



## A New Series: Practical Advice for 2017

Insights

12.27.16

With the exception of Immigration enforcement, I doubt that we will see as vigorous an increase in new employment law requirements and enforcement under the Trump Administration as under President Obama's tenure. Therefore, I'm returning to the practical day to day subjects which continue to generate employer legal and safety claims or to increase profitability and success ... depending on whether one in fact utilizes not-so-common sense.

Most of this series will focus on specific employment law and safety strategies, but I'll exercise the author's right to ramble a bit and also deal with more philosophical or plain damned simple ideas as well. It's that wonderful quiet week between Christmas and New Year and today's post will hopefully be fun to read.

I do not like some of the self-help books or motivational quotations, but I do enjoy classic preferably snarky quotations, so here are a few to set the tone.

### **The Importance of Thinking.**

*The most decisive actions of our life – I mean those that are most likely to decide the whole course of our future – are, more often than not, unconsidered.* Andre' Gide.

Which leads me to several points, such as the need to **Think** and be thoughtful, before acting and as a daily practice.

*It is human nature to think wisely and (still) act in an absurd fashion.* Anatole France.

### **Embrace Learning.**

Preferably before you screw up, but certainly **learn from your mistakes**. Even better, learn from others' mistakes, which is why I write about safety, labor and employment law screw ups and successes.

*The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.* William Blake.

*Try again. Fail again. Fail better.* Samuel Beckett.

### **Practice Listening.**

Genuinely listening is a problem for me and for many other attorneys. We are so eagerly planning our own no doubt profound comment that we don't learn and listen to the other person's words. Moreover, we waste opportunities to learn from normal people in our everyday life. My Will Rogers-like Uncle John Alsup lived by the belief that every person, no matter how humble or uneducated, has something to teach you.

*When you know how to listen, everyone is the guru.* Ram Dass.

*Everyone you will ever meet knows something you don't.* Bill Nye, the Science Guy.

*When people talk, listen completely. Don't be thinking what you're going to say. Most people never listen.* Ernest Hemingway.

### **Showing Respect.**

Which leads to **Respect** ... a virtue in scant display during the last year's political battles. Many hot comments are made to impress oneself and one's likeminded friends and have no persuasive value whatsoever. Likewise, both parties learned what happens when you appear to look down upon others and their beliefs.

### **The Importance of Reading.**

I'll close with one of my favorite practical beliefs – that one should continuously **Read**. And not solely business, industry and trade-related books. In fact, I believe that one should purposely read good fiction and non-fiction works.

For me, I love history and narrative non-fiction and periodically pick different periods of history, depending in part upon whether a new book has been released where the author made the history readable. I am not disciplined enough to force myself to read very many dry tomes, no matter how important the content. I regularly track Best Book Lists, including British periodicals such as the Guardian and Telegraph. I also enjoy lists of books read by successful leaders and business people, especially when the lists are not limited to business texts. Best of all, I am blessed with adult children who routinely turn me on to great fiction, often before a book becomes a best seller. As an example, my son got me to read *The Martian* long before the book became famous and was targeted for a darned good movie.

While it is very much not the same as “*reading*,” much of my recent book consumption has been by listening to *Audible* recorded books while endlessly driving, even around Atlanta, walking and hiking and while doing mindless tasks such as cleaning my office or washing dishes. I often purchase a hard copy or an electronic version and alternate listening and reading. I also partake of the “*Great Courses*” through Audible.

I've noticed that even reading good fiction subconsciously affects my writing style and improves my vocabulary. Unfortunately I may use words that I've read but not heard, and sometimes pronounce

new terms in a way which causes my overly intelligent and wonderfully snarky son to collapse in laughter.

**Below are some recent lists of books from which to choose.**

- *NYT: What's the Best Book New or Old, You Read this Year?*
- *13 Books that Top CEOs Think You Should Read.*
- *WSJ: Best Books of 2016*
- *NYT: The Year in Reading* (dozens of famous people suggest books)
- *Guardian: Best Books of 2016*
- *Christianity Today's Best Books of 2017* (more interesting and wide-ranging list than you might expect).
- *WSJ: Who Read What in 2016.*
- *Publishers Weekly Best Books of 2016*
- *Other Guardian Book Lists and Recommendations.*

**And here are a few of my recommendations** (reflects my own reads and does not reflect every worthy genre).

- *Dreamland, The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic* Sam Quiones (My "must read" for 2015 - a necessary read to understand the epidemic of Opiate abuse) (See also NYT article).
- *Hillbilly Elegy. A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis.* D. Vance (My 2016 Must Read - lessons abound in this conversationally written book about the rural working people, especially the Scotch Irish predominating Appalachia and whose heritage I share).
- **"You will not read a more important book about America this year."— *The Economist***
- **"A riveting book."— *The Wall Street Journal***
- **"Essential reading."—David Brooks, *New York Times***
- *The Quartet: Orchestrating the Second American Revolution, 1783-1789* 8 , Joseph J. Ellis (Pulitzer Prize winner Ellis throws down another immensely readable book; this time on the personalities leading to our US Constitution).
- by Joseph J. Ellis *The Great Upheaval: America and the Birth of the Modern World: 1788 – 1800* (This book and *The Quartet*, along *Founding Brothers* are essential and enjoyable reading to understand our Constitution and the improbability of the US having come to be.)
- Cixin Liu's *Three Body Problem trilogy* (Bestselling SF from China, which is both a complex but readable story and a fascinating look within China.)
- *Hero of the Empire*, Candice Millard (young Churchill – need I say more?).
- James S. A. Corey's *The Expanse* series (Believable SF recommended by George R. R. Martin);

- *A Rising Man*, Aber Mukherjee (First effort by promising author – murder mystery set in post WW I India – unusually good job of painting an era).
- *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, Douglas A. Blackmon (another 2016 Must Read to better understand US race relations. Painful for me to read.).
- Ian Tregillis' *The Alchemy Wars* series (Delightful reads. SF meets Steam Punk meets fantasy).
- *Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future*, Ashlee Vance (My favorite Bio for 2015-2016).
- *Medicus: A Novel of the Roman Empire*, Ruth Downie (fascinating setting.).
- *The Company: A Novel of the CIA*, Robert Littell (riveting novel which gives a sense of the CIA up to 911. Difficult to find but worth the hunt.)
- Anything by John Scalzi (snarky science fiction and alternative military history/SF).
- *Andersonville*, MacKinlay Cantor (painful fictional history of the mind-numbingly inhumane Civil War prison.)
- *The War of the Roses: The Fall of the Plantagenets and the Rise of Tudors* (Narrative non-fiction which reads like a real life *Game of Thrones*. It truly stunk to be royal.)
- *City of Thieves*, David Benioff (Classic coming of age story meets grueling Leningrad war tale meets *Catch 22*)
- *King Leopold's Ghost: A Tale of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Adam Hochschild. (Chilling. Explains the problems facing Central Africa. Warning: you may feel grumpy toward Belgians after reading this book.).
- *The Relic Master*, Christopher Buckley (Some of Buckley's work veers out of control but this quirky post Medieval tale will convulse you in laughter while you learn a bit of history.)
- *The Cuckoo's Calling*, Robert Galbraith (J.K. Rowling) (The first two books of this gritty series by the Harry Potter author are superb detective novels).
- *A Kim Jong-Il Production: The Extraordinary True Story of a Kidnapped Filmmaker, His Star Actress, and a Young Dictator's Rise to Power*, Paul Fischer.
- *Red Rising* trilogy, Pierce Brown (Hunger Games for adults.)
- *Wonderland, How Play Made the Modern World*, Steven Johnson.

## ***Related People***



**Howard A. Mavity**  
Partner  
404.240.4204  
Email