

Watching Hallmark Movies Makes Me A Better Lawyer

By **Karen Ross** (March 27, 2026)

In this Expert Analysis series, attorneys discuss how their unusual extracurricular activities enhance professional development, providing insights and pointers that translate to the office, courtroom and beyond. If you have a hobby you would like to write about, email expertanalysis@law360.com.

I realize you may be judging me for watching, and actually enjoying, Hallmark Channel movies. I understand that reaction, as I too once doubted the fandom.

After I started watching the movies a couple of years ago, however, I not only became a convert, but I realized they make me a better lawyer. The movies provide a good diversion from our 24/7 work responsibilities, and the story lines have many parallels to the practice of law.

Here, I outline how the characters in the movies demonstrate qualities and actions that lead to an efficient, productive and positive legal practice. I welcome you to sit back, maybe with a cozy, warm beverage — a staple in every Hallmark holiday movie — and picture it.



Karen Ross

Sometimes, we need to turn off the noise.

More than ever, legal professionals, from the IT department to the managing partner, are constantly "on." While it is great to be able to work from outside the office, that also means that escaping work is a challenge. Finding something that allows us to turn off the noise and decompress can be equally challenging.

In theory, spending time with friends and family or participating in an outdoor activity can provide that release. Unfortunately, events like that often require planning, are dependent on others being on time and in good spirits, or favorable weather, etc. So, what should have been a relaxing and fun time can end up creating stress. Hallmark movies, on the other hand, provide the perfect package to turn off the noise.

You can enjoy them at your leisure, year-round, viewing takes under two hours, they always include calming and beautiful scenes and locations, and unlike other shows you may binge, there are no trigger warnings for traumatic events.

Additionally, there is always a pleasant ending, which is not always possible in the legal profession. Finding something that allows you to take a breath and enjoy some real downtime is critical to surviving in the legal profession. I am confident that if you watch a Hallmark movie you too will benefit from the escape they provide.

Clear communication is key.

Every Hallmark movie has at least one dramatic miscommunication that could damage a business and/or a romantic relationship. Similar to the legal profession, this happens in the

movies because someone missed a call/text/other communication, misunderstood what they heard, and/or misconstrued something they observed.

Just like our work, clear communication from the start and seeking clarification when confusion occurs helps to avoid these situations. The movies also highlight the unnecessary time, personal capacity and potential negative outcomes that can occur when there are communication issues.

Fortunately, before the end of each movie the miscommunication is resolved. Since we are writing our own stories, we need to engage in clear communication regarding client goals and asks, lawyer directives and instructions, the facts, etc. Being comfortable asking for clarification and not jumping to conclusions are also necessary traits in the legal field.

We can all learn from Hallmark characters, and avoid drama and problems by ensuring that we have clear communication with co-workers, clients, our opposition, witnesses, court staff and mediators, and juries.

It's OK to lean on others.

In addition to adding diverse characters and story lines, Hallmark has realized the way individuals think about their work-life balance and interact with each other, and set goals have changed in the last several years. For example, they explore the negative effects that follow when an individual takes care of everyone else and loses sight of taking care of themselves.

Just in the 2025 holiday movie season alone, several characters, with a little push from friends and family, took the brave steps of leaning on others and putting themselves first, at least sometimes. While controlling everything may appear beneficial for a lawyer, more often than not — given our 24/7 lives — it leads to burnout, a lack of mentorship or general professional unhappiness.

We need to learn from Hallmark characters and seek and accept help and support, as well as take advantage of opportunities to put ourselves first. Adopting these habits will serve us professionally and personally.

Own it when you make a mistake.

Similar to the miscommunication plot line, most Hallmark movies include a character making a mistake. Through several scenes, that character deals with the aftermath and then finally acknowledges that it is best to take responsibility for their mistake.

Those in the legal field are not immune from mistakes. No matter the severity of the mistake, taking responsibility for it is key to good practice and is required by our ethical obligations. The "how" should be on a case-by-case basis, but recognizing it and dealing with it proactively are prudent first steps. Accepting our mistakes not only helps us to provide quality service to our clients or employers, but it is also part of continued professional growth.

A good supporting cast makes the difference.

Each cast member of a Hallmark movie plays an important role in the storyline. Even if other characters do not see it, viewers are shown that the movie requires every character to play their part and work together.

Practicing law is the same. Getting the best results requires having a productive and healthy team, where each member has a role based on their knowledge and skills, and everyone recognizes that they have a shared goal. Further, a key to maintaining consistent and quality work is supporting and valuing members of the team, regardless of their role or title.

Much like Hallmark characters, the supporting cast you create in your office can make or break your story. Further, how you treat them plays a central role in the ending.

Do not be afraid of hearing "no" or taking risks.

A mainstay in Hallmark movies, particularly holiday movies, is a character facing a professional or other major life decision. The viewer watches as that character muddles through deciding what to do. Eventually, the character realizes that they should not be afraid of hearing "no" or taking a risk. So they take the leap, be it moving back home to marry the local football coach or turning the struggling tree farm into a successful event space.

Continuing to move forward in the face of potential rejection or defeat is a quality lawyers should exercise as well. Obtaining the best result often requires thinking outside the box, asking for something — even though you may hear "no"— or choosing a plan that involves calculated risks.

Unlike movie characters, when lawyers take the leap, we are not rewarded with an idyllic inn to run, but we do often find success. Even when we lose, we learn something.

Embrace what you cannot change.

Hallmark is in on the joke. They recognize that their movies can be formulaic, and that some people make fun of them. Rather than trying to change the narrative or hide from it, they embrace it. Their movies include characters poking fun at routine scenes in holiday movies — think the standard baking scene where flour ends up everywhere. Hallmark even created a greeting card with a bingo board of the standard activities and events that occur in their movies.

Hallmark likely realized that leaning into the public persona of their movies would better serve them. In the same vein, lawyers can and should take control of the narrative. As lawyers, we sometimes deal with undesirable facts and challenging arguments. Therefore, like Hallmark, we need to find a way to make lemonade out of lemons. Even though embracing the challenging parts of our work may not result in the thrill I had this year of calling out "coverall" on my Hallmark bingo card, it is still a valuable practice.

Closing Credits

Unlike the characters in a movie whose story ends, as lawyers, we are able to apply what we learn throughout our practice. Even though I will never be able to fit the multiple winter coats that the characters in Hallmark movies do into a small roller suitcase, I can, and do, recognize and utilize the traits of their characters and lessons they illustrate, and then apply them in my work. As I say, they are transferable to many aspects of our professional lives and make me a better lawyer.

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