

*I had been fortunate enough to seize an opportunity...  
to explore the unknown. To be denied this experience or to somehow  
have it stripped away would have left me with one looming  
question: what might have been?*

When Chris Pavlak failed the bar exam in 2006 and 2007, the comfortable optimism of becoming an attorney vanished, replaced by feelings of shame, humiliation, and inadequacy. Fixated on the financial ascendancy of being a lawyer for a large law firm, Chris had attended law school for all the wrong reasons. In that hypercompetitive environment he became singularly focused on comparing himself to others, status, and making money. When chaos reared its ugly head in the form of repeated failures, he realized he would have to radically reshape his life. Uncertain about where a new path might lead, Chris embarked on a life of service in the United States Marine Corps.

In *From Lawyer to Warrior*, Chris shows how failure might be considered an opportunity to willfully and courageously confront the chaos of life. The crucible of Marine Officer training and the privilege of leading Marines ultimately helped recalibrate the vision of his life. This is an honest and inspirational memoir about reinvention and reclamation—of finding meaning in the uniqueness of personal tragedy by being absorbed in something bigger than yourself, camaraderie, and being responsible for others.



**CHRIS PAVLAK** graduated from law school in 2006. He failed the bar exam twice before joining the US Marines and becoming a ground intelligence officer. During his service, Chris has led marine rifle and scout sniper platoons, been a planner for Marine Corps service-level exercises, and served as an advisor to Afghan security forces. Still in the Marine Corps Reserves, Chris is a faculty member at National Intelligence University near Washington, DC. As a civilian, he is a consultant on the policies, ethics, governance, and regulations of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. He lives in Alexandria, Virginia. Visit his website at [www.lawyertowarrior.com](http://www.lawyertowarrior.com).

BARCODE

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FROM LAWYER TO WARRIOR

CHRIS PAVLAK



FROM  
LAWYER



WARRIOR

*Failing the Bar, Becoming a Marine,  
and Finding Meaning*

CHRIS PAVLAK