



October
Newsletter
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WIPLA Networking News

In Every Issue:

- Member Spotlight
- Organization News
- Upcoming Events
- Highlights from Previous Events
- Our Sponsors



Member Spotlight

Things You Just Don't Learn in Law School: The Importance of Mentors

By Zerina Curevac



Throughout my time in law school I've been told about the importance of joining school organizations, working for a Big Law firm, finding resources to help me with courses, and that I should actively keep thinking about how I'm going to prepare for the bar exam. My experience with mentorship is that it has been mentioned here and there in law school, but overall its importance in a lawyer's life is underrated. Good mentors not only guide their mentees through the ups and downs of

Publication by Our Members

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law school, but more importantly, they can provide guidance during ups and downs after law school. There's plenty of "stuff" law school doesn't prepare you for: how to balance work and life, how to define your career path, how to switch from a law firm to in-house, how to pick up the pieces after a big hit to your career, or how to find help when you need it. And for those who identify as a woman or a minority, there are even more ups and downs that a mentor can provide insight into. Some bar associations, such as the Wisconsin and South Carolina bar, are catching onto the importance of mentorship and considering (or already have implemented) solutions that include providing mentors with CLE credits for time spent assisting sprightly new lawyers. It's important to note that mentorship is not just limited to new lawyers. As we all grow in our profession, we may need insight from others to guide our decisions.

Now, you may be wondering what exactly makes someone a "good" mentor. There are no recipes for making a "good" mentor, but there are certain characteristics I have found in my experience that all good mentors share: they actively listen, they share, they criticize constructively, and, most importantly, they are accessible. Although all of these can really be boiled down to great communication, I think they merit separate attention. Below I touch on these four important characteristics and explain their importance.

1. Mentors Actively Listen. When mentors actively listen, they ask pointed questions and really listen to the answers. They get the chance to hear about someone's narrative which enable them to understand where they're mentees are coming from, what inspired and helped them along the way to get to where they are today, and what they value for their future. Mentors may find that firm life isn't the right fit for a mentee, or that their mentee doesn't have the same timeline to reach certain milestones. Listening to someone's journey informs your mentoring by relieving your anxieties surrounding your mentee's life experience and expectations, it potentially opens up different doors you or they had not considered before, and it allows you to formulate expectations tailored for that individual mentee.

2. Mentors Share. I will never forget when one of my mentors shared her story with me. She didn't start with law school but began her childhood up to her current life. What really stood out to me was her veracity and her casual calm when sharing her ups and downs. That openness was appreciated at a time that I was experiencing anxieties about the life decisions I was making. It allowed me to see that being a lawyer doesn't mean one thing or another and that there are many ways to get there. Sharing with your mentees allows your connection to grow, allows the walls to come down, and provides your mentee with insight about "being" a lawyer they will not get elsewhere.

3. Mentors Criticize Constructively. Improvement sits at the heart of a mentor-mentee relationship. There are many ways to do something, and your mentor can guide you to do them well. Personally, I have always loved and sought out constructive criticism as I believe there is always something to improve. However, in my experience the most common hiccup is starting the conversation about constructive criticism. Lacking the comfort level needed to give constructive criticism can be the first road block. I think this can be easily addressed by having a frank conversation with your mentee about whether they are ready to receive constructive criticism, what they would like feedback on, and how and when they would like to receive it. Sometimes, a mentee may not be ready for constructive criticism or they might not know the right questions to ask (as a mentee you may not know what you need to know). By striking up the conversation first, you allow a mentee to start thinking about feedback (if they haven't already) and you alleviate their anxiety from asking you to take the time to do so (lawyers are busy people after all).

4. Mentors are Accessible. Being accessible to your mentee is essential to your mentor-mentee relationship. Anyone in the legal field, whether just starting

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law school or decades into the profession, understands that time is limited. No one expects a 24-hour response time, but being able to assist your mentee in a reasonable amount of time is the most valuable thing you can do. Even a quick 5 minute phone call is better than no response at all. If you find yourself really swamped, send an email over to your mentee and tell them when they can expect you to have time for them. I've found that I'd rather know my mentor is too busy right now, but we can meet up in a couple weeks, than to guess and wonder and, eventually, have our mentor-mentee relationship suffer from the lack of communication.

I'm no expert when it comes to mentorship, but I know that in my experience so far, mentorship has had a profound impact on my life. I've had some opportunities to be a mentor, and have found that I learn throughout the process, too. Although you may be mentoring someone, you may find that you are mentoring yourself, too, by either affirming or changing the course of your own decisions. The legal profession is very unique from others, and has many ups and downs (e.g., depression, work-life balance issues, etc.), thus making the availability of good mentorship even more significant and necessary. Regardless of your expertise in the legal field, everyone can benefit in their overall well-being from both being a mentor and having mentors.

Organization News

Thanks to all who participated in the WIPLA Survey!

We have received 26 responses so far and will send the survey out again next month, so please take a few minutes to tell us which WIPLA events you love most. The results from the survey will help us plan future popular events, filled with networking opportunities!



Upcoming Events

Wine & Canvas Networking Event

Join WIPLA for an evening of chatting and networking while you sip wine and create a work of art!

Friday, October 16, 2015
Refreshments at 5:30
Painting Starts at 6:00 sharp

The price is \$15 for WIPLA members and \$35 for non-members. The event will be held at Foley & Lardner's Palo Alto Offices. See you there!

WIPLA'S Annual Holiday Party

Save the Date: December 3, 2015



The Women's Intellectual Property Lawyers Association invites WIPLA

members and their guests to join us for our 2015 Holiday Party (with complimentary cocktails and hors d'oeuvres) as a thank you to our members for their commitment to the WIPLA organization.

Highlights from Previous Events

A Discussion of Patent Strategies of Technology Startups

Last July, Celia Lerman, Partner with Rotman, Szlak & Lerman (Buenos Aires), and Stanford University Fulbright scholar LLM student discussed her research on the influence that a patent strategy can have on a startup company's growth. We had a great turnout, which led to an intimate and enriching discussion over wine and appetizers. Celia summarized the event perfectly: "it was a great example I think of fulfilling WIPLA's mission: creating meaningful experiences and new bonds between people in IP from the area!"



August's Networking and Panel Discussion: Licensing Without Borders



WIPLA's CLE program entitled, "Licencing Without Borders," was hosted by WIPLA sponsor Kaye Scholer LLP and featured esteemed panelists, Professor Anna M. Han, Associate Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Global Lw and Policy, Santa Clara University School of Law, and Chelsea Ferrero, Vice President and HGSTDivisional General Counsel. The panel was moderated by Yingxi Fu-Tomlinson, Shanghai Office Managing Partner, Kaye Scholer LLP.

The panelists discussed the dangers and pitfalls of using form licensing agreements in the international context and they challenged the audience to identify problematic terms in form licensing agreements used by big companies today. This interactive approach, using real world examples, made for a lively discussion and provided the audience members with practical tips for their current or future practices.

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