



MY OPINION

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Building Meaningful Relationships

When I was a child, my grandmother would often tell me that life is as much about who you know as it is what you know. Like all grandparents' wisdom, her words were deeply profound and I would find them to be true later in life.

In order to be a successful lawyer, you have to be highly skilled in your craft. In addition, you must be able to generate business. Competence and skill comes from hard work and experience. Similarly, being able to generate business also comes from hard work and experience. You should build your book of business by developing and cultivating meaningful personal relationships with others now. The foundation for such relationships is laid through common interest, mutual trust, and respect.

RELATIONSHIPS MAY LEAD TO PLACES YOU NEVER IMAGINED

As a first-year law student in Atlanta, I volunteered to help staff a two-week trial technique program along with other first-years. The program, which was mandatory for all second-year students, followed exams and was taught by some of the best trial lawyers and judges from across the country and Canada. One of the tasks that I was assigned was to drive a shuttle van that took the visiting lawyers and judges to and from the law school each day. This volunteer assignment gave me an opportunity to meet some of the best and brightest in our profession. On one particular day, one of the lawyers asked if I could drive her to a mall because she had left her walking shoes at home.

That afternoon, I drove Leila D'Aquin, then an attorney at Haynes and Boone,

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from the law school to a mall. During the drive, we had a great conversation about our respective families, shared values, and interests outside of the law. I do not recall us discussing anything relating to law school or the practice of law. When we returned to the law school, Leila gave me her business card and asked that I call her later that summer as she thought I would be a good fit at her firm. Prior to our discussion, Texas had never been on my radar as a potential place to live and work, as I had no family or friends there. Nonetheless, wanting to keep every door of opportunity open, I did as Leila had asked. I interviewed with the firm and accepted a clerkship the following summer in the Houston office. I later joined the firm and Houston became my new home.

The ability to connect with people on a personal level is just as important as your resume and can lead to opportunities that you had not considered. If you are currently seeking employment, then go to places where potential employers are and make a personal connection — some-

thing that you cannot do by submitting your resume online. Technology is great, but a firm handshake and in-person conversations are better when you are looking to build meaningful relationships.

RELATIONSHIPS BUILT THROUGH BAR SERVICE

Bar activities provide young lawyers the opportunity to meet and interact with other lawyers outside of the conference room or courtroom. Working with lawyers on projects to educate children, mentor law students, or provide pro bono services to veterans will help you build meaningful relationships with others who may share your same interests or goals. Through bar service, I have found lawyers who I can trust to show up or participate in volunteer activities. As an in-house lawyer, working with an outside lawyer on a pro bono project is great, as it gives you an opportunity to evaluate that lawyer's character, skill, and commitment without having to first incur fees. Indeed, if I can trust a lawyer to do a great job on a task for which she is not paid, then I am more inclined to refer a case or client to her, as I know she will zealously protect my client's best interests.

I have had clients needing lawyers in different parts of the state or in areas of law outside my expertise, and I have been able to connect them with good lawyers who I know and trust and consider lifelong friends. Bar service helps you expand your referral network and build meaningful relationships while also serving your community. In addition, it has the added benefit of helping you grow your book of business. Get involved today. ☘