

Riding The Energy Bus

Books on tape became popular some 10 years ago. At that time, people were intrigued with the new concept of listening to novels during long car trips or while riding the bus to work.

I improvised on that concept when my family went on a road trip about eight years ago, and my husband and I needed to stay awake while the two young children slept. We didn't have any audio books, but I had a hard-cover book with me. So I became the audio tape, reading the novel out loud to the two of us. At first my husband thought it was a crazy idea, but five chapters into it, he insisted that he keep driving so I could keep turning the pages and reading the story out loud.

This personal car reading scenario hadn't happened in years, but as I was packing our bags to travel to Iowa over this last New Year's, my eye caught sight of a favorite book next to my night stand. I threw it in my bag just in case a stay-awake book reading was in order for the late-night drive.

As we got to the place on our trip where radio stations fade, I pulled out *The Energy Bus*¹ and started the oration. This time, my 11-year-old and 16-year-old questioned what Mom was doing,

but soon they were engulfed in the fictional story about a middle-aged man riddled with stressful work demands, an apathetic team, a strained marriage—and on the first day in the story—a flat tire. The man begrudgingly finds himself boarding the local bus to ride to work, where he is introduced to the engaging, friendly, and wisdom-filled bus driver named Joy.

As the story unfolds, and the skeptical man is forced to continue riding the bus for two weeks while his car is repaired, he is introduced to Joy's philosophy for leading a positive, rewarding, and energy-filled life. Each day, Joy and her regular passengers share their life experiences and teach him the "Ten Rules for the Ride of Your Life."

I won't share all the rules; you should read the book. But I will relay four of my favorite precepts:

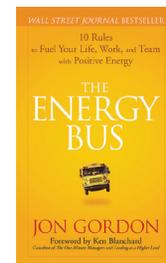
1. You're the driver of the bus.
2. Fuel your ride with positive energy.
3. Post a sign that says "No Energy Vampires Allowed" on your bus.
4. Drive with purpose.

As a bar leader, I'm often asked, "How do you do it all?" When I've been asked to speak on quality-of-life panels, similar questions arise. "How do you balance everything?" The truth is: I'm not sure there is balance most days. Little sleep, questionable diet, not enough exercise—nothing I would recommend or encourage—are all chinks in my armor. And some days, it feels like I am just trying to get to the next list of to-do's.

But when I ponder what has really sustained me the last 20 years of practicing law, changing firms, dealing with the economic pressures of developing business, starting a firm, managing significant stress, and taking on various volunteer roles, there is an answer. It strongly resembles the tenets of *The Energy Bus*: It has been my commitment to drive my bus with purpose and positivity and to enjoy the ride. That has been my sustenance. It has gotten me through sleepless nights, victories and disappointments, and uncharted territories. When I have sensed my bus going in the wrong direction, or someone else trying to steer my bus, I have stopped and re-routed. I have made sure that the people on my bus are those I respect and who inspire me. And this has allowed me to stay excited and energized about my bus.

I share this perspective, because I know we all struggle at times with the chaotic pace and demands put on

lawyers. And while it may seem like no one else struggles, we all do. As detailed in the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being's report last August (*The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations For Positive Change*), there are many serious issues plaguing lawyers today as a result of the pressures exerted on us. Substance abuse and depression take many of our colleagues completely off-road and require expert assistance to get back on track. (Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers is always available to help at 651-646-5590 or 866-525-6466.) But there are other road blocks as well: anxiety and stress, sleep deprivation, job dissatisfaction, and work addiction, to name a few cited in the report.



The Energy Bus: Ten Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team with Positive Energy
Jon Gordon

There is nothing in the Well-Being Report about *The Energy Bus*, but I do see a correlation. Among the hefty issues described in the report, I note the many self-imposed impediments to lawyers' well-being, satisfaction, and success. So while there are institutional recommendations in the report, I am reminded that, at the individual level, we are the drivers of our buses. And although it's not easy, re-fueling our buses and empowering ourselves to re-evaluate our routes, our passengers, and our purposes can only help to improve our well-being. ▲

Notes

¹ Jon Gordon, *The Energy Bus: Ten Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team with Positive Energy* (Wiley, 2007); see also www.theenergybus.com.

² "Energy vampires" are people who zap your energy, pull you away from your desired path, and needlessly consume your precious time.



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