



The Mottley Law Firm

8001 Franklin Farms Drive, Suite 125
Richmond, Virginia 23229

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A FAMILY BUCKET LIST FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

TRADE THE USUAL GOALS FOR SHARED ADVENTURES

As the holidays approach and another year comes to a close, many of us take a moment to reflect on the past year and think about what we'd like to accomplish in the next. It's a natural time to plan a little, and it's a good opportunity to do it as a family. The problem is that this type of end-of-year planning often turns into the usual personal resolutions we make and drop before spring arrives. Here's a better option worth trying this year.

Instead of making a list of things to fix, change the framing. Sit down as a family and make a bucket list of experiences you hope to share together in the year ahead. A great place to start is to organize your goals into a few meaningful categories instead of creating one long list of random to-dos.

Try to mix a few different categories so the list has some balance. Include some that are purely fun, like movie outings and exploring a new place, along with others more centered on growth, like learning a new skill or giving back to the community. Once you've named your categories, let every family member drop ideas into them so the finished list belongs to everyone.

Often, the best goals for a family bucket list avoid strict timelines or unrealistic expectations. You want the goals to be specific, but the point is to keep things realistic, achievable, and fun. And remember that some items on your list are meant to take all year, while others can be knocked out in a single afternoon.

To keep the list front of mind, write it out and hang it somewhere the whole family will see it, like the fridge or a wall in the kitchen. As the year goes on, you can check things off together and add new ideas as they come up. By the time December rolls around, you'll have a full list of crossed-off adventures and the memories that came with them, just in time to start planning for the next year.



THE MOTTLEY CREW REVIEW

11/26

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Rolling Reads

FROM MOTTLEY LAW TO A MOBILE BOOKSTORE

Entrepreneurship takes many forms. In Danielle Angell's case, it rolls on the wheels of a Japanese mini truck.

During the workweek, Danielle is our paralegal here at the Mottley Law Firm. But on the weekends, she's known to book lovers throughout Richmond and New Kent as the business owner behind Paperback Parlor, a traveling mobile bookstore specializing in fiction (including dystopian and sci-fi works, fantasy, and romance). The road she's traveled to make Paperback Parlor is as colorful as the stories her truck supplies.

One day, Danielle was at home in New Kent, bemoaning the lack of a bookstore in her area. Rather than just going to Amazon or another online store to find something fun to read, she began brainstorming ways to bring her love of traditional bookstores to others in her community.

In September 2025, Paperback Parlor debuted as a tent-and-table pop-up selling used books she had purchased as her time and budget allowed.

Over the following year, Danielle and her husband, Ryan Tawney, brought the Paperback Parlor pop-up to breweries, wineries, markets, and events throughout New Kent and Richmond. Along the way, Danielle used her membership in the American Booksellers Association to learn how to acquire new books through wholesale partnerships with publishers, just as traditional bookstores do.

As her business expanded, so did the need for an easier way to get around. In September of this year, Paperback Parlor celebrated the grand opening of its official vehicle, a refurbished 1996 Japanese mini truck, at Brambly Park here in Richmond. That's when things *really* took off for our resident book aficionado and independent merchant. In addition to new books, they also sell other



book-adjacent items (like custom candles, Kindle accessories, etc.). Whether it's a farmers market or a small coffee shop, the truck has become synonymous with intriguing reads at fair prices. The "Red Rising" series by Pierce Brown, "Dungeon Crawler Carl" by Matt Dinniman (which Danielle describes as an "insanely comical sci-fi series set in an apocalyptic alien game show."), and the works of Gothic romance fantasy author Rachel Gillig are among Danielle's current bestsellers.

In the beginning, Danielle spent time every night working on the business after getting home from our office. These days, she spends only about three hours a week keeping Paperback Parlor thriving during its weekend stops. What impressed me most about Danielle's success with Paperback Parlor is that she built it one step (and mile) at a time.

"Bite off what you can chew, and then you'll figure out the rest later," she told me in a recent conversation. "You're never going to get started doing something if you think about everything that needs to get done. You just need to get the first thing done. If I try to bite off everything at once, I wouldn't have done anything."

That's great advice for *any* situation!

In addition to just being fantastic, Danielle's efforts to make Paperback Parlor a success are the subject of this month's cover article for two important reasons. One, she is celebrating her sixth anniversary with our firm this month, and we're so fortunate to have her. Two, November is National Entrepreneurship Month. If there's anyone who demonstrates entrepreneurial spirit, it's Danielle!

—Kevin Mottley



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A KILLER NIGHT IN

Spice Up Your Next Dinner Party With a DIY Murder Mystery

Why settle for a potluck or game night when you can turn your home into the scene of a thrilling mystery? If your dinner parties have started to feel a bit predictable, a DIY murder mystery dinner is the perfect way to shake things up. Equal parts dinner party, game night, and theatrical adventure, it's an experience that gets everyone laughing, mingling, and working together to solve a deliciously dramatic whodunit.

A STAGE SET FOR SUSPENSE

Every great mystery begins with the perfect setting. Transport your guests to a roaring 1920s speakeasy, an elegant masquerade ball, a dusty Wild West saloon, or even a Gothic castle filled with vampires and glowing candelabras. Simple decorations, themed music, and creative invitations are all it takes to transform your dining room into another time and place.

Encourage guests to dress for the occasion, too. It's amazing how quickly a feather boa, cowboy hat, or vintage suit helps everyone slip into character.

GOOD FOOD, GREAT COMPANY ... AND PLENTY OF SUSPECTS

The menu doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, the easier it is to eat while questioning fellow guests, the better. Charcuterie boards, bite-sized appetizers, sliders, and small desserts let everyone stay focused on gathering clues instead of juggling a knife and fork. Amp up the



atmosphere by choosing a themed menu, such as tea party classics for your Regency-era thriller or "blood" red treats for your vampire mystery!

As for the mystery itself, whether you choose one that follows a strict script or one that encourages improvisation, every guest receives a character with secrets, motives, and just enough information to keep everyone guessing. You can create a story from scratch or find murder mystery dinner party scripts online. Whichever you decide, the conversations quickly become the best part of the evening as accusations fly, alibis unravel, and unexpected plot twists emerge.

FUN MEMORIES MADE TOGETHER

The grand reveal is always worth the wait. As everyone shares their theories, the room fills with laughter over missed clues, convincing performances, and wildly inaccurate guesses before the true culprit is finally unmasked.

Who says game night has to mean another round of cards? This season, invite your friends over for an evening filled with suspense, laughter, and unforgettable moments. After all, the only thing better than sharing a meal is sharing an adventure.



FROM BORING TO BOLD

Break the LinkedIn Mold

As a marketing and inter-industry communication tool, LinkedIn is popular, necessary ... and often quite boring.

Any personal injury attorney who hopes to gain new clients and referral sources probably utilizes LinkedIn in one form or another. Still, being on there doesn't amount to much if you're not getting valuable returns. Frankly, a lot of personal injury-related content I see law firms posting looks the same day after day. In addition to saying pretty much the same thing over and over, this content is often structured the same way. I also suspect the majority of it was AI-generated. My observations aren't meant as criticism, but if I'm bored, there's a fair chance the readers you're hoping to engage are, too.

When I started my firm nearly two decades ago, I began attending marketing seminars for lawyers. These were the waning days of the Yellow Pages, so law firms were obviously looking for new ways to get the word out there. Ultimately, these seminars had the same core message: If you want to know how to market your law firm's services, look at what other lawyers are doing and do the opposite.

So, how do you do the opposite of the same old LinkedIn content in 2026? I recently came across a possible answer in a LinkedIn video posted by business coach James King. He argues that anyone who simply looks for trending topics, researches what to write about on LinkedIn, or focuses mainly on the algorithm will likely end up creating "cold, boring posts" comparable to what people could generate on their own with ChatGPT. Instead, he poses a vastly different approach.

"What would it be like if you sat down for five or 10 minutes and wrote about what happened to you today, what you did for your client last week, or the lessons you learned from that business mistake that you made six months ago? Then, you'll be sharing *personalized content* where people will resonate with your story, and it's unique because only *you* can write it."

As someone who produces and distributes a personalized monthly newsletter, I couldn't agree more! If you want to capture an audience these days, do the opposite of trends and share your story. I suspect it will result in dividends beyond anything you can achieve by following everyone else.

—Kevin Mottley

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SUDOKU



Beef 'n' Biscuit Bake

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 can (16 oz) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 1/4 oz) whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 can (10 3/4 oz) condensed tomato soup, undiluted
- 1/4 cup 2% milk
- 2 tbsp finely chopped onion
- 1/2 tsp chili powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup cubed Velveeta
- 1 tube (12 oz) refrigerated biscuits
- 3 tbsp butter, melted
- 1/3 cup yellow cornmeal

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 375 F.
- In a saucepan over medium heat, cook beef, breaking into crumbles, until no longer pink; drain. Add beans, corn, tomato soup, milk, onion, chili powder, and salt; bring to a boil.
- Remove from heat; stir in cheese until melted.
- Spoon into a greased 2 1/2-quart baking dish.
- Bake, uncovered, 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, brush all sides of biscuits with butter; roll in cornmeal.
- Place on top of bubbling meat mixture.
- Return to the oven for 10-12 minutes, or until biscuits are lightly browned and cooked through.

November, Nerves, and New Habits



A REMINDER TO RELAX AND RESET

Thanksgiving and Veterans Day top the list of major holidays in November, but Chaos Never Dies Day on Nov. 9 and Loosen Up, Lighten Up Day on Nov. 14 are two "unofficial" holidays that really strike a chord with me at the moment.

Why? Oh, boy ...

First, the chaos. My wife and I have been going through a whole house renovation. It started as, "Let's do some minor things to this house we bought." That turned into, "Well, let's do all the bathrooms." Before we knew it, the entire home turned into a production

zone. We don't even leave the doors locked because workers constantly walk in and out of the house from 7 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. One day, I came home to find our poor dog sitting in the middle of a floor covered in plaster and looking at me with an expression that clearly asked, "What are you doing to me?"

To say it's been crazy at home lately would be an understatement, but we have no choice but to laugh at the situation and take things one step at a time. That spirit is at the heart of Chaos Never Dies Day, which was created to encourage us to accept life's unpredictable, messy nature with a shrug and a smile instead of letting it overwhelm us.

That's how I think about personal injury suits, too. The journey to the conclusion may be fraught with stress, unpleasantness, and challenges, but those things will all be worth it when a client receives the recovery they deserve.

If you're in a state of chaos at that moment, I encourage you to hang in there, take things in stride as much as possible, and find joy amid the frenzy.

As for Loosen Up, Lighten Up Day ... well ... that's a whole other story. Although most people would probably consider me a laid-back person, I'm pretty intense on the inside. That said, I've been trying to unwind a little more frequently lately. I've been gravitating toward journaling, meditating, sticking to exercise routines, and walking at least 10,000 steps a day. All these things have made a great difference, and I have no doubt that any one of them would do you a world of good as well.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to my live-in construction site.

—Kevin Mottley