

How to...

WLAM Leadership Class

Types of Networking Individuals

What is a mentor?

A legal mentor is an experienced lawyer who passes their guidance, experience, and advice to another attorney, law student, or legal professional. With the help of a mentor, a legal professional can learn new skills, set better goals, and build confidence in their career. A mentor can work with a mentee one-on-one or in a group setting. In addition, the goal of a legal mentorship is to create a relationship where a more experienced lawyer can convey real-world wisdom and support—so the mentee can learn and grow.

Discourse is the heart of a legal mentorship, and the discussion can occur by meeting in person, talking on the phone, or via email correspondence.

Legal professionals can arrange mentorships formally via a legal association or organically through networking.



Why do you need a mentor?



As a law student or new attorney, having a legal mentor is a great way to have an established lawyer show you the ropes. Unfortunately, most lawyers aren't taught many important lessons in law school. That's why a mentor who can help you set career goals, search for a job, and prepare you for proper work-life balance, networking, and the business side of law can help start you on the right foot.

Where do you find a mentor?

The most advantageous places for law students to look for a legal mentor are often within their existing networks and affiliations. You're likely already connected to people and programs that can help you find the right match. Look to:

- **Clubs.** Law-related student clubs and organizations may work with potential mentors.
- **Law school resources.** Check if your law school has any formal programs to help facilitate mentorship opportunities with legal professionals or upper-class students.
- **Law school faculty.** Professors and faculty members may become mentors, or they may be able to help connect you with an appropriate mentor.
- **Internships.** Check if there's a formal internship program or if you can find a mentor while interning.
- Law school clinic placements
- Networking events (both sponsored by your law school and offered in your community, like through the chamber of commerce)
- Professor recommendations
- Simply asking your network: friends, family, former employers, etc.

How do you structure your mentorship?

Once you've found the right fit, you need to consider what **questions** to ask a lawyer mentor and establish **goals** for your mentorship. It's essential to think about these factors from the start. This way, you can maximize your experience and be **respectful** of your mentor's time. Keep questions, goals, and respect in mind to help promote a positive, productive mentor-mentee relationship.



Asking questions



Time is valuable, so avoid asking questions that you could easily find the answers to by Googling. For example, you can often find basic biographical facts about potential mentors on their law firm website. Instead, think of questions to ask a lawyer mentor that focus on their lived experiences, opinions, and advice. For example:

- How would you describe your career journey?
- Can you recommend any books to read? Do you listen to any legal podcasts that you think could be beneficial?
- Do you recommend any associations for me to join? Have you had any noteworthy experiences that came from associations?
- Are there any lawyer training courses you can recommend?

Setting Goals

Both you and your mentor can establish a more productive relationship if you enter your time together with a clear goal for what you hope to achieve from the mentorship.

To help structure and focus your sessions with your mentor, you should know the answer to the following questions before your first meeting:

- What do you want to get out of this mentorship?
- What professional goals do you want to achieve?
- What personal goals do you want to achieve?



Be Respectful

If someone is taking time out of their busy day to mentor you, you must be respectful of their time and energy. Follow these tips:

- **Respect their time.** Be reasonable with your requests for meetings and assistance. For example, if your mentor is willing to look over a resume or document for you, make sure you give them ample time to reply.
- **Do your research.** Do some background research on your mentor to have a general idea of their career path—this can help guide your discussion and bring up areas that you're particularly interested in getting their insights.
- **Take the lead.** Be prepared to be in charge of making the mentorship work when it comes to scheduling. Since your mentor is giving their time, it's your responsibility to make the process as seamless for them as possible. Don't make them chase you to set up a time to meet.



What is a sponsor?

The sponsor truly comes into play once you have a job. The sponsor will fight for you, uplift you, and support you. A sponsor is someone in a senior level or other influential role who can openly advocate on your behalf for raises and promotions or otherwise vouch for your abilities to fast track your career. So while mentors typically serve as advisers to help you define your goals and identify paths to get there; sponsors put you in place to achieve your goals.

Business Insider offers three tips to impress a power player in your organization into taking you under their wing as your sponsor:

- (1) Exceed expectations, and make your performance known.
- (2) Demonstrate that you are trustworthy and loyal.
- (3) Bring something special to the table.



Using Peers

- Who you know is everything. Your classmates, friends, and family are great resources for networking!
- Don't be afraid to ask a peer for contact information.
- Peers can also help your reputation or help you get a job or internship.



Navigating Office Culture

Realism in the conversation

- The myth of the perfect young professional
- Grow through it as you go through it
- Individualism is a good thing!



KEEP
IT
REAL

Work/Life Balance and Boundaries

Know your limits.

Self-checks every week: how do you feel?

Clear and effective communication.

Compromise where you can to meet in the middle.



Key Takeaway

There is nothing about any workplace that makes it worth staying if it is not a place that accepts you as an individual, and is safe, inclusive, and respectful.



Utilizing Your Network

It's Not What You Know, It's Who You Know

This phrase often is used with a negative connotation, but it can be interpreted more positively. Building a network in your field provides a way to gain insight about possible career paths, and many times the information gleaned from those interpersonal connections assists in finding your niche in an industry or position that plays to your particular strengths and interest.



Job Hunting

- Keep in touch with your references!
 - It's a good idea to have a list of references that you update with someone from each job. Send an email once in a while to catch up!
- Keep in touch with your professional network
 - When you meet someone at a networking event, be sure to follow up afterward
- Be specific about what you're looking for -
 - you're much more memorable if you state you have a particular specialty or goal in mind, versus meeting others and saying you're "open to everything".



Job Hunting

- Have others look over your resume often, especially when you change positions or responsibilities.
- Don't delete old descriptions of responsibilities at your past jobs - these can be mined for inspiration for years.
- Keep a “master list” for your resume, containing old job descriptions, addresses, and contacts. This will come in handy when it comes time to apply to the bar!



Job Hunting

- Don't blanket apply to positions with generic cover letters and materials - use that "master resume" to delete irrelevant experiences and tailor your application materials to a position.
- Leverage previous experiences to get your foot in the door, but request to get more experience in another task or role.
- Handle rejection gracefully - if you get rejected from a job or position, take no for an answer.



Professional Organizations

Get involved! State Bar Young Lawyers Section, Women's groups, American Bar Associations, etc. It's a way to network and meet others, and a way to stay current on relevant law



THE
LGBTQ+
BAR



YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION



Socialization and Support Systems

- Social support systems aren't just here for finding jobs, potential employees, or clients.
- Cultivating your community is an important aspect of self-care.
- Networking isn't all small-talk - Deep and meaningful conversations help us forge connections with one another, but we often stick to small talk with strangers because we underestimate how much others are interested in our lives and wrongly believe that deeper conversations will be more awkward and less enjoyable than they actually are.
- That said, don't throw all of your emotional problems at someone that you're trying to connect with - try to find a happy medium here
- Be proactive - plan activities with others that you want to develop a relationship with.
- Ask for advice - showing vulnerability and being authentic with others develops stronger relationships, and asking for someone's opinion on an issue shows you respect their opinion
- This isn't a one-way street - remember to be supportive and helpful to others in their time of need.
- Use a "Curiosity mindset" - going in with curiosity helps shift attention away from our nerves, and more toward the people you are meeting. And people love to talk about themselves, so it's a win-win!

Dressing Professionally in Law School and the Legal Profession

Dos and Don'ts: Dressing for Law School

DO dress comfortably

DO be prepared to dress professionally on campus during special events

DO keep a backup blazer and dress shoes in your car

DON'T wear uncomfortable shoes

DON'T wear pajamas or sweats



Khawla Rahman



3L Detroit Mercy Law, Detroit Housing Commission

School: Hoodie & jeans on a regular day.

Work: Blouse & pencil skirt combo or quick go-to easy-to-style work dresses when feeling tired.

Stores: Express for legal outfits that are modern and high quality.

Style tip: ALWAYS get in your actual size, especially in blazers. You're better off spending extra time making sure you have the best fit instead of doing damage control later.

Judge Annemarie Lepore



41-A District Court, Sterling Heights, Michigan

Work: Dress pants with short sleeve top & blazer. Prefers layers and always tops off outfit with a great pair of shoes depending on her mood.

Stores: J. Crew & Ann Taylor

Style tip: Professional style doesn't have to be boring. Don't be afraid to infuse your personality into your look—but exercise caution on something that would distract from your presentation & professionalism. If you wear a statement blazer, keep the rest simple. If you wear a dark suit, wear a cool pair of heels. It's all about balance.

Dos and Don'ts: Dressing for the Courtroom

DO pay attention to skirt, dress, and neckline lengths

DO wear an appropriate jacket/blazer

DON'T substitute a jacket/blazer for a cardigan

DON'T wear/hold purse at the podium while addressing the court

DON'T wear leggings or skinny pants



Kirsten Silwanowicz



Associate General Counsel, Great Lakes Water Authority

Work: Lots & lots of dresses. Dresses it up or down depending on whether she's working from home or in the office.

Stores: Shein, Express, Nordstrom, Target, Stitch Fix, Rothy's, J. Crew, & Amazon

Style Tip: Be yourself, whether it's with your clothing or shoes—but be respectful. Your style is an extension of your personality, so dress the way you want, while keeping in mind where you are.

Dos and Don'ts: Dressing for the Office



DO accessorize

“Even if my dress is not that dressy (cotton or linen), you can always dress it up with the right pair of shoes or jewelry, or even a scarf!”

DON'T feel obligated to wear heels or makeup

“If you prefer flats, find a brand you like and buy them in every color. If makeup is not you, then don't wear it. You do you.”

Tanya Grillo



Attorney & Law Firm Owner, Grillo Law

Work: Casual attire unless attending court or meeting with city officials.

Stores: Cabi, Ann Taylor, LOFT, Banana Republic, & Amazon.

Style Tip: It's better to be overdressed than underdressed. Purchase the key pieces—black jacket, skirt, pants, dress, & several tops. Always dress conservatively at federal courts.

Dos and Don'ts: Dressing for the Office



DO wear clothes you feel comfortable & confident in.

“Your wardrobe should bring you confidence and reflect your personality.”

DON'T show too much skin or wear open toed shoes to court.

“Be conscious of what is appropriate in the office or sector where you work. Federal court is a whole different animal and conservative dress is best!”

Networking Next Steps

Networking Can Be Overwhelming

Often you don't have more than a few minutes to talk with someone at networking events, so you may come away with a lot of names and business cards. It can be hard to navigate turning that interaction into something meaningful.



Purpose of Networking

Network so that you will be remembered at the next professional event. The legal field is small and continuing a conversation can become an invaluable asset when you least expect it.



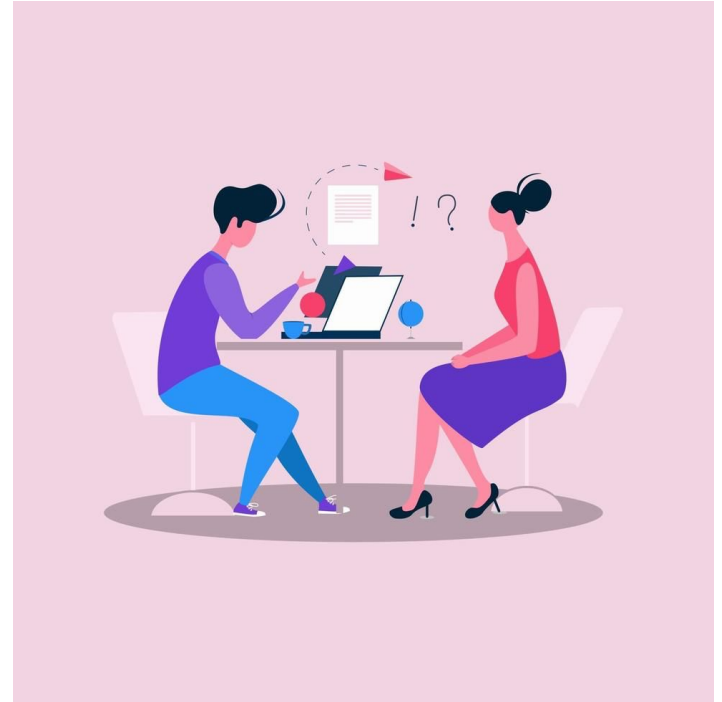
Types of Contacts

Networking can include several different types of contacts that will be useful in different situations.

- If they are in a practice directly related to you, set up a follow-up meeting or shadowing day to learn more about that area.
- If they are in a different practice area, you have just become a referral contact for them. Send clients their way, and they will often do the same.
- If they are further in their careers than you, think of ways they can directly or indirectly help you advance. They or someone they know probably have useful advice for you.
- If you are further in your career than them, offer mentorship and information freely. Give back to the process just as much as you benefit.

Follow-Up Meetings

In follow-up meetings, have a rough idea of what you would like to find out. Leaving the conversation too open can mean you don't get a lot of information you really want.



Tip

Some people keep a notebook or document in which they take note of names, contact information, practice areas, and interests (work or personal) of their network. This can make remembering key details much easier and aid in quick referrals.



Preparing for Interviews

Research

The best place to start is the organization's website.

Get familiar with their mission, motto, and values.



Conversations/Small Talk

Leading the conversation with questions shows great confidence. Making a remark on the location of the office and asking about a favorite nearby lunch spot or commenting on the beautiful office space and asking how long the company has been there is a great way to break the ice.



Billable Hours Requirements

Outside of asking about minimum billing hours and expectations, it is helpful to ask how many hours the top associate billed last year.



Red Flags

High turnover

Inappropriate conversation/behavior
from your interviewer



Questions to Ask

Ask about day-to-day responsibilities.

Ask about ability to work remotely.

Ask what the interviewer is looking for in a candidate.

Ask about overtime expectations/opportunities.



Follow Up

Thank you note/email within 24 hours.

If you have not received a response two weeks after sending an initial application, do a follow up call.

How to do a follow up call:

- Introduce yourself, see if your resume was received, and ask if there is other information you can send like a writing sample or references.
- Use this time to schedule an informational or formal interview.
- Use this time to ask about the employer's timetable for making a decision.

How to Write a Thank You Note/Email

Send a thank you email/note within 24 hours of the interview.

If the interview was on Friday, send the thank you in the afternoon or Monday morning. Avoid sending a thank you email over the weekend.

Address to everyone that was in the room during the interview.

If you do not have everyone's email addresses, ask them to forward on your thanks to the other interviewers.



Salary Negotiation

If your initial offer is over the phone, ask for some time to process the information.

Best done over the phone to minimize miscommunication, but if you are more comfortable sending an email with your requests, that is fine too.

What and how much you negotiate is based on an evaluation of what you have to offer.

Self-evaluation

- Cost of living
- If a job requires 3-5 years of experience and you meet the higher requirement then it may warrant a higher salary.

