

# Young Lawyers

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## FINDING GOOD MENTORS IS A KEY TO SUCCESS

Mark Twain once said, “Don’t let schooling interfere with your education.” Undoubtedly, this saying makes a lot of sense to many new lawyers. Even with today’s focus on practical skills training in legal education, there is only so much that work at a law clinic or practical skills courses offered in law school can do to prepare students for the real world of law practice. This reason is one of many that supports the need to find a good mentor.

The transition from the ivory tower of academia to the practice of law can be scary. But we Nevadan lawyers are fortunate to live in a tightknit legal community where even newly-minted lawyers who have decided to hang shingles and open their own practices have access to great resources for building support teams of mentors who can help them become effective attorneys and advocates. I say “teams,” because new lawyers can benefit greatly by finding a variety of different types of attorneys and personalities to mentor them in separate areas.

The state bar provides an easy starting place for lawyers looking for mentors through its Transitioning into Practice (TIP) program. TIP mentors must have a minimum of seven years’ experience, giving them a level of practical experience and knowledge that will greatly assist new lawyers in starting their practices. And if the TIP mentors don’t know the answer to a question, they probably know someone who does and can help. So, I encourage new lawyers to embrace the TIP program as an essential opportunity to begin developing relationships with other bar members. But, because the TIP program lasts only six months, you can’t stop there.

The next obvious mentor is an attorney specializing in an area of the law a new attorney wants to learn more about. This resource is readily available when you join practice-specific sections of the state bar, which can be very beneficial to a new lawyer. There are numerous sections for lawyers to join, and the benefits of membership often include discounts on practice-specific CLE courses and the opportunity to meet and collaborate with experienced attorneys in specific practice areas. Additionally, one section in particular that I highly recommend to solo practitioners looking for mentors is the Solo and Small Practice Section. There, new attorneys will find lawyers eager to give advice and guidance based on their own experience that can help less-experienced attorneys tackle all of the myriad details running a solo practice

entails—details that many lawyers in bigger firms never have to consider.

Finally, becoming a member of the Young Lawyers Section and attending YLS functions can be a great way to find a less obvious, but in my opinion no less necessary type of mentor: other new lawyers who are just a couple years ahead of you in practice. While you should never hesitate to ask questions, it can be invaluable to have another new lawyer, with just a bit more experience, to turn to with those maybe-silly questions that you would prefer not to take to a busy partner or senior associate down the hall, or the more-experienced solo practitioner down the street from your office. Undoubtedly, you will find that second- or third-year lawyer helpful to you in these cases, because they can easily empathize with your confusion about things that have become mundane, routine tasks for much more experienced attorneys.

Finding good mentors is essential to becoming a great attorney. I have been very fortunate in my career to have found some wonderful mentors, whom I continue to turn to and rely upon for guidance. And, in the end, it all comes full circle. Having, on occasion, found myself in the role of “new lawyer with a couple more years of experience,” it’s not hard to see that, more often than not, the teacher can learn just as much from the student as the student can learn from the teacher. So, as your career advances, you will be well-served to take the time to become a mentor yourself when newer lawyers start to seek you out for guidance and advice. **NL**