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**Progress, Not Perfection**

**Career Development**



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It's funny how you go through life — your day to day — thinking that you have it all together. How something you addressed that was an issue for you is no longer, until... yep, you guessed it: That issue rears its ugly head again. It reminds you that part of progress is not forgetting where you've been, but periodically checking in to see that you are still on track with where you want to go.

As we are still early in this new year, we are often focused and have our sights set on new goals. But what about last year's goals, or goals from years long gone? We can wait until that moment comes and we can no longer ignore that something still needs work, or we can intentionally take stock and perform a tune up where, when, and as needed.

For me, that moment came during the end of my second week on vacation. While I had plans for lots of downtime, my vacations are times I set aside to work on projects that are unrelated to my day job. I had spent months thinking about the things I wanted to accomplish with my five weeks off. High on the list was knocking out a couple of columns for the *Docket*. However when the time came to get down to business, my frayed laptop power cord decided it was on vacation, too. Permanently. So my plans came to a grinding halt.

In "Off the Mat" and "Outside the Box," I talked about change, flexibility, and the importance of operating outside of our comfort zones in order to grow and accomplish more than we often think we're capable of. It's one of the mantras I recite to myself frequently: "There is no growth in the comfort zone." So imagine my surprise when I was "unable" to work because I didn't have access to my laptop. My husband offered me the use of one of his notebooks and his laptop (a PC mind you), so that I could at least finish my *Docket* article (this one). But neither of those solutions was

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acceptable to me.

So for two days I accomplished nothing, felt guilty for my progress, and stressed over missing my deadline. All this while on vacation in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Let me tell you, that was no bueno! A bellman finally found a yellow legal pad for me, and with that and my iPad, I was able to get back to work.

While I'm poking a little fun at myself, the situation reminded me how easy it is to fall back into old familiar patterns or ruts; that is, if we are not careful, they will keep us from moving ourselves or our teams forward.

The best way to keep this from happening is to check in with ourselves every now and again to see if we are too comfortable with the way we are thinking, or approaching the things in our lives. Prevention is the best cure, but if we find ourselves slipping, we don't need to throw the baby out with the bathwater, we can simply employ the tools we have used in the past, or find new ones that have worked for others. For example, breathing, surrendering, and challenging our black or white thinking, are just a few tools at our disposal.

So as we continue moving through this new year, whether our lists include resolutions, goals, or intentions, we should make sure that growth and a willingness to constantly challenge our comfort zone is on the list, and that progress — not perfection — is what we are aiming for.

[Whitnie Wiley](#)



Former ACC Docket Columnist

**Whitnie Wiley** was a long-time columnist for the *ACC Docket*, where she wrote the *Lead the Way* column for more than seven years. The column provided leadership tips for in-house counsel and others as they pursue their personal and professional goals.