

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BREAKFAST WORKSHOP Where Young Attorneys Gather for Career Advice

Navigating your way down a career path, or even finding one, can be a daunting task for many lawyers. It can be especially hard for the midlevel attorney who often spends so many hours working that there is little or no time to think about future goals and the steps to attain them.

Speaking to an audience of more than 100 young attorneys at the City Bar's Professional Development Breakfast Workshop, titled "Achieving Professional Satisfaction and Success," Susan Manch of Shannon & Manch LLP urged participants to make career planning a priority and take time out to think about it. "Firms' expectations for midlevel associates go beyond mastering the work product," she said. "Firms want to see midlevel associates show entrepreneurial spirit, take ownership of projects, and demonstrate an ability to supervise."

Achieving career success and satisfaction is a step-by-step process, says Manch. "First determine what it is that you want to do, then lay out and implement a plan that will get you there. Be mindful the entire time of the need to be flexible in adapting your plan along the way," she said.

For young attorneys, often the most difficult questions to answer are: What do I want to do? and, Where do I see myself in 10 years? To help participants answer these questions, Ms. Manch asked them to think about a great day at work. "What was it that made it great? What can be done to have more days like that?" Equally important is to think about what drives your career. "Is it interesting work, financial reward, opportunity for promotion, the ability to achieve a work-life balance?" Thinking these questions through can help provide a clearer understanding of what your career goals might be, she said.

Create a Career Plan

With personal and profession goals in place, it is time to begin to put together a career plan and develop strategies to meet these goals and enjoy career satisfaction and success along the way. New attorneys should start to lay the groundwork, inside and outside their work environment.

Forming positive interpersonal relationships and building a network are key, according to Ms. Manch. "Make sure to maintain past relationships, especially with law school friends or previous employers; it is as important as building new relationships."

Manch also advised participants to seek out mentors at work and though participation in outside groups, such as bar associations or pro bono organizations. She reminded the audience that more than 80 percent of jobs are never listed in classifieds or with headhunters, proving the adage that it is often who you know. These outside activities not only build relationships, they build skills as well.



Susan Manch, guest speaker at the Association's Professional Development Breakfast Workshop on September 30th, advised more than 100 young attorneys on how to create a career plan and to develop strategies that will help them achieve their career goals.

Attorneys should identify their strengths and weaknesses, and work to maximize their strengths. By maximizing the impact of your legal and technical expertise you may more easily achieve the success you desire at work. You also need to benchmark yourself and gauge how you stack up against other members in your class.

Most firms have a formal evaluation process in place. You should not treat this cavalierly. Seek feedback and make the most of the insights, both positive and negative.

Be a Self-Starter

Workshop participants were advised not to sit back and wait for work to come their way. Know what work is available and seek assignments that show off your abilities, while still advancing your skills.

Find out what skills and behaviors your office values and exhibit these attributes at work. It is important to be mindful, however, that your firm's expectations will likely change as you move ahead. The skills valued in a junior associate are different than those valued in a more senior associate.

Using these tools can assist you down a path to partnership, as well as to other positions with a firm, in-house, and in any other legal setting.

In summing up, Manch recommended that a career plan be treated as a work in progress. "Make sure to review your plan at least four times a year to see what has been achieved and what areas still need work, and then make adjustments. By developing a meaningful plan young attorneys can focus on their goals and seize control of their career."

For more information on the Professional Development Breakfast Workshops and a complete schedule of upcoming sessions, please visit www.nycbar.com.