

Introduction: Welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer Podcast, the show that walks you step-by-step to improving strategies you can use today to grow your business. We show you how being kind, useful, and, of course, enchanting will bring you more clients and build a thriving community.

Now here's your host from sunny San Diego, Jacob Sapochnick.

Jacob: Hello everybody and welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer Podcast. This is a show where we interview the most inspiring entrepreneurs from all over the world. Some of them legal professionals, others are not. We share their work with us. We get inspired. Every episode we learn something new.

Today, I have an interesting guest from San Francisco. His name is Nathan Fox. He is, I believe, one of the few experts that actually understand the LSAT test, whatever is involved: passing it, taking it. He believes that this test is actually easy and it's his mission in life to help students to see it that way as well.

He personally scored 179 on his own test. I think 180 is actually the perfect score. He taught LSAT full-time since 2007. Founded Fox LSAT in 2009. Nathan is an acclaimed author of six LSAT books, creator of the Fox Online LSAT Course. He has his own podcast, the Thinking LSAT podcast.

He graduated from law school, UC Hastings, in 2011. But like many other law school students, he does not use his degree. He's not an attorney. He continuously challenges his students to think deeply about whether law school is worth their three years of their life.

Nathan, I'm super excited to have you on the show. Welcome. How are you doing today?

Nathan: Oh, I'm great. I'm actually in Los Angeles. I'm splitting time now between San Francisco and Los Angeles. It's a beautiful day in Los Angeles as always.

Jacob: On the show I speak to attorneys and non-attorneys. I had a lot of law students and potential people want to go to law school who listen to the show. We had a few people who talk about law school over the episodes. But I never touched about the actual prep work that is required to do this.

First of all, tell us a little bit about yourself. I shared a few but if you want to add some to that I didn't mention. And then let's kind of explain what an LSAT is and why is it important to pass this test.

Nathan: Yeah. I think you did a great job with the bio. I don't really know that I have anything I need to add to that but I'm happy to talk about the test.

LSAT is offered four times a year and it takes a typical student two or three months to fully prepare for the test. Some students will study for a lot longer than that -- six months or even a year or sometimes longer. The reason why they study so long for it is because it's the primary determine of law school admissions and also law school scholarships.

Jacob: Okay.

Nathan: It's a pretty weighty test. I like to tell people law school is going to cost \$150,000 in a lot of cases. If you can get five or ten more points on your LSAT and end up getting a scholarship that saves you \$100,000 or more. Boy, that's a pretty high ROI in that three months or whatever it took you to prep. I really do encourage people to get the best score they possibly can.

Jacob: I wasn't aware.

So, in your case, since you got 179, you had a scholarship for law school, right?

Nathan: I had a partial scholarship in law school. Unfortunately, I'm like the world's worst student. So my undergraduate grades were terrible.

Jacob: I see.

Nathan: That's actually kind of a problem and there's so many irresponsible 18, 19-year old. I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I was an undergrad. I never even contemplated the idea of going to graduate school. It was not on my radar at all. I have really bad grades. Fortunately, a great LSAT score will cover up for that. So I was able to get into a good school but I did not get a lot of scholarship money.

Jacob: I see.

So, for those of us who are not familiar -- because I have a lot of attorneys who listen to the show from overseas -- tell me, kind of in a nutshell, what is this test consist of? I know there's some games and quizzes and stuff like that. But what is exactly ... what does it look like?

Nathan: Yeah. One-fourth of it is logic games.

Jacob: Okay.

Nathan: That's one out of the four scored sections. That's the section that people usually are really frustrated with. I get people who are just panicking because they take their first practice test and on the games, they can completely crash and burn. I mean it's possible that they just score three or four points out of 23 on the entire section.

I administer a practice test on the first night of all of my LSAT classes and it's kind of funny to look around the room and see people ... People will completely freeze up sometimes on the logic games where they'll just quit. Just surrender to the test.

Fortunately, the games are actually the easiest part of the test to learn. People have a hard time believing that when they first hear it but after the three or four weeks of prep, they start to see the light. They realize that it's actually, I think, the most fun section of the test as well. So people end up learning. If they practice, they end up doing quite well on the games.

Then another one fourth of the test is reading comprehension. So that's really familiar for most people. Reading comprehension is long passages followed by a set of six or seven questions per passage. People have been doing reading comprehension like that since they were in grammar school. That's not usually too much of a surprise and many students will naturally score quite high on the reading comprehension right off the bat.

Then the remaining two out of four scored sections -- so half of the test -- is what we call logical reasoning.

Logical reasoning is short arguments followed by one question. So it's just one argument and one question. The question usually says, "How do you make this argument better?" or "How would you make this argument worst?" or "What was the conclusion of that argument?" or "Can you identify a flaw in that argument?" There are a whole bunch of different types of logical reasoning questions.

Some people do pretty well naturally on the logical reasoning just if they have strong verbal abilities, they can do pretty well right out of a gate on logical reasoning. But every student has room for improvement on a logical reasoning. They have to learn really what the test is asking on the different types of questions. With some basic skills, people end up making pretty good improvements on the logical reasoning as well.

Jacob: Nathan, do you think -- you've seen probably many, many students over time that you help them. Do you really think that this test is a good indicator for somebody, first of all, whether they should or shouldn't go to law school? And whether they would be a good law student or maybe lawyers in the future?

Nathan: Wow! I could talk to you for an hour answering that question. I really could.

The first thing I would say is that the LSAT does test a lot of very lawyerly skills, particularly on the logical reasoning. Having been to law school and having studied legal writing, I can see quite clearly what the makers of the test are

intending to try to find out about you; that they want to know if you can do the very formula, like step-by-step. It's almost like putting together a Lego puzzle or something with these arguments where you need to make sure that every single thing connects to every other thing, right?

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: In the logical reasoning, when you learn to identify the gap in the argument then you can help your client and you can write better briefs and you can write better memos when you know what the pieces are and how to get to a logically valid conclusion. In that way, I think it's quite a good test.

It is an intensive test of English language ability and lawyers in the United States practice law in English.

Jacob: Of course.

Nathan: People, I think, underestimate the importance of being strong in English writing and reading as lawyers. Boy, I really wouldn't like to have a lawyer who doesn't like to read books, you know? I need a lawyer who enjoys words and loves ... The metaphor I always use is that lawyers are gladiators who use the English language as their weapon.

Jacob: Absolutely.

Nathan: So the LSAT is going to be a pretty intensive test of your English language abilities. If you don't have those abilities, unfortunately, law school is going to be an uphill battle for you and, I believe, the bar exam is going to be even harder than that especially in California.

Jacob: Of course.

Nathan: Legal practice is going to be difficult as well if you struggle with reading, and writing, and getting through heavy texts, dense text, cases, statutes, and that sort of thing.

I think there, you know, that is a pretty good indicator of your future ability as a lawyer. Of course, those skills can be improved but it's a painstaking improvement process, right, that's going to take years to improve your ability in English.

The final thing that I would say ... I'm trying to keep this short. I love that the LSAT is a test of how hard you can work. The reason why I say it's a test at how hard you can work is that there are now 77, soon to be 78, released practice tests and these are official LSAT practice tests. This year it was on June 6th maybe. I forget already.

Anyway, the LSAT in June 2016 -- as soon as those scores come out which is going to be in another week or two, that practice test will become available for students to study. They release three of these tests every year.

Jacob: Okay.

Nathan: We now have 77 practice tests, we're about to have 78 practice tests. If you study them, you will improve your LSAT score dramatically. It's a matter of how much you want it and how hard you're willing to work in order to get the score you need. I think that is an excellent thing for them to be testing for future lawyers because the lawyers that I know, the successful lawyers that I know, are not afraid of hard work.

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: It's a pretty good indicator. If you're not willing to put in the time and effort to do ... I'm not saying people need to do 77 practice tests. I mean that's ridiculous. But you should be aware of that some people do.

Jacob: You should do enough of those.

Nathan: Yeah. And I usually say at least 10. At a bare minimum, you should have done ten full practice tests before you set for the actual test. Many students will do 20 or 30 or more and their score will keep improving. Well, if your score is still improving then I think you should continue taking more practice tests and continue improving because you really do need to get the very best score you can.

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: Anyway, because the test is so learnable and because they have ... they don't hide the ball at all. It's just, "Here's the test. Here's all the old tests." If you're good at old tests, you're going to be good at whatever test you actually set for.

Jacob: It's a good prep for the bar exam as well. I mean in the sense of as far as your tenacity and dedication to pass it.

Nathan: Yeah.

Jacob: Yeah.

Nathan: Law school as well, right? These people need to be able to put in the hours and the consistent effort of studying. If not, then if the LSAT scares you off if you don't improve because you don't work at it, or if you don't get a high enough score because your language ability may be is not quite strong enough, it actually

might be the best thing that ever happen to you if it scares you off before you spend \$150,000 on a law degree.

Jacob: Right. That's a good logic.

You told me before that you ... I guess in 2L, your second year in law school, you decided that you don't want to be an attorney. Why don't you kind of tell me what went through your head and why you made that decisive decision?

Nathan: Well, the biggest reason is because I just have the greatest job in the world, I think. I mean I love what I do so much. It rarely feels like work, teaching LSAT. I love the test. It makes sense to me. My students are extremely hard working. They laugh at my stupid jokes. I mean it really is just such an honor to be able to work with these hardworking students. I make my own schedule. I do not schedule myself for 40 hours a week worth of work. I schedule myself for 20 hours a week worth of work. That's the real reason why I'm not a lawyer is because ...

Jacob: You knew that already then that you're going to be an LSAT coach.

Nathan: Maybe I didn't know it when I was a 2L.

So what happened was I had been teaching LSAT for someone else; for one of the big national prep companies. In the summer between my 1L and 2L year, I decided to start my own business because I knew that ... Well, I knew how much the students were paying for the class they're taking that I was teaching. And I knew that I was doing all of the work, except for the marketing part.

Jacob: Sure.

Nathan: I thought I could figure that out because I had gotten some really good teaching reviews. I figured I could get some word of mouth going and some good reviews. I figured I could attract some students. So I started the business really just ...

I thought it would be part-time and I did not think it would be permanent because I was still at 2L and I thought, "Oh, I'm going to be a lawyer." But the business was just ... It took off right away and I quickly realized, "Oh, this is what you are truly passionate about. You're good at this. You love it. You get paid for it. Why, on earth, would you quit and do anything else? This is just too good."

Simultaneously, I also was fairly bored with law school. I did not do the due diligence before going to law school. I mean I had ... like many students, like far too many students, I really had no idea what lawyering was before I started law school. For me, it was a bad investment.

It could have worked out fine if I didn't have something better to do. I could have, I think, become a successful lawyer. Maybe I would have fallen in love with that, too. But I found the classes to be pretty boring. I just wasn't into it. I was like, "Wait, this is what lawyers do? Oh, boy, I can't imagine spending my life ..."

Jacob: Doing that.

Nathan: Doing this, yeah. I mean it all worked out very well for me, in the end, that's why I'm so aggressive about trying to get my students to question whether law school is the right choice for them.

Jacob: Right. I said, this is something that you kind of not known for but you mentioned that also in your intro that you are seriously trying to talk people out of law school. It's interesting for me because I ... when I work with attorneys and I coach them -- there are many attorneys that aren't happy and they're working and they're like, "What else can I do?" But what if you can find those people before they even go to law school and you can convince them, logically, that they shouldn't. So do you find there's a profit of somebody who shouldn't go to law school?

Nathan: The question that I pretty consistently ask my students is can you name a lawyer whose life you would like to have and whose life you could conceivably obtain through law school, wherever you think it is that you're going to go to law school.

I don't care what the name of that lawyer actually is. It's not like I'm, you know, building a database or anything.

Jacob: Yeah, of course. Of course.

Nathan: What I want to know is do you actually know any lawyers? Do you have any idea what this is? Because I'm sure that the people who would go to law school without knowing any lawyers at all are going to be more likely to be unhappy with the decision they're making.

Jacob: Right. Because they feed themselves from movies, and media, and Boston Legal, and all that kind of stuff. That's not really what most lawyers do. It's really about state of mind.

Nathan: Yeah.

Jacob: Most of the work is not actually glamorous.

Nathan: Oh, no. It's completely unglamorous.

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: It's much harder work. It's much longer hours. It's not glamorous at all. It doesn't pay nearly as much as people think.

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: I mean it pays incredibly well for a very select few, right?

Jacob: Of course.

Nathan: When you look at the average salary for lawyers then it ends up looking like it's a lot because a few make a lot.

Jacob: Right.

I personally think that one of the reasons why it's happening is because law schools are doing a very bad job about structuring and projecting what's the reality out there. For example, law school should be providing more marketing courses. They should be providing more business development, business skills, survival in a law firm type of deal and they're going to do that. So what happens when you get out of there, then reality hits you.

Nathan: Yeah.

Jacob: It kind of leads me to my next question. The last six years has been the worst time for lawyers in many, many years. I mean we had a very hard time -- economy-wise -- in the legal field. I'm wondering how has it impacted the business that you're in, the test prep industry?

Nathan: My business has done great all throughout. I've seen nothing but increases in my number of students since I started my business. But I only have a tiny fraction of the LSAT business that's out there.

I guessed the other day that in San Francisco, where I've been teaching, since 2007? Yeah, it was 2007, with my own business since 2009 in San Francisco and I have all these great Yelp reviews and people telling their friends and they love it. My classes are full. Always full. I still think I probably only have 10%, 15% of LSAT business in San Francisco.

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: I think my business has been successful because I've gotten ... I listened to your last episode with Kari Embree about the importance of online reviews.

Jacob: Yes.

Nathan: I couldn't agree more with that, for my business. I mean my business literally would not exist if it wasn't for Yelp.

Jacob: Of course.

Nathan: Because I was kind of ahead of the curve on that, or just because I got so many good Yelp reviews, for whatever reason, my business has not suffered at all. But I do know that ... like Kaplan, for example, the bit national test prep company. I think they've been struggling quite a lot.

I continuously hear people tell me that they registered for a Kaplan class but then the class, at the last minute, got cancelled due to low enrollment. I think that the LSAT business, as a whole, is -- Oh, I mean it has to be struggling because there's half as many people taking the LSAT now as there were five or six years ago. It's literally down by half.

Jacob: Okay. That's happened.

Nathan: Yeah. LSAT test administrations are down by 50% since five or six years ago. I think the big, major prep companies have struggled but it hasn't hit me.

Jacob: Okay. Perfect.

I think, personally, that things would change. People are more confident about the legal profession right now especially with -- I'm here in Vegas, in a legal conference, and we're talking today about the future of law and the use of technology. And that more and more attorneys are going to be using new technology. The confidence in practice in law is going to come back. It will be a good cycle of people returning to law school to do this new and cool innovative things like offering legal services online and things like that. So that definitely will help you, too, of course.

Nathan: Yeah. The scare a few years ago was that a lot of network was going to be automated, right? Also the scare that the work was going to be outsourced, like, to lawyers in India.

Jacob: Sure.

Nathan: But hasn't it happen that anytime you do the automation or you do the outsourcing that you just need other lawyers to manage that whole process, right?

Jacob: Exactly. Yes. In that respect, I think that there'll be like another bounce back of attorneys that are eager to -- young attorneys who know Facebook and Snapchat and Instagram and they don't know how to use that and how to integrate that

into legal marketing and communication with clients. So, definitely, future is there. I'm excited for you and for everybody.

What I want to ask you now, and I'm actually curious, is if you can share with us an all-time favorite LSAT game or question, something cool or crazy, that you've seen in a test.

Nathan: Oh. Something cool or crazy, you know.

Jacob: [unclear 00:24:41]. Just the favorite.

Nathan: LSAT is far from cool.

Jacob: Not cool, yeah. Cool [unclear 00:24:47].

Nathan: I'm a professional nerd.

I think a lot of the games are really fun. There's a certain type of game that I really like. Only the LSAT students out there would even know what I'm talking about. It's in Prep Test 45 which was the December 2004 LSAT. There's this game where you're trying to figure out which friends are in a photograph. It's like seven friends and you're just trying to figure out who's in the photo. There's all these rules like if so and so is in the photo then some other person has to be in the photo. And if some person's in the photo then somebody else can't be in the photo. That sort of thing.

That type of game, with a lot of conditional logic in it, really [unclear 00:25:44] people when they first see it. But I have grown to love that game over the years because if you learn some very basic ... It's really just kind of painfully obvious once you see it up on the whiteboard. If you start linking those rules together ... It's like "If A then B and if B then not C. Then that means that if A then you're not going to be able to have C." It's kind of obvious but you can link the rules together in that game into one, big long chain.

When you make the whole chain then you get to see these giant inferences. Like you learn so much about the way the system works. When you learn so much about the system before you even do the questions then the game becomes incredibly easy when you actually do answer the questions. That game, in particular, every time it comes up in my curriculum, I get excited.

There's another game which was in December 2008, Prep Test 56. There's this game with trying to figure out which trees are planted in these two parks. That game has this crazy, huge inference where there's this one of the trees or one variety of trees which are Tamaracks which I don't even know what a Tamarack looks like. I should Google that some time.

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: As it turns out, in this game, if you just look at all the way the rules work in conjunction with one another, it turns out that the Tamaracks have to be in both parks. There's two parks and it's just very simple. Tamaracks ends up in both parks always all the time.

The reason why this game sticks out to me is because that inference, just by itself, it destroys the game. It answers more than half of the questions before you even are ever asked those questions.

Jacob: Right.

Nathan: That's exciting to me because when I can get a student to actually make that leap and then if I watch them answer the questions and realize that they've already answered the questions before they were asked, then, yeah, my LSAT nerd excitement goes off [unclear 00:28:07].

Jacob: You feel the breakthrough there.

Nathan: Yeah.

Jacob: Excellent. To me it's very fascinating because it's just one of those things that, you know, you have to pass it to move on to the next step which could be the career of your life. That's why it's so important.

Nathan: Yeah.

Jacob: Nathan, as we come to the end of our show, one or two tips that you can share with people who are about to study for the LSAT or thinking about it that can help make it a bit easier, more manageable.

Nathan: Sure, yeah. I could also go on all day about this.

One thing, people ... they manage the time really poorly on the test but the average person, when they first see the test they say, "Well, I've got 25 questions that need to be answered and I have 35 minutes," because every section has 35 minutes. They say, "Well, 35 minutes to answer 25 questions ..." and they do some math and they realize that that's 85 seconds per question or something like that. Then they try to answer each of the questions in 85 seconds so that they can finish the section. I see the logic behind that.

But what people don't understand is that the test is designed in such a way that the average person can't finish the test in time while also getting the questions right. What people end up doing is if they try to attempt so many questions, they spread their attention way too thin and they misunderstand the questions, they

misread the questions, they fall in to every trap that the LSAT has laid for the unwary test taker and they end up just scoring horribly because ... really because they finished, they end up scoring horribly.

The first, like, mind-blowing thing for most students is to realize that, "Hey, I don't need to do every single question and, in fact, I'll do better if I don't. What we really need to do is slow down and focus on accuracy." People don't understand as well is that the questions earlier in each section are the easy ones and the questions at the end of each section tend to get harder. Not a little bit harder but a lot harder.

If you miss more than, let's say, two in the first ten or if you miss more than four in the first 20, you really shouldn't be doing more questions than that. Because all you're going to be doing is making silly mistakes earlier in the section on the easy questions so that you can then have plenty of time to do ... harbor ones which you might miss even if you had unlimited time.

Jacob: Excellent. Time management is the key for anything -- the test or anything that you do. Perfect.

Thank you so much, Nathan. What we're going to do is we're going to link your website and all the -- how to find you in our show notes. I thank you so much for taking the time to come on the show.

Nathan: Very good. Thanks for having me on.

Jacob: Excellent. Have a beautiful day.

For you guys who are listening, thanks for the emails, thanks for the comments, and we'll see you at our next episode. Thank you.

Closing: Thanks for listening. You can find even more resources, including the show notes for this episode, at enchantinglawyer.com. That's www.enchantinglawyer.com.