in those communities, people that I cherish with and are my great confidants to this day. There was a great focus on building community when I was part of that program. And I have carried it with me everywhere I've gone. It's important to me. So, I love Mastery Group.

Melissa: Hmm. Well, Mastery Group loves you. And I mean that in more ways than one, and we'll talk about that. You joined Mastery Group a little over a year ago, I think. You were involved with Velocity work before that, through Sprints. But Mastery Group is what you joined; I think it's September 2021. It has just been such a privilege to work with you since

then. I'll let you share some of the things you shared with me before I pushed record, in a bit.

But here's what I want to say, and here's why I wanted Aimee to come on. We are constantly trying to figure out how to make sure that this program is useful. The most useful program possible for the law firm owners that join. Now, a lot of that is nuts and bolts, and numbers and data. And then there is time, you know, how you manage your time and how you move through time.

And, there's community. I think there's more than just what I mentioned, but those three things matter, in terms of you making progress towards where you really want to go. And, Aimee has just embraced all of them in a really great way. When I say embrace all of them, it's not about perfection. Like, there's no such thing as; she's doing everything perfectly, and that's why I'm having her on the podcast.

No, and nobody does. It's more about, she keeps showing up. And she'll have weeks or months that, you know, she disappears and she gets really busy. And then, she comes back. There are times that have been really hard, and you've been really open within the community, and you're willing to share some of the hard stuff. And then, there's times that you just are floored by yourself, like floored by your progress.

So, you've been really great to have on the journey, and been such a strong example for everyone in the group, of what this looks like. This is just what it looks like. It doesn't matter what level your firm is. The ups and downs, the ebbs and flows, are always going to be there. Your commitment to the process is the thing that makes this progress really happen.

I would love to have you share a bit about that. But I don't want to keep going without everyone listening, understanding. The other reason I'm having her on, is she approached me with an idea to implement a community call once a week, that was meant to be a place where people could come and do their Monday Map/Friday Wrap together.

So, she facilitates that. And, I'll let you explain what those calls looks like. But basically, those calls have been a hit. People love coming to those. It forces them to do the thing that they want to do, but they keep pushing off. And it's been a really huge help, I think, for members. Do you want to riff on anything I said, basically?

Aimee: Well, flattery will get you everywhere, Melissa. So, thank you for saying those nice things about me. Okay, so I looked up... I came to a Smith AI podcast that was happening, which they were putting on. Smith AI is a telephone answering service. On Wednesday, February 17, 2021, I was invited and signed up for Melissa's workshop about Monday Map/Friday Wrap. I was very taken in.

I think, I had probably dabbled in reading James Clear, where I knew she was taking some of this from; where I knew you were taking this from. And, I got to work. I looked in my Monday Map folder, and my first Monday Map, so that was February 17th. My first Monday Map was March 5th. And, with the exception of about three weeks, I have done a Monday Map since March 5th.

Melissa: Do you want to explain to everybody, in your words... I mean, I definitely have podcasts on it, and people who listen to this they know what I think it is. What is Monday Map/Friday Wrap? How would you explain that to somebody?

Aimee: Monday Map / Friday Wrap is a tool to use to plan out your week, so that it coincides with what you're wanting, with your goals. So, you are, you know, threading out things that need to be done, in terms of cases. But that's not the only thing that is going on the map, the goals, the Rocks, the other things, the revenue goals. Sorry about my dog.

Melissa: So that's what... I don't know if people really understand, and I don't know, if I do a very good job of explaining it. Monday Map / Friday Wrap is a useful tool, period. But it's on steroids if you do strategic planning. Because if you do strategic planning, that means you have goals

you're shooting for. You've thought through the vision of what you're creating.

So, I guess that's first; vision of what you're creating. Then you have actually, specific goals, numbers to shoot for. Then you have Rocks, which are key priorities for the quarter. That you're saying, this is what I have to do, in order to be on track for my goals. And if you have all of that planned and mapped out, then it comes down to what you do every day.

And so, Monday Map / Friday Wrap, to your point, can be a tool to make sure that how you're spending your time coincides with where you want to go; coincides with your Rocks and your goals. And if people don't have Rocks and goals, and they haven't really thought about planning, Monday Map can still be very useful and increase your productivity. But it's not going to move the needle in the same way.

It does feel like there's something really special about macro planning versus micro planning, which is the Monday Map. And if you don't have both, you might be missing something.

Aimee: I love that. I mean, okay, so I was doing the Monday Map, and I participated in what Velocity Work was offering as one-off Sprints at that time. That was, you paid for consultation with a group and Melissa every day, every work day, I think maybe it was four days a week, but maybe it was five days a week.

Okay, and we get on we say what we're going to do for the next day. And then, we get back on the next day and we report whether we did it or not. And then, we report on the lesson learned. Which apparently, I have trouble learning any lessons, because that really is the most challenging part of Sprints, and/or any sort of asking.

Melissa and Velocity Work will constantly ask you, whether it's a weekly check-in by email, what were your lessons learned? It's always very challenging for me to come up with what exactly that is. But that's how I

intersected with Melissa first, was to be at the Sprint. So, I didn't know about Rocks and revenue goals and other things. But I'm still doing my Monday Map.

I talked to Melissa, and finally said, "You know what? I gotta join, I need help." I joined the day before the September quarterly planning, and so...

Melissa: But you can't do that anymore, everybody. Like, there's an open enrollment window. Back then, you could just join whenever you wanted to join. So, Aimee did.

Aimee: And so, my husband, who was a printer, I was like; here's the PDF, print this off, I gotta get this ready for tomorrow. And, I was completely lost. I mean, obviously, could not have done that... I mean, it was meaningful to me, because I was getting to meet other members, and to kind of get a handle on it. But it wasn't until I had been immersed in the program.

That December quarterly planning was so meaningful to me, because I really had a hold of the finances, in terms of being able to figure out; hey, what could I make? And how would I pay a staff member or two? And really having a hold of my finances, and feeling confident in talking about my finances. When I say finances, I mean, the firm finances, you know, and I'm still not a master at it.

But every day, I am learning more about the money that makes the firm work. And for many years, I mean, like until September of 2021, and I opened my firm in May of 2007, it was sort of like, take a look at the balance, and let's see what we can do. I mean, you know, there wasn't any sort of grasp about what I needed to make the money I wanted to.

And so, I mean, it's a little embarrassing to say that, but I don't care, whatever. I mean, I'm here now. And anyway, so that's kind of a long way around of saying, Monday Map... I mean, my Monday Map is very evolved now, in terms of like, how it's done, you know. There are categories, and

it's on a sheet. It can be done on the, you know, just cut and paste, copy the Google Doc™.

But I remember when I first started, I would get out the printout every time and just read through it, because it's like, I want to learn how to do this, I want to know how to do this. So, it is an extremely useful tool.

As far as the Monday Map gatherings, we had done it independently, not behind Melissa's back, but I had asked to several other members of the group that I had grown close to. And so, it's weird, because you're saying community, but it is all on screen. At this point, we had only known each other through the screen. But you're sharing things.

You're sharing things in our Tuesday meetings. You're sharing things at the quarterly retreat planning. You're getting to know people, know about their families, know about their lives. You know, we chit-chat in the background of the Zoom® meetings. And so, we had gathered together to start doing our Monday Map.

Because one of my biggest realizations on Monday Map, is you have to put time in your calendar to do Monday Map. And so, it took me a little bit to get that. So, I started with Theta and Aaron, just meeting with them. And then, we ended up growing that group a little bit. And then, Melissa and I, decided to do it as part of Mastery Group.

We have such a nice group on Friday mornings.

Melissa: It's called Monday Map Power Hour, is what we call it.

Aimee: Yeah, with Aimee Gronkowski. I giggle every time I get that email.

Melissa: So, when they come to that, what can people expect?

Aimee: So, when you come, basically, we do a little bit of socializing at the beginning. There will always be links to information about Monday Map for people that are into it. A lot of times, I will take something from either the

Mastery Group meeting on Tuesday, or the podcast on Tuesday, like riff a little bit on that, sort of. A couple of weeks ago, you challenged us during the Monday Map Mastery Group call; what is one thing that you can change?

So, I've been harping on that, during the Power Hour; what is the one thing you're going to change, just for these 90 days, to make it better? And that happens for about eight minutes. Then, we put our heads down. And then, we come back, with about eight minutes left in the hour, talk about what our struggles were. Sometimes we talk about what we're going to be doing that weekend. But it is building community. During the hurricane, you know, we're checking in with our Florida people, you know, finding out if everybody's okay. So basically, it's work time, but you get a little socialization, have talky on either side of that, of that work time.

Melissa: Yeah. Yeah. And I think, so basically, after the first eight minutes, and when your head is down, it's really doing Monday Map. Getting the process of Monday Map that we teach; the brain dump, breaking things down into smaller steps, putting times next to each thing, and putting it on the calendar. Yeah. And everybody has a different flavor of how they do that.

I mean, it's the principles that need to be stuck to; I don't have your perfect blueprint of a calendar. You all can come up with that. But that's your space to work on it, so that you're planning your next week. So, when you hit Monday, you can hit the ground running with your plan. Instead of finding your footing in the week, so to speak. Nobody could see her, but she was shaking her head no, like, who does that? Finding your footing in the week?

That's how most people do it. And you used to, but now that's not your norm. Imagine how painful that would be, if you started, you slammed into every week without really understanding exactly what your map was. That would be a very different experience than what you've had for so long now, because you've been doing it.

Aimee: Absolutely. It's so interesting to think about, too, how you sort of start with the week, you know, Monday Map week, and then we're doing quarterly planning. And for me, that has morphed into; hey, you know, what is 2023 and 2024 gonna look like? And what am I going to make them look like? What am I going to take control of? And not just let things happen to me, in terms of employee reviews, or just these things that have to be done.

And that, you know, yes, they go on the Monday Map. But what if they were on the yearly map? We do employee reviews the third Wednesday of the, you know, whatever it may be. And so, sort of my mind now, is going more to; hey, what are the things that can get on the calendar next week, next year? So, that it can go smooth. As well as, just a Monday map.

Melissa: Yeah, absolutely. That's so, so good. Yeah, before we pushed record, she was telling me, you know, her schedule is getting tight in a good way. Like, yeah, it's getting tight, and you're making plans for 2023. So, that you make sure you have the right space carved out. And I mean, that sounds good in theory, and I know people do that, but I really, it is crazy, the level to which people do it inside of Mastery Group; it's different.

It's easy to be flippant about planning for next year. Where, yeah, I'm going to set aside this next year. But really, if you had a list of things that you set aside, every year; you do annual planning and you block it off. There's a list of things that you block off. I think that's a different level, that's really setting yourself up for success. So, you do have all the stuff blocked, what matters.

Like you just said, reviews, for example, reviews, meetings that, you know, are just a part of what happens or need to happen, bigger meetings, or retreats with your team, and then vacation time or time off. And even if you don't even know where you're going, it doesn't matter, just consistently blocking space in your schedule. I really, really like how seriously people take it, because it makes a difference in the quality of your life when you do.

Aimee: I think that the litigators in our group, sometimes are like; I can't do Monday Map, I have court. And, I wouldn't call myself a litigator, but I do have court all the time. And I do think there is a way to Monday Map for all different areas of the practice of law. It is not, you know, hey, this is for estate planners, or hey this is for criminal defense attorneys.

It's funny, because when you kind of hear the new people coming in, and they're like, well, yeah, but I got my court calendar. And it's like, yeah, but it can be the same. And they don't really believe you until they start doing it. And then, they're like; okay, I'm on board.

Melissa: It's a good point. It comes up consistently. Every new like, cohort of new members that comes in, there's some, you know, there's at least a couple litigation attorneys there. And now, especially... And I'm so glad I stuck to it. I feel like at its core, we are truth seekers. That's just it. I care about facts. I do care about feelings, but you have to have the facts. And it's so easy for people to feel like they don't have space, or feel like this isn't an option for them. That is a choice.

So, you know, a year and a half, two years ago, I was working with litigators, one of them being a private client, and he crushed it. He did Monday Map better and tighter, and was more productive, in terms of producing results outside of court. And he didn't have, I mean, he had like 20 to 25 hours a week in court, at that time. Then, people who are transactional attorneys practicing Monday Map.

And, it just blew this myth up; that if you are a litigation attorney, you can't practice Monday Map. It's going to look different than an estate planning attorney, but you still can take the reins. It's just about taking the reins, and taking control over what you have control over. That's what Monday Map is, and having discipline to honor that plan. So, I know, I agree. If any of you listening to this are litigation attorneys, it's easy to just throw the baby out with the bath water.

And I'm telling you, that's not how this needs to go. If you want to take more control over your time, then this is a really good process to follow. Okay, Aimee, so enrollment window is... When this airs, I think it will be the day after this airs, enrollment opens for people who are on the waitlist; they get first dibs, basically. And so, I want to walk through just some of the events and things that we do inside of Mastery Group.

And if you have commentary on any of them, feel free to give it; if you don't, that's fine, too. So, it's all centered around Quarterly Strategic Planning. That's a full day, it's virtual once a year. We have an in-person option, but it's virtual. You get a workbook in the mail, if you want, you can choose that. And, some worksheets that can be helpful. And now, we have prep calls for that.

So, we have a data call that can be helpful, just to make sure you have the data that you need before you come, or that you know what you should have before you come. We have a new member onboarding call, that's way better, just because it's evolved over time. So, all of that, then you get to your first retreat. You do the things we said, think through your vision, you set goals, you do Rocks, there's some other helpful stuff in the workbook.

And then, every single week, we have a call, every Tuesday. You have, after your retreat, you submit your Rocks, they go into a tracker, and one of the weekly coaching calls every month, sometimes two, is dedicated to giving a status update of progress on your Rocks. So, we have a couple of fields. And, that's a fun call; I always feel like it's fun. It's where everybody gets down to business. You have to report in if you're doing something or not, really.

We can talk through barriers; it's not about shaming you, if you haven't made progress, it's about helping you. And then, the other Tuesdays are topic focused. There's always a Monday Map coaching call. There's always a Result Cycle coaching call, which is a framework, we teach. Rock checkin. Sometimes Calendar Planning calls, for further out. And then, we go through the quarter.

And then, we start again. We do strategic planning again, for the next 90 days. That's the gist. There are other perks, like, Monday Map Power Hour is a perk for people; they can come to. We try to think of more useful things we can continue to add in. But of all of the elements, and that's the cadence, what's your commentary on any of it?

Aimee: Well, I think it could be, as described, a little overwhelming to someone. And just to say that it is a little overwhelming, because there are going to be people that are further along on the journey, in terms of knowing what they want their firm to look like. You know, having a clearer focus. And for me, that was hard, because it was just like; well, dang, I'm never going to be there, you know. It will be so hard to get there, where they are. I don't feel that way anymore. But all those things just take time.

And although I would love just to like snap my fingers and do like, you know, work and have the law firm of my dreams. It's just a work in progress. And, I mean, I don't know if there is an endpoint. I mean, maybe there's an endpoint, if I could sell my law firm. That would be, I guess, the endpoint. But don't be overwhelmed by that. Show up for everything. I was always so shocked that people signed up and did not come to the quarterly planning.

It's shocking to me, just because it's like, it's the best day of the quarter; no, I'm kidding. But it's a really good day, a great day that could just really skyrocket your vision, and what you want to do, and how you want to live your life. And skipping that day, and yeah, you could watch it on Zoom, for sure, you can watch everything. But there's something about being in that moment, and sharing that moment with everyone, and listening to other people.

Because as varied as our practices are, we're all still just running a business. And, we're needing help in that area. So, anyway, it's always shocking to me that people don't show up to this quarterly planning retreat. But also showing up for the Tuesday meetings. And just by osmosis, I was so, like, about two weeks ago, there was a Monday Map call on Tuesday.

You know, that was going to be the topic. And I'm thinking; what could I learn from that? I mean, come on, you know? I'm teaching a class about it.

But I went; and boy, oh boy, you bet I did learn something. Not only from Melissa, but from other people that were participating in the call. It was a very meaningful call to me. It was an hour out of my day, and you know, will change the trajectory of my law firm. And so, now, I've always been somebody that shows up. Like, my aunt used to call me, "You're such a joiner," because I went to law school and I joined everything. You know, I joined all the stuff I was interested in.

And I do show up for things, maybe some people aren't like that. But I would hope that if you join Mastery Group that you would come to everything. It is meaningful, and yes, it seems like; oh, gosh, that's an hour there and a whole day. It's not much. For what you get out of it, is extremely satisfactory and gratifying. And anyway, I hope to see, whoever's listening, your faces on the call, at some point?

Melissa: Yeah, I do think... So, what you said is really true, about it could sound overwhelming. As you said that, I was like, yeah, I did just feel like I rattled off a lot of things. And people would be like, whoa, lady, I don't have time for that. But it really isn't. A, you're guided. I mean, we're only getting better and better at that. Our onboarding is so, so much better right now than it used to be, because we gave a ton of attention to it this summer.

So, like, onboarding is easier. And yeah, you gotta get your feet wet, but you're guided. It's not like you're just thrown into things. And on an ongoing basis, it's an hour a week. Every quarter, it's a day. But set it aside, you know? And Monday Map Power Hour, you should do that anyway. So, you're either going to do it on your own, or you can show up with people and do it; doesn't matter.

And the retreat, I will say... I mean, yes, Aimee, you show up. There's like, probably 30% of members or so, that they show up all the time. And, there's a chunk of people that don't. When I check in with them, they're like;

no, no, it's going well. But they really do rely on the recordings, and they're doing great, you know, so it doesn't...

Aimee: My path is different. All of ours are.

Melissa: Yeah, you don't have to be just like Aimee. But I will say the more you engage, the more you get out of it. It'll be a much richer experience, because you're able to connect with others, and hear their examples, and learn from what they're going through, and their lessons learned will apply to you. So, I think there's a lot of value in taking advantage of the community.

And every time I talk to a member, and I'm not asking for this information, but if we start talking about the group, the appreciation for the kind of group that it is, blows me away. I was just talking to somebody last week, and she was like; I look forward to interacting with this group. It really fills me up and makes me feel a part of something. I get quality information there. There's no judgement in this space, at all.

I just think that this is... Like, there isn't another group out there like that. And I'm a part of a lot of groups. That made my heart just swell up. Because at the end of the day, like you just said a minute ago, everybody's just trying to run a business. You know, everybody's at different levels. And it really doesn't matter your levels. I mean, like we have a couple of members doing over a million, in the group. And we have a couple that just have hit their 100K.

You know, everybody's on their own journey. And the way that we facilitate the work meets you where you are, and you reflect on where you are and what's next. And then, around you, is support, and community, and examples of what's possible. It's a really special place, and it's people like you that make it special. So, thank you. Yeah.

So, if you are someone who would like to talk to a peer about the group; you're thinking about it and you have questions. You're not sure, and you

want to hear someone's experience. Aimee has offered time on her calendar to chat, like, 20 minutes.

You can ask her any questions you want. And I think you could tell; Aimee is a straight shooter. So, she'll tell you exactly what she thinks. And I've made it very clear to her that she doesn't need to feel... It's not a rah-rah call. I just want her to be able to share her experience with people who are curious, and are thinking about it, and don't know if it's the right fit. And maybe after talking to Aimee, it's not a good fit, but at least you know.

Aimee: I'm sorry, I'm interrupting this part. But I just want to say, that I've have been skeptical of business coaches my whole life...

Melissa: I forgot that you, that it's true.

Aimee: My whole business life. And thought, you know, why would I need a business coach? If I made enough money, I could afford one. But I, you know, was such in like, anyway, just a different space. And have tried another lawyer-focused coaching and didn't feel like it was for me. But anyway, so I am skeptical of the whole business coach thing. Because it's like, well, why can't you just do it? Like, you have a law degree.

And well, the fact of the matter is, there are people that can get the law degree, go out and hang their shingle, and bing-bang they are ready to roll and don't need it, the business coach. And then, there are the people that are self-selecting into Mastery Group, that are willing to be like; I need help with this. I need help with this.

And being able to, either use the tools that Velocity Work offers and/or, you know, communing with your other members of being like; yeah, I should do that. Yes, I should take that into advice. Because sometimes business coaching can feel like; oh my god, I'm busy with this business, how can I do this extra layer? And I just think that the extra layer is so beneficial, and just runs down to the business in such a positive way that it's okay.

So, if people are skeptical of business coaches, I'm raising my hand; me too. But I am not skeptical of Melissa and this program. And if you ever wanted to look at my numbers, you could take a look and see where I was pre-Melissa, and where I am post-Melissa; and it is a massive difference. And only getting better and bigger; the things that I want, desire. So anyway, I've kind of broken in the middle of that. But if you're skeptical of business coaching, I get it.

Melissa: Yeah, I really, I don't know why I hate the term business coach as a way to describe me; I get it, and it's fine. I don't get offended when someone uses it. But it's just so vague, in general. And I just, I feel like I'm a facilitator; I facilitate the growth of each of the members. That's what I want to do. But I get clumped in with business coaches; and that I get it, I totally get it. And I appreciate that you shared that.

We set up a URL, so if you want to book a call with Aimee, and you want to chat, go to velocitywork.com/call. I'm going to redirect it to her calendar, so you guys can set up a chat. And yeah, for any of you who are intrigued we'd love to have ya; it's a pretty special place. So, thanks for coming on, Aimee.

Aimee: Absolutely. Absolutely. I love you.

Melissa: I really appreciate it.

Aimee: I love our community. It's amazing.

Melissa: It is. All right, thank you so much.

Aimee: Melissa, we'll talk to you soon. Bye.

Melissa: Bye.

Hey, you may not know this, but there's a free guide for a process I teach called, Monday Map/Friday Wrap. If you go to velocitywork.com it's all yours. It's about how to plan your time and honor your plans. So that, week

over week, more work that moves the needle is getting done in less time. Go to velocitywork.com to get your free copy.

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