

Hearsay

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Aiming high

Young lawyers possess ambition in abundance; veteran attorneys know the value and toll of the requisite workload. As the balancing act among family, career and leisurely pursuits grows more complex with each passing year, the driven attorney invariably revisits the burning question at each new stage of life: "How high should my bar be set?"

For **Christopher J. Petrini** at 50, the answer was about 18,000 feet.



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NON-BILLABLE HOURS

As he hit the five-decade mark in 2011, the Framingham town counsel also hit the road less-traveled — taking on major mountain treks and intense climbing expeditions, initially for self-fulfillment and, more recently, for charity.

He completed a 17-day traverse of the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal that year, hiking 150 miles to elevations of 18,000 feet. In 2012, he embarked on a 60-mile backpack in Rocky Mountain National Park, climbing 14,000-foot Long's Peak in the process.

And earlier this year, Petrini emerged from a competitive selection process sponsored by Backpacker Magazine to participate in a charity climb of Mt. Whitney in California, the highest mountain in the contiguous U.S., via the technical Mountaineer's Route. Five climbing teams raised more than \$280,000 to bring outdoor experiences to underprivileged adolescents, with Petrini personally raising \$9,000 toward the effort.

The emotional highs triggered by the scenic workouts are easy to imagine, and Petrini hopes to serve as an inspiration to others in their 50s and beyond to use their leisure time to pursue decidedly non-leisurely challenges.

What might not be as obvious, however, is the crossover benefit that Petrini carries from the mountain to the Moakley Courthouse, including a key to professional suc-

cess that might have been best paraphrased by Sun Tzu, the legendary Chinese military general who stressed the importance of readiness above all: "Every victory is won before the battle is fought."

"Preparation, preparation and more preparation," Petrini says. "The expeditions sharpen the exact same skills that dramatically increase the likelihood of achieving a successful outcome for your client, whether inside or outside of litigation."

Still, no matter how diligently an attorney may try to anticipate every possible impediment to success, nothing can prepare one for adversity like having been through it. And on the mountain, adversity is as certain as incline.

"The unexpected turn of events, whether it be weather, impassable terrain, ice or fatigue, require adaptability, tenacity and a positive state of mind — skills equally critical to navigating the inevitable ups and downs of major litigation," Petrini says. "Like in climbing, adaptability and tenacity are essential skills in a litigator's tool chest."

Overall, Petrini wants his fellow lawyers to understand that his peripatetic regime is no mere off-the-clock escape. By pushing himself to the physical limit, he reaps benefits that remain viable long after the descent, extending intact to the office and courtroom.

"Most overwhelmingly, I've found the expeditions regenerate me and help give me a fresh perspective — on my law practice and life generally, and result in personal growth and new ideas that enhance both."

— MATT YAS