

Announcer: Welcome to The Extra Mile Podcast For Bar Exam Takers. There are no traffic jams along the extra mile, when you're studying for your bar exam. Now, your host Jackson Mumey, owner of The Celebration Bar Review.

Jackson Mumey: Hey everyone, welcome to Episode 38 of The Extra Mile Podcast For Bar Exam Takers. This is your host Jackson Mumey. Glad you're with us today. There's a lot going on in the bar review world right now. As of recording today, we're still waiting on results to come out for New Jersey, Texas and California, at least. There's some other jurisdictions, but those are three big ones, that we're still waiting on results, and we'll share that information with you as it comes online and available.

Today's episode is titled "When should I start studying for the bar exam?" It's part of a series I did a few years ago called "Shifts", which was really just a look at some basic thought patterns and shifts in those thought patterns, that are necessary for success. That idea of shifts, comes from a book by Peter Arnell, titled "Shifts", and I'll link to that in our show notes. It's an interesting discussion, and wanted to kick off that particular series with this recording today. As I'm recording, we're about four months until the next bar exam in February 2016. This is a really good time to be having this conversation.

If you're a July 2016 or later bar exam taker, this is also a good time for you to be listening to when you should be thinking about getting started in your bar exam studies. I invite you to check that out. Now, one thing I do want to say, when I originally recorded this lecture, you'll hear me talk about a pass rate for the general, large bar review companies, around 50 percent. Today, that number's actually lower. It's probably somewhere in the range of 30 to 35 percent.

Things have actually gotten worst for people that do a traditional kind of course, than when I first recorded this message. I think that that is again, proof, that this approach of trying to cram over a short period of time, is generally not very successful. It's something you need to think about very carefully, before you jump into doing that. You'll hear that, and we'll update that information in our show notes as well.

If you're someone who's waiting for your bar results, we know that this is an anxious time, and we appreciate you spending time with us on the podcast today. If you're an upcoming bar taker, this is also important information for you that we're going to be sharing. Over the next few weeks I'll be doing some interviews with successful bar exam takers. I'll also be doing an "Ask Jackson" episode, in which I take some questions that I've been getting around the country about the things that are happening, the changes in the bar exam generally. The reduction in scores, the lower pass rates and so on.

The bar exam has probably been more in the news in the last few months, than it's been for years and years and years. There's definitely a lot going on. I invite you to stay with us. We do these podcast episodes twice a week. You can subscribe on iTunes, or you can go to our website, which is celebrationbarreview.com, and click on the word podcasts at the top of the page. You'll be taken into a page that's got all of our previous episodes, as well as the show notes. You can also subscribe from that page. I invite you to check out the past episodes, and then, subscribe and join us as we go along. Particularly, over the next few months, I think it's going to be an interesting time.

Now, in addition to all of that, if you are planning on taking the bar in 2016, or perhaps, you're just waiting for your 2015 results and you're not sure what's going to happen, but you're terribly optimistic. In either of those cases, I invite you to join me this Thursday for a free, 90-minute live master class, titled "How to make the next bar exam, your last bar exam." We're going to look at the four steps that every bar taker needs to incorporate into their study, in order to be successful. The course is completely free, this live master class. However, registration is required, and you can register one of two ways. You can go to our website again, that's celebrationbarreview.com/webinar, and register online. Or, if you prefer to use texting, you can text message us the phrase, "NEXTBAREXAM" to 33444. Again, that's the phrase "NEXTBAREXAM", text that to 33444.

The master class starts this Thursday, 3pm Eastern time. That's 12 noon Pacific. Ninety minutes, it's filled with lots of content. I think you're going to be very, very pleased that you spent the time to join me on this class. I do it, really to give you an insight and a leg up, a head start on your studies. It's been well received by the people that have been through it already. I invite you to join me there for that. With that in mind, I want to jump into today's lecture. We want to talk about when you should begin studying for the bar exam, and then, I'll come back at the end with a couple of concluding thoughts.

Hi, and welcome to Celebration Bar Review. We're doing a video series about some shifts to take, as you think about studying for the bar exam. The concept of shifts is really suggested by a book I talked about in one of the earlier videos called "Shift" by Peter Arnell. In which, he talks about making some fairly significant changes in the way you do things in your life, in order to get different results. Now, today I want to talk about a shift that may be a bit surprising to some of you. It's a shift about thinking, with respect to when you should start studying for the bar exam.

Let me first describe what the basis premise is, that most people use. Most people take their exam, whether it's the first time, or multiple exams over a period of time, with the notion of coming out of law school, typically at the end of a third or fourth year of school, and doing nothing but studying for the bar, for an intense period of six or seven weeks. That is the presumed norm. That's

what most people think they're going to do. Now, nationally for about 40 to 50 percent of the people that do that, they pass the bar. That's the national norm on the bar exam, typically. That means that there's an awful lot of people for whom that norm doesn't work very well.

Now, if you're going to an ABA approved, top 50 law school, and you're in the top half of the class, and you're a [prodigious 00:06:55] studier, and you've paid attention all the way through law school, and you're not going to do anything after you graduate from law school except study for the bar for six or seven weeks, a traditional bar review course in that time frame, probably will work for you. I mean, you've got a better than average chance of passing, but that's a relatively small number of people that we're talking about there.

If you're not someone who's attending an ABA top 50 law school, if you're not in the top half of the class in those schools. For example, if you're attending a correspondence law school, or a state-approved law school, if you're in the bottom half of a bottom-tiered law school, or even the top half of a bottom-tiered law school. If English is not your first language, if you have failed the bar exam previously. In any of those situations, if you wait until six or seven weeks before the bar exam, your chances of passing the test drop dramatically.

In fact, I would tell you that, not empirically so much as experientially, I would say you're probably running a 25 percent chance of passing is all, if you're in one of those categories. You're in what we would think of as a "at-risk" category, if you will, for passing the bar exam. Now, that doesn't mean you won't pass or you can't pass, but here's the shift you have to make. Too often, what occurs is, that we start thinking that because that's what the big bar reviews say to do, to study for six or seven weeks, that must be the norm. That must be the right way to do it. Let me give you some insight into why that six or seven period exists.

Now, I can say this confidently, having run one of the big bar exams for several years. This is the way the thought process goes. A large bar review company has a huge expense in putting on their bar review courses. Typically, they try to do them in some combination of live lecture, although that's less and less these days. Essentially, what they want to do is get as many bodies into seats for a relatively short period of time. Now, some of the bar review companies pay inflated premiums to law schools, for the use of rooms in the off season. Some of them pay over-inflated prices to professors at certain schools, to get them to come in and read scripts for them. Again, sort of to have a foot into the market.

In both of those situations, what's happening is, that the bar review company is essentially saying, "We want to maximize our revenue, and minimize our outgo, yeah, by having a relatively short period of time in which we're conducting the courses." As a result, the historical tradition was, that you would take six or seven weeks, put everybody in, crowd them in as tightly as possible, bring as many lecturers in as quickly as possible, and get through the course in that short time frame. Now, that makes for a wonderful business model, if you think about

it. If you can put a lot of people in, you're certainly paying the same amount for the room, whether there's 10 people in the room or 100 people in the room. You're paying the same amount for the professor, whether they're 10 people listening or 100 listening.

The economics makes sense for the large bar reviews, to push everything into that one, short time frame, before the February exam and before the July exams. The problem is, that it's really bad teaching. You see, virtually no one who's involved with teaching, would tell you that the best way to learn, is to cram or study for 12 to 14 hours a day non-stop for six or seven weeks, trying to push it all into your brain and then, somehow, in a burst of adrenaline over two or three days, you spit all that back out on the exam. The reality of the numbers prove that out. Most people that go through a traditional bar review course, don't pass. The absolute majority don't pass in most cases, and in most jurisdictions.

If you look at a jurisdiction like California or New York, that has a low pass rate, in the 30 percentile range, you'll really see how fouled up that approach is. What's the better approach? I mean, what's the shift? Many years ago, one of the things that I realized was that people learn much better, if they took small incremental bites of the apple. If they learned in small pieces. What I described as a "stair step approach". The idea was, to learn a little bit, go to the next step, then go to the next step, then to the next step, and then to the next step. To do that, requires time. It requires an incremental approach. Instead of trying to study for 12 hours a day, you try and study for one or two hours a day, maybe four or five days a weeks, but over a period of four or five months.

Now, some of you are [undoubtedly 00:11:30] saying to yourself, "Well, I don't have four or five months to study." I mean, you might not. I mean, if you have to take an exam, and you're now in something like three months or less until the test, you don't have much choice. You're going to have to simply knuckle down and do it. I think home study gives you tremendous advantages here, because you can tailor that study to the times of the day that you're available, and not the times that the course is being offered, when you sit in a room and watch a DVD, or listen to an audio. More importantly I think, the shift is that you need to think about how do you pass the bar exam? How do you study most effectively?

In my experience, the best way to do that is to start four to six months before the test. Using a study guide, a plan, like we prepare for our students, you work incrementally in, essentially 10 hours to 15 hours a week of study for that period of time. Now, you'll make a little bump in study time when you get into the last 30, maybe 45 days before the test, that's only normal, and I don't think you should feel bad about that at all. If you've been ramping up slowly, at 10 to 15 hours a week, that's pretty manageable. In fact, what really happens from a teaching and learning standpoint is that you consolidate the gains.

The things that you learned early on in a course like ours, you build back to, you gain them again, you learn them again, you're reinforced again. In addition, because we don't think memorization is the skill that's really being tested on the bar exam, we're not trying to have you retain that information in a memory sense, for a long period of time. We're really trying to teach you how to use the information, rather than memorize it, which is another shift all on its own. The shifts that I really want you to think about today is, how long you want to study for. Most people underestimate the time it will take them to study.

In our experience, in the states that we prepare students for, you're going to need, on average, 250 to 300 hours, if you're an average student. Now, if you're in one of those "at-risk" categories that I was talking about earlier, if English is not your first language. If you're a foreign-trained attorney, if you went to a less than stellar law school. Or, if you had a less than stellar legal education at this point ... And there's nothing wrong with that. That's not a knock on you or your school. It's just a reality here. If you're in one of those situations, you need to give yourself more time.

If you try to wait until those last six or seven weeks, and then do the traditional bar review course, frankly, the only one you're benefiting is the bar review provider. You're not doing yourself much of a favor. I think a big shift that you'll want to consider here, is starting early. Now, in our course we offer lots of discounts. The price is better for you, if you start early. There's more mentoring time available when you start early. Frankly, we've got a much higher pass rate, because our students, in general, start earlier.

Does that mean we won't work with you if you come to us six weeks before the exam? No, we'll do our best to help you then, but I think, if you ask anyone who's actually taken the exam and studied for it, both in the traditional six week approach, and in an approach like ours that's over a longer period of time, almost without exception, people will tell you that it's better to study small pieces, over a longer period of time. I think most people can handle 10 to 15, maybe even 20 hours a week, on top of their work, or their practice, or their other family and life commitments.

In over 20 hours a week, you pretty much are studying full time, so that's the trade-off that you'll want to make. I hope that that shift is one that you'll think about. We're right now, as I record this, quite a ways out from the next bar exam. It's a good time for you to be making that approach. If you're watching this video, my hope is because you're thinking about that kind of a shift already. If you have questions about that, don't hesitate to give us a call, or to contact us on our website. Be glad to discuss it with you, and in your personal circumstances, even further. Have a great week of study. Or, a great week of starting your study. We'll be back to you next time, with another shift in the bar exam.

Announcer 2: That wraps up today's episode. Thanks so much for listening. If you'd like to be part of our Extra Mile For Bar Exam Takers private Facebook group, just check the show notes. You'll find a link, in which you can request an invitation. We'll see you, along The Extra Mile.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to The Extra Mile Podcast For Bar Exam Takers at www.celebrationbarreview.com.