

WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION (WIPC)

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION



Committee Newsletter | Fall 2013, Vol. 1 No. 1

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am happy to present our first newsletter of the 2013-2014 year for the Women in the Profession Committee. It is our objective to provide you with unparalleled resources and opportunities from this committee in the next year and hopefully set a precedent that will make this group a first-stop resource for women in law long term. The WIPC has talented and dedicated committee members, and I look forward to working closely with everyone to achieve our goals.

In this newsletter you will find committee updates and articles written by our leadership and members. If you are interested in writing an article for our next newsletter or for the website, please send me an email! We would love to disseminate your words of wisdom to our committee members. Please also never hesitate to contact me with feedback or ideas as to how we can improve as a committee and how I might better serve as Chair.

Neyleen Beljajev
Chair, ABA YLD Women in the Profession Committee
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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Programming

We have some other programs in the works but it is too early to mention them just yet! We are in the outreach stage of many of our ideas and are looking to collaborate with other committees and commissions.

If you have any ideas or would like to be involved in planning our programs, opportunities are available! Engagement in the WIPC is an excellent way for new and young attorneys to connect with others and learn more about the ABA YLD. I am always accessible by email and would love to hear from you.

Fall Conference in Phoenix: October 10th-12th

The ABA YLD's Fall Conference will take place the weekend of October 10th at the Arizona Biltmore. The conference is specially designed to help build, market and manage your practice and organization. You will get substantive law and legal updates, learn how to take your practice and organization to the next level, and network with top national presenters and lawyers from the Phoenix area and from across the country.

Registration is now open, the registration form is available online [here](#) if you would like to attend. *Register by September 6th for special discounts: \$85 for ABA Members and \$95 for non-ABA Members.*

Teleconference: “Learning to Lead: What Really Works for Women in Law” to take place on October 16th

On October 16, 2013, a collaborative teleconference between the WIPC and the ABA’s Commission on Women in the Profession will be held. The teleconference, entitled “Learning to Lead: What Really Works for Women in Law”, is primarily a discussion of the book of the same title by Gindi Vincent. This book synthesizes the research and anecdotal evidence on leadership techniques that help women in all fields develop in all aspects of their careers and condenses and focuses the information into digestible concepts that women lawyers can use. During this teleconference, theories from the book will be discussed by the panelists, who will share practical tips and tricks for women in the law.

Visit the WIPC webpage closer to the date of this teleconference to register.

Mentorship Program

We are in communication with the Law Student Division and are excited about getting the mentorship program initiated. More information to come as we get closer to launching the program. Please contact me if you are interested in participating.

Next Step Diversity Challenge

We have expanded the ABA YLD’s [Next Step Diversity Challenge](#) to include programs developed by Law Students and/or Law Schools and we are working with the ABA Council for Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Pipeline to create the [Next Steps Diversity Challenge Database](#) for all programs that have been developed based on the recommendations in the *Diversity in the Legal Profession: The Next Steps*.

101 PRACTICE SERIES ARTICLES

Partners in Pumps: Women on the Partnership Track

By Emilee Boyle Gehling

When companies and professionals need their deals to come together, they turn to Emilee to anticipate and meet legal needs, clear roadblocks, and complete the transaction. Her general practice includes Business Law, Commercial Law, Contracts Law, Corporate Law, Debtor and Creditors, Employment Law, and Real Estate Law. Emilee has recently been invited to join as a Partner with the Goosmann Law Firm, which practices in Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

Every female attorney has her professional goals. For many young attorneys in private firms, their goals include making partner. The Association for Legal Career Professionals reported that in 2012, women represented only 19.9% of the partners in U.S. law firms. As women, we can utilize our unique strengths and explore opportunities to change this number. Below are some pointers to help you get there.

Find Out.

Seek out information about the partnership model utilized at your firm. Understand the eligibility metrics and set your goals to meet and exceed each requirement. Write down your goals and track them weekly, monthly, and/or quarterly. Speak to partners in the firm about the

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responsibilities that will be expected of you when you become a partner. Be clear about what you want, then set your goals and tick them off one by one.

If you plan to take off time for maternity leave, have an honest discussion with your firm about billing requirements that would be expected given your time off. My firm, run by a female rainmaker, was clear that billable hour requirements will be proportionately reduced for maternity leave. In my view, if you are not getting paid while you are on maternity leave, your billable requirements should not be the same as your male colleague who is paid while you are not.

Speak Up.

Don't assume your firm's shareholders know you want to be a partner. Make sure you mention you want to be on the partnership "track." A good time to do this is at your annual review. Approach each discussion about your performance as an opportunity to showcase the value you added to the firm and finding opportunities for growth.

"Bill Like A Man."

My boss and founder of our law firm heard this advice from her (male) mentor. Although it may be read with a sexist undertone, the message may nevertheless be helpful. His view was that some women attorneys would miss billing opportunities because they did not value the time they spent analyzing a matter. For instance, if you analyze your case while out of the office and come up with a key case strategy, bill your time. His perception was that women would hesitate to bill unless they were working in a more traditional sense. Don't hesitate to value your time and work.

Take Advantage of Networking Potential.

As women, we can take advantage of unique networking potential. For instance, women have the freedom to go to coffee or lunch one-on-one with men and women. Some men hesitate to ask women to lunch for fear it would feel like a "date" if they ask. Women also are often hard workers attuned to detail (in my experience). We can use these attributes to volunteer for committees and groups where we can set the agenda and gain recognition for the work we do.

Just Ask.

Let potential clients know what you do. If you have built a relationship with a potential client, let them know you are not too busy to help them should they need it. Or let them know you appreciate referrals. Don't miss opportunities to help potential clients.

If your goals include becoming a partner in your law firm, taking the actions outlined above will help propel you forward in your career. Goal-setting and measuring your progress are some key elements to getting where you want to go, whether you arrive clad in flats or pumps.

Time Flies: Hard-Learned Lessons Since 2009

By Ashleigh Rollins

Ashleigh Rollins is an associate in the San Diego office of Lozano Smith. She represents school districts in the areas of labor and employment, students, special education and charter schools.

I started to write this article a couple different times. I tried to come up with arguments and give overarching sage advice. I realized during my attempts that I was fraudulently making conclusions that could not be fully supported at this relatively early stage of my career. I do not pretend to know all the answers in just my fourth year of practice. After scrapping my previous attempts, I decided to do what I do best (no, not lawyering): be honest. Here are some lessons I have learned since I began practicing that will hopefully serve you well:

1. **Do not be short-sighted. This is a career, not a job.** We all did the extra work to finish school and pass the bar. It would have been a lot easier to get a job and shut it off at 5:00 p.m. everyday not to return until 9:00 a.m. the next morning. That is not what you chose. You chose a way of thinking and a way of life. Your legal career demands more of you; act accordingly. Invest in your career, and it will pay dividends.
2. **Be intentional and choose your practice area wisely.** Some newer attorneys might have laughed at this heading and the idea that any of us have the privilege of “choosing” a practice area. When I passed the bar at the end of 2009, it was not exactly a recent-admittee’s job market. However, as you gain experience, you will have more opportunities. Think about where you want to go and how you can get there. Think about what you want out of a practice area and research different practice areas by reaching out to more experienced attorneys. That is a great way to learn new things, make contacts and perhaps eventually make a move. If economic realities require you to take a “job” that is not your chosen practice area, embrace your current situation, learn as much as you can and build relationships with colleagues and mentors. Identify transferable skills that you can develop and use in the future.

My current law firm principally represents school districts. I have found education law to be an amazing practice area, particularly for women attorneys. My firm actually has a slight majority of women. My firm’s slow and busy seasons correspond with the school year, so many attorneys who are parents can easily take vacation when their kids are out of school. I enjoy a supportive working environment where we are treated like human beings instead of billable hour machines. It is widely known, understood and respected that we have families and lives outside of work.

3. **The career path is not a straight line. Embrace the crooked road.** I am very fortunate to be in a great practice area at a great firm. However, I did not waltz into this job directly out of law school, and young lawyers should not expect to obtain their dream job right out of school either. For most of us, the career path is not a straight line. The good news is that you can end up where you want to be if you work hard, persevere and intentionally move towards your preferred practice area. Embrace whatever road you travel and know that every bump is a learning experience.
4. **Be tough.** Though it may be difficult to believe, you may experience some gender inequality in your practice. You may feel like opposing counsel is condescending or judges do not respect you as much as the male attorneys. Be tough and get over it. It is not about you. We have a job to do and clients to protect.

Exude confidence. As new attorneys, we usually do not feel confident because we may not know what we are doing most of the time. Exude confidence anyway. This is particularly

important for new women attorneys dealing with some of the issues identified in #4. Exuding confidence will reassure your client, create respect, and actually make you feel more at ease. Find your own trick to help you put forth confidence and use it to your advantage. I am over 5'10" and I always wear high heels when interacting with opposing counsel. I know my height has an effect because almost every attorney I have ever opposed has asked me about my height. I always smile to myself and stand a little taller when I respond.

5. **Do not worry about what others can do for you. Do things for others first.** As young lawyers, we have to worry about building a practice (meaning a client base) and building a professional reputation (in the community, at the courthouse, and among other attorneys). Doing things for others will help you in both areas by building a network of relationships. Develop a reputation for being available, responsive and invested in your firm and your community.

The corollary to this rule is: **do not keep score.** With all this "doing for others," it is very tempting to keep score and expect something in return. Do not do that. Keep doing what you know is right by helping others, even if you do not immediately receive anything in return.

6. **Build as many relationships as possible.** Many times events and mixers can be intimidating, particularly when you are first starting out and do not know anyone. This is not high school. Say hi to everyone. Get to know everyone. If this is difficult for you, volunteer for a project or a position that will force you to work with and get to know others. It will get easier with time and practice. When your contacts call on you, always respond quickly and positively.
7. **Gain as much experience as you can.** I recall, shortly after passing the bar, telling a partner of my law firm that I was "barely" a lawyer. He responded that I was as much of a lawyer at that moment as I would ever be. (This is also the partner who brought me the line, "You are a fish. You have to swim.") Even though we are new, we better act like the licensed attorneys that we are. Do not cower in your back office researching all day. Talk to the partners and other associates. Volunteer for assignments. Come up with assignments to move cases forward and discuss them with the partners. Take the initiative and show that you are willing to step outside your comfort zone. Almost everything is going to be uncomfortable at first, but you will be better for it.
8. **Never burn bridges.** New lawyers commonly switch firms. If you switch firms, do not burn bridges with your former bosses or co-workers. You do not need to disclose every little hurt on your way out the door. Be grateful for your time at that firm, the experience you gained, the opportunities you had, and move on. Even if you are not treated completely professionally when you leave a firm, stay on the high road. You never know when or where you might run into a former co-worker or boss.
9. **The state bar requires substance abuse training for a reason. Stay healthy.** I remember laughing during law school about a flyer for a lunchtime presentation reading "Which bar is life leading you to?" with pictures of the justice scales and beer bottles. After practicing for a few years, that flyer is less funny. Being an attorney, and especially being a new attorney, can be incredibly stressful. Undoubtedly things are not always going to go your way. Get used to it. If you want to make this career last, you need to

find healthy ways to deal with stress. Pretending that you are not stressed is not a solution.

All of my lessons have something in common: they contemplate the long game. As lawyers, we commonly have to think of the long-term consequences of short-term actions. We should treat our careers with the same careful consideration. Although my suggestions might not always be the most fun or the easiest to accomplish, you will not regret that you engaged in any of them. At our early stage, we need to open as many doors as possible. Play the long game because we are in it for the long haul.

Your “Stiletto Network”

By Sherry Hechanova

Sherry Hechanova specializes in medical negligence and elder abusedefense. When not spending time with her family and friends, Ms.Hechanova enjoys fishing, running, and traveling.

Today, many women are establishing strong networks (be it personal or professional) by having lunches, meeting for yoga, joining professional organizations, volunteering in their community, participating in mentorship programs, having “play dates,” and interacting with each other. I believe that every woman should be part of a “Stiletto Network.” Pamela Ryckman’s *Stiletto Network: Inside the Women’s Power Circle that are Changing the Face of Business*¹ explained that “Stiletto Networks” are made up of a group of women that come together and help each other become the “biggest, boldest, bravest” versions of themselves they can be. With professional women’s limited time, effective networking is a valuable skill.

There are many conventional means to establish strong networks, which range from joining professional organizations, to volunteering in the community, to utilizing the internet. There are numerous legal organizations that facilitate networking opportunities for women: The Orange County Women Lawyer’s Association², Black Women Lawyers of Los Angeles³, Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles⁴, Women Lawyers of Los Angeles⁵, etc. Law school alumni organizations are an effective and inexpensive networking tool that is often overlooked. The State Bar of California has a list of mentorship programs in which women can participate and expand their network.⁶ As attorneys, many of whom have families and children, the internet is an excellent medium for networking. Websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn provide a convenient and effective tool for establishing, maintaining, and improving ones’ network.

However, despite the conventional networking tools mentioned above, women are also now utilizing innovative means to network. Many of the networks I have witnessed formed from women having lunches together, signing up for fitness classes, setting up “play dates” for their children, registering for the same cooking classes, or going wine tasting. Other women take a much more progressive approach in establishing and becoming part of “Stiletto Networks” by

¹ Ryckman, Pamela. *Stiletto Network: Inside the Women’s Power Circles that are Changing the Face of Business*. AMACOM: New York, 2013.

² <http://www.ocwla.org>

³ <http://www.blackwomenlawyersla.org>

⁴ <http://www.caala.org>

⁵ <http://www.wlala.org>

⁶ <http://www.calbar.ca.gov>

writing blogs. The *Truth About Mommy*⁷ is a blog consisting of a female litigator's witty anecdotes regarding the challenges of being a mother and a litigator, which reminds us that we are not alone. Furthermore, it reminds us that present challenges may make for humorous stories later on — hopefully. Therefore, whether you write a blog, volunteer as a mentor, or take a co-worker out to lunch, recognize the networking opportunities you have and maximize them.

⁷Greco, Vicki. *Truth About Mommy*. www.truthaboutmommy.com. August 2013. Web. August 2013.