Practice Tips for Young Lawyers

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The Chicago Bar Association
Founded 1874

The Young Lawyers Section
YLS
The Chicago Bar Association

Dear Young Lawyer:

Over the past year, the officers of The Chicago Bar Association took the "We are Family" theme to heart, writing articles for the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin that shared insight on issues that have made them who they are today. To personally welcome you to the CBA Young Lawyers Section family, which you'll be a part of for your first ten years in the practice, we have compiled these articles about tackling our most difficult coming-of-age issues. This booklet will give you a sense of what was important to us in our early years, how you can address similar issues if they arise, and hope.

No matter the economic climate, there is a way to get what you want from your life in the law. Our wish is that your membership in our organization makes you feel more comfortable in whatever you want to contemplate: balancing work with family issues and athletics, debating going solo or a federal clerkship, transitioning from one workplace to another, or getting motivated to do pro bono work or simply network.

We wish you much success--no matter how you define it–in your new career. Please contact us if there's something the CBA YLS can do to help get you where you want to go.

Cheers,

Jill Eckert McCall

Jill Eckert McCall
2010-2011 Chair
Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section

Table of Contents

Employee Mobility: Should I Cool It or Should I Go?

Ethan G. Zelizer, *YLS Co-Editor in Chief, YLS Journal, 2010-11*

As an employment attorney, I have spent a lot of time during this recession dealing with employee mobility and reduction issues. Whether it be mass layoffs, plant closures, non-compete issues or just your standard separation agreement, employee mobility has been a huge part of my practice these last two years. That's why it isn't all too strange for me to be writing about my own recent employee mobility issues.

On a Tuesday morning in February 2010, I received an e-mail from firm leadership announcing that the cluster of partners and senior counsel that I predominantly worked for–were leaving–TODAY. It was, by all accounts, a complete shock to me and just about every other associate in the firm. Due to various ethical and professional cannons that I will not bother to detail here, the attorneys that I worked for – that were now leaving -- were not permitted to share their plans with me. Instead, shortly after the announcement, I received a call from the lead partner inviting me to join him at the new firm. After considerable deliberation, I made the leap. I followed my mentors and their clients and set off for new and exciting professional opportunities.

Employee mobility…it isn't anything all that new to me. I had moved once before in almost the exact same circumstances–the partners I worked for at the firm I started at out of law school had decided to move on and start the Chicago office of another larger firm. I was reluctant to move then for many of the same reasons: loyalty, professional opportunities, "firm credit," partnership opportunities, quality of work, quality of life, and client exposure.

I will not dare discuss my inner thought process regarding these decisions in a magazine article. Needless to say, I have been blessed both professionally and personally to have worked amongst some of the brightest legal minds in Chicago and I value each and every opportunity I have received. Whether I would make the same decisions again is water under the bridge. Fortunately for me, I am in a great place in my career, at a great firm and again surrounded by superbly talented attorneys.

But enough about me. What about you? What if you or a friend or colleague is faced with a similar decision? As the immortal Clash would say, "Should I stay or should go?" Let's discuss some of the universal considerations.

Universal Consideration Number 1: Loyalty

"If you say that you are mine
I'll be here 'til the end of time."

We all want to be loyal. However, the concept of loyalty has changed from generation to generation. A recent study by the Spherion Legal Group shows that more than 50% of all associates plan on changing firms within the next two years. The emergent young attorney equates loyalty and advancement with contribution and performance. He or she sees job change as a vehicle for growth, takes responsibility for developing and driving his or her career path, and actually rejects job security as a motivator for commitment. What does this all mean? It sounds to me like an associate above all else is loyal to his or her own legal career and professional opportunities. Why the change from our traditional romanticizing of a one-firm career? Perhaps it has to do with the loyalty consideration as it relates to the law firm and its management. Namely, if you decide to stay at the firm despite tempting offers to leave, will the firm remain loyal to you? In this age of de-equitization and associate/partner layoffs, it's hard to rely on loyalty of the firm.

So, are all associates destined to be firm-hoppers? No, not really. "To thine own self be true" can translate in many different ways. For example, I have a friend who has had ample opportunity to move to bigger and more high-profile firms and has refused time and time again for one simple reason: loyalty. I recently asked what that meant to him. Was it the culture, the friends that he made, the clients? No. Actually, it was the silent promise of partnership. It was the feeling he got that his firm would reward him for all of his hard work. This can end in one of two ways: I will either be toasting his partnership or wondering if promissory estoppel applies in this setting. That's why, of course, the struggle to move is such…well, a struggle.

Continued next page

Universal Consideration Number 2: Will You Be Happier?

"You're happy when I'm on my knees. One day is fine, next day is black."

The grass isn't always greener on the other side. It is a universal truth that we all learn one way or another. There isn't much to say about this point other than to strongly suggest that you talk with as many folks as possible before you make a move. Whatever you do, don't fall into the trap of thinking "they want me so they must have good taste." Indeed, there are plenty of reasons why a firm might want you. Many of those reasons may be temporary in nature and still others prove fungible over time. So, before you move on to greener pastures, do your due diligence and figure out what shades of green are at play.

Universal Consideration Number 3: Professional Growth

"Exactly who'm I'm supposed to be. Dime que tengo que ser. Don't you know which clothes even fit me?"

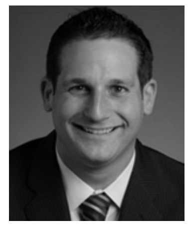
Stagnation disgusts many of us. That doesn't mean we are destined to jump firms. Staying in one place is fine so long as you are continuing to grow your mind and your abilities. You chose law. That means you want to be continually challenged at a high-level in the field of law you enjoy practicing. If that can happen at your current firm – then, perhaps the decision is easy. If it cannot – perhaps even easier. More often than not though, the choice will be between different types of growth and opportunity. You may be able to stay and continue to foster a beneficial client relationship. On the other hand, your new opportunity may lead to bigger and better clients and more challenging work. So which one fits best? Again, this comes down to due diligence and careful self-analysis. My wife is a career teacher. She is often reminding me when I teach my students employment law at Loyola that students learn differently. Some students are visual, some need more mentoring, still others will flourish no matter what the circumstance due to their own inner drive. So how do you learn? Perhaps more importantly, how do they teach? Think about that before you sign your name on the dotted line. The wrong fit can lead to a short-term stay at a firm and, even worse, stagnation in your professional development.

Universal Consideration Number 4: "Firm Credit"

"If I go there will be trouble.
Si me voy - va a haber peligro.
And if I stay it will be double"

You just spent years building up "firm credit" and now you're about to trade it in for a "new opportunity." Let's think about that for a minute. If you're ahead at a casino and plan to take your luck elsewhere, your first step will be to cash-out and use your winnings to seed your next adventure. There lies the rub. If it was only that easy to cash-out your current professional credit with your firm and simply deposit it into your new digs. Partners can do that. They have clients who will likely follow them. You, however, likely don't have a portable book of business.

What we have as junior attorneys is simple. We have our know-how, our drive, the head on our shoulders, our disposition and our integrity. Chances are, you have used all of those things in a commendable fashion to be in the position of picking between multiple firms, multiple jobs, multiple opportunities, multiple whatever. So, my parting thought is this: forget "firm credit" when making this choice. If every other consideration weighs in favor of moving and only "firm credit" weighs on the other side, then trust in yourself to build it up again.



About Ethan:
Co-Editor in Chief YLS Journal Ethan G. Zelizer represents and advises employers in all aspects of employment law, including discrimination, wage and hour, Sarbanes-Oxley actions, harassment, wrongful termination, accommodation, breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty, misappropriation of trade secrets, and regulatory compliance.

Sometimes, the Practice Chooses You: Confessions from a Mild Mannered Bankruptcy Attorney

Vikram R. Barad, *YLS Treasurer, 2010-11*

Ten years ago, if you were to ask me what kind of law would I be practicing today, the last thing I would have responded with would have been bankruptcy law. In fact, I did not intend on practicing law at all once I finished law school. Yes, you read that correctly. What person in their right mind goes to law school and doesn't expect to practice law at all? Surprisingly, there are many people who go to law school and do not intend on practicing law. I was one of them. I went into law school to enhance an anticipated non-legal career. Instead I ended up finding an area of law that so greatly intrigued me that I left my non-legal career to practice that area of law. To this day I'm amazed at how I transitioned from a non-practicing attorney to a mild mannered, seasoned bankruptcy attorney.

But before I delve into how the practice of bankruptcy chose me, a little background information is in order. When I was eleven, my father started a distribution company, importing various goods from around the world and distributing those goods to businesses locally. It was a business that he envisioned me a part of, even at a young age. I can still recall assisting him in the warehouse filling orders while at the same time memorizing the products that were being imported. As I got older, I would accompany him to sales calls and to trade shows as he continued to expand his array of products. Since I envisioned joining the family business, I focused on business related courses in college thinking those subjects, particularly finance, would better prepare me for my future. During semester breaks, instead of going on trips with friends, I would lend a hand where needed at the family business.

My father had encouraged me to consider law school during my undergraduate years but I had not been completely sold on the idea. This was because I didn't believe having a law degree was necessary or helpful for one in the business world. It didn't dawn on me at the time, that many CEOs of fortune 500 companies had law degrees. I had always believed that having a law degree only meant that you were a practicing lawyer or a politician. It wasn't until I attended one of those law school fairs where I met several attorneys who were engaged in non-legal careers that I became convinced that having a law degree meant something more than simply practicing law. As one non-practicing attorney explained to me many years ago, law school emphasizes logical thinking, research techniques, persuasive writing and oral advocacy abilities, skills that are useful in virtually any other profession. I thought my undergraduate training did not provide me with these types of skills, and I decided to pursue a law degree in search for those skills.

Like undergrad, in law school, I focused on those courses that I thought would benefit me in the business world, such as business organizations, tax, structured transactions and administrative law. And similar to undergrad, I spent whatever available time I had during semester breaks lending a hand with the family business. By the time graduation came around, I believed that I was prepared to join the family business and utilize those critical thinking skills that I acquired in law school. After taking the bar exam (which I passed), I joined the family business.

I had several roles with the business, from handling operations to front end office management. As a lawyer, I naturally dealt with any legal issues that came up, such as contract negotiations and collections. As the months went on, I realized that something was amiss; I didn't experience any real passion for what I was doing. While I would describe my work as satisfactory, I felt as if something was missing. Moreover, I also felt my skills as a lawyer were being underutilized. At the time, I wasn't sure what to do about it.

Fast forward a year or so and I received a letter from an attorney who represented a customer that was operating under bankruptcy protection. The letter stated that under the bankruptcy law, our company was required to return payments made by the bankrupt

Continued next page

company to our company during the ninety days preceding the date by which the bankrupt company filed for bankruptcy protection. Amongst bankruptcy professionals, this type of payment is commonly referred to as a "preference" payment. To summarize this concept a bit further, bankruptcy estates may recapture payments made to creditors during the ninety days prior to the filing date of the bankrupt entity. "Wait, you're telling me that I have to give back money to a creditor that owed our company money?" my father asked me. At first I thought this was some kind of heavy handed scam being perpetuated by shady lawyers but as I researched this area of law, I noticed that not only was this a legitimate action, but a very common action that many businesses and individuals are subjected to all across the country. Of course there was a happy ending to that story. After researching and applying available statutory defenses, it turned out that our company's liability was next to zero. But this moment in time was a career changing moment for me. The baffling nature of bankruptcy "preference" actions intrigued me. As I researched this area of law, I became fascinated by its complexity and the strategies employed by companies operating under bankruptcy protection. It was like a breathe of fresh air. Naturally this had to be the area of law that I chose to overlook in law school because it appeared dull and boring. Nevertheless, it was at this time that I believed it was time for me to explore the realm of bankruptcy law further.

Approaching my father and explaining to him that I wanted to leave the family business to explore my interest in bankruptcy law worried me, given that he had been grooming me as his successor for many years. He surprised me though; in fact he encouraged me to seek out a living that will enable me to realize my full potential. Work is not work as many people refer to it; it should be fun and exciting. While the transition from a non legal career to a practicing attorney wasn't easy, I can honestly say that after seven years of practicing bankruptcy law, I thoroughly enjoy it.

About Vikram:
Vikram R. Barad is an associate with the Maxwell Law Group, LLC. He concentrates his practice in the areas of bankruptcy litigation, restructuring and creditors' rights. Mr. Barad has been actively involved in the legal community for over seven years, particularly with The Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section. Prior to his current role as Treasurer, Mr. Barad served as Director for the last three years.

Choosing to Be a Law Clerk

Mary Curry, *YLS Vice Chair, 2010-11*

Deciding precisely what to do as a lawyer is no easy task for many of us. I was fortunate enough to receive two job offers when I graduated from law school in 2005: the first in the field I specialized in during law school, health law, and the second, a law clerk position. The next step was deciding which position to accept. I was just out of school and had no idea which opportunity would be best for my career and future goals. I knew that law clerk positions were coveted, but I also had specialized in health care and knew that a job in that field would perhaps lead to better positions in that area in the coming years. And let's face it, the health care job was going to pay significantly more.

I spent the few days I had to consider both options talking to several people, including those in the health care field (who recommended I stick with the health care job), the dean of my law school, and several mentors. It came down to the general answer that either job would be a good choice.

So I chose to become a law clerk. I decided that making less money would be a good tradeoff to the broader experience of clerking. I was correct. Because of that choice, and after five years of working in both State and Federal court, I can now tell you the reasons why joining the many lawyers who have taken this path may be the right decision for you too.

First, you get immediate, meaningful, experience. As a new lawyer, the best part of my first few weeks on the job was how immediately I was trusted as just that: a lawyer. My first assignment was not just a research assignment. I was to write an opinion. And not just on a basic discovery dispute. I was reviewing an administrative decision regarding a mother's alleged abandonment of her baby. The outcome, therefore, had a serious impact on a family's life.

I completed the opinion and then prepared myself for it to be picked apart for all of the many errors that I assumed I must have made, being only months out of law school. To my surprise, the judge agreed with my analysis and was ready to enter the opinion. The point to take away from this is that as a law clerk, you truly are a vital part of the judicial process, and you are trusted by the judge to take that responsibility as seriously as he or she does.

Second, you get a breadth of experience in multiple areas of law. During my first year clerking, I had covered constitutional issues, real estate disputes, administrative law reviews, as well as discovery disputes and dispositive motions in a variety of general commercial litigation cases. To reflect back to my other job possibility, where I would have been dealing with only a limited, and specific, area of the law, clerking was teaching me more than I could have imagined. And that concept does not just apply to new graduates. I am now in federal court and, though I have been here for several years, I continually see disputes that involve new issues requiring research that I have not done before.

Third, writing skills. This one should require little explaining, but I will reiterate the absolute importance of this aspect of clerking. I have now seen five years of lawyer's briefs, advocating for their client's positions in all types of disputes, both in simple discovery motions as well as complicated insurance coverage or intellectual property disputes. The shocking reality is that a large number of these briefs would not survive your law school legal writing instructor's red pen, and yet they are submitted to a judge deciding a real life dispute. Often these less than exemplary briefs are not written by junior level associates who are still learning, but by practitioners who have the experience and knowledge base to get it right. To me, this only further supports the idea that a clerkship could benefit almost any lawyer, at any level of experience, because there is no better place than clerking to improve how you write.

From this side of the bench, you see what not to do perhaps more than what works, but that is a valuable learning tool. And the constant requirement to summarize legal arguments, the law, and succinctly analyze issues leads to better writing, and quickly. This is also evidenced through my work with the over 50 law students that I have supervised as externs. On average, these students – as it was for me – experience a huge shift in their writing in the short time they are working for the judge.

Fourth, it is a valuable job to consider at almost any point in your career. I pursued the traditional

Continued next page

track of becoming a law clerk right out of law school, but I am now surrounded by more law clerks who have left private practice to pursue their clerkships. For example, several clerks I know were sixth or seventh year associates before joining a judge's chambers. And an even better example is my own judge, who became a law clerk in her 15th year of practice (after having worked in both private practice and at the United States Attorney's Office). As one fellow clerk told me, having come from a big firm in her sixth year as an associate, she has now gained more experience in her one year in the courthouse than in all six of her years doing document review, observing depositions, and working closely with partners but never handling a case all on her own.

The point to take from this brief review is that there is, indeed, good reason that law clerk positions are coveted jobs. Even more so today, clerking can be an option at many points in your legal career, to help you better understand the perspective from the bench, improve writing skills, and see a vast array of legal issues. So if you are deciding what to do next, you may want to add a clerkship to your list of possibilities.

About Mary:
YLS Vice-Chair Mary K. Curry is currently clerking for the Honorable Susan E. Cox, a United States Magistrate Judge in the Northern District of Illinois.

Bar Membership as a Networking Tool

Justin Lee Heather, *YLS Chair Elect, 2010-11*

Most lawyers recognize the importance of bar membership and participation as a valuable networking tool. Many, however, lack the skills necessary to effectively take advantage of the many opportunities presented by bar involvement to develop and build their professional relationships. Understanding the nature and what is meant by networking is fundamental. Only then can young lawyers truly build a meaningful network from their numerous bar association contacts. Hopefully the following observations will assist young bar members in developing a helpful network of professional relationships.

The Nature of Networking
The first, and arguably most important, step in network building is understanding the nature of networking. Networking is simply about relationship building. Meeting new people and getting to know them, what interests them, areas of commonality, unique traits and interests, etc. Young lawyers should keep in mind the old adage that it is better to give than it is to receive when networking. This means that lawyers must give their time and attention to learn about new contacts and remember what they learn. Networking is not simply about collecting and dispensing business cards.

Young lawyers must understand the nature of networking in order to fully utilize their bar membership as a network building tool. Current economic circumstances have led many young lawyers to rely heavily on their bar membership for purposes of obtaining a job. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with attempting to leverage bar membership into gainful employment – indeed, this would be one of the main member service benefits of bar involvement, young lawyers must be mindful that networking rarely results in such immediate tangible benefits. Rather, the natural give and take of building a successful professional network often takes a substantial amount of time to come to fruition. Young lawyers must understand both the importance of building their network and how they develop those relationships.

Tips for Building a Solid Network
A substantial body of literature and countless CLE program have been developed in recent years providing advice to lawyers about networking. The following is not meant as an authoritative discussion or learned treatment of networking, but reflects the author's impressions and suggestions for young lawyers in their approach to networking in the context of their bar membership.

Be Seen. Simply attending bar functions and meeting fellow lawyers and legal professionals is the first step in leveraging your bar membership into a network. Regular appearances at bar events and meetings help young lawyers to become known to others. After a few of these events, it is likely that bar leaders and other members will approach a new face and introduce themselves, even if not at the first event.

Introduce Yourself. Bar officers and other leaders, as a general matter, endeavor to meet as many people as possible during meetings and other gatherings. However, every young lawyer must take it upon themselves to introduce themselves to others. The first bar event is often a very daunting experience with new faces, many of whom are leaders in the legal community. Young lawyers should realize that each of these people at one point attended their first meeting or event and were previously in just such a position. Remember: Most bar members do not bite.

Get Active. Active involvement in bar activities is essential to creating a successful network as a young lawyer. Nothing helps a young lawyer make new friends and develop meaningful relationships more than being active in bar projects and committees. Whether judging mock trial, writing articles, planning CLE programs or being involved in other member and public service projects, The Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section and other bar groups have countless opportunities for young lawyers to get involved and meet colleagues in the legal community.

Give As Much As You Get Networking requires a balance of giving and taking. As noted above, young lawyers must give others their time and attention in order to understand them and develop a meaningful relationship. Simply exchanging names and cards will give a lawyer another name for the rolodex, but will not help develop the strong relationships necessary for truly successful networking. When opportunities present themselves, lawyers should think of whether others within their network might enjoy being called upon to fulfill the role.

Continued next page

Say Yes. Saying yes, even though you would rather not take on a project or assignment, indicates dedication and selflessness that will not be easily forgotten. Young lawyers that are willing to donate their time and work outside their comfort zones are those that are first thought of by bar leaders when opportunities arise. Making such a positive impression upon your colleagues often will help cement a professional relationship better than many casual meetings.

Develop a Plan. Networking requires planning. Lawyers must create a plan for turning their bar membership into a working network of professional relationships. Young lawyers must consider what they want to get out of their bar membership and develop an approach to meet those goals. For example, if a lawyer's bar membership is designed to help meet colleagues that practice in a specific practice area, appropriate committee membership and taking on related projects would serve that purpose.

Be Flexible. As noted above, professional networks, although they must be nurtured, often have a life of their own. Networking often leads to unique and unexpected professional associations. Lawyers must exhibit flexibility in their networking efforts. In other words, do not be afraid to go with the flow even if it is not part of "the plan."

Be Patient. Building a successful professional network takes hard work and patience. No matter how much energy a young lawyer brings or how active he or she wants to be in the bar, relationship building takes time to develop. Creating a professional network is a natural process that a young lawyer must allow to grow and develop on its own.

Have Fun. The CBA YLS, other bar associations and legal groups offer a number of opportunities for young lawyers to develop and hone their networking skills. Despite the work necessary to develop a strong professional network, young lawyers should make sure to enjoy themselves and the friendships that they develop as a result of their bar membership

About Justin:
Justin Lee Heather currently serves as the Chair-Elect of the Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section and as the Senior Advisor to the Serving Our Seniors Project, the 2010-11 public service project of the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division. He focuses his practice on complex commercial litigation and international litigation and arbitration. Mr. Heather actively serves a number of bar associations and legal organizations. In February 2010, he received the ABA YLD's National Outstanding Young Lawyer Award.

Young and Solo

Patrick B. Markey, *YLS Project Officer, 2010-11*

It is no secret that this is a tough market for new attorneys just starting to practice. There are many lawyers who did well at a good law school, but cannot find work. Don't despair; the current economy could be a blessing in disguise.

In 2006, I started my own solo family law practice after having worked for other attorneys for four years and I am very satisfied with the decision. Going out on your own is a difficult decision for anyone to make, who like myself, has never run their own business and is accustomed to having a regular paycheck. I am not stating that going solo isn't hard; however, if twenty-somethings such as Andrew Mason and Mark Zuckerberg can found multi-billion dollar companies like Groupon and Facebook, respectively, you can start a solo practice.

Starting out.
Get an office. This is the biggest fear of all new solos. I had the fear of paying office rent when I didn't know if I would have enough income or even any income. Practicing out of my condo for two weeks was very depressing and not functional. A friend and mentor of mine asked me at the time "What, are you practicing law out of your bathtub or glove compartment?" It was a bizarre statement, but the message hit home and I had an office right away.

You will feel better when you have your own office. There is office space of all sizes and prices, as well as a lot of office sharing in Chicago. Something exists for everyone. I recommend a full-time office rather than an address where you just receive mail and can use a conference room. Office sharing is the best option for new solos as other attorneys in the office can provide work, referrals and general support.

Getting cases.
This is every lawyer's main objective and another fear of new solos. Most attorneys who get sworn in do not have any clients lined up to hire them. All attorneys basically start from zero. Even the lawyer who has been practicing for 30 years and has a great book of business probably started from zero. The new solo shouldn't expect to have the same amount of business as that seasoned attorney right away. Generating cases takes some time, but it does happen.

That said, getting cases happens quicker than the new solo expects depending on the area of law you practice. You have a lot of extra time to network and market yourself since you don't have a job to report to every day. Your increased marketing and networking will generate new cases for you.

You also won't need that much business to get by in the beginning. That lawyer practicing for 30 years with the great business likely has a lot more overhead than you, including associates, staff, expensive office space and higher malpractice insurance. He or she needs to have a lot more business than you to pay all those expenses.

Remember: all the money the client pays goes to you after you pay your expenses. The more you bring in, the more money you earn. You will never have to argue with a boss for a raise again. Another solo attorney, after learning that I went solo, asked me "What's the best time of the day?" I was confused. He answered "when the mail comes." He was right.

As stated above, income to the solo attorney is gross receipts minus expenses. The expenses with running a law practice, such as office space can be very intimidating in the beginning. The stress associated with expenses never fully goes away, but it goes down significantly after you have practiced for a while. An attorney I know who has practiced almost as long as I have been alive told me "in the beginning you worry about nickels and then after a while you just stop." I have found this to be true and remind myself of it when my expenses seem to be getting too high.

It's a business.
Being a solo lawyer is being a small-business person. You are going to spend a decent amount of your time not practicing law, which I like. I do like to practice law and it is the service which I sell and pays my bills, but I wouldn't want to do it all day, every day. I need some diversity in my work day.

That diversity means the new solo lawyer wears a lot of different hats. You are the CEO, CFO, COO, Director of Marketing, tech support, admin person and so on. Not every hat is great to wear; you want someone to do the administrative tasks and bookkeeping tasks as soon as you can afford to do so.

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Some non-legal items are actually fun. I enjoy the marketing hat a lot. It is fun to tinker with my website and learn about things such as Search Engine Optimization, then see how many hits my website gets.

Marketing and keeping track of your finances is just as important as practicing law. There are a lot professionals who can help you out with the marketing and financial aspect of practicing law. As a lawyer you're not expected to know all of this yourself and you should get outside consultants to help you. Other startup businesses do it and a law practice is no different from them.

As solos we do work hard. All the extra hats cut into practicing law which is how you earn a living. But you don't mind the extra work since it all helps you grow your business and hopefully make more money. Being a solo does provide a lot more flexibility since you create your own schedule and work when you want to. That said, you still have a boss. Client needs and demands don't go away as a solo, they increase because they are now your clients. The buck also stops with you. If you aren't working hard by taking care of clients, marketing, and otherwise keeping the business running you're not going to be successful.

If I wasn't a solo lawyer, I most likely would have started another small business. I like working for myself and the positives far outweigh the negatives. The irony is that I can take off whenever I want, but my business suffers a little when I do. I am working on that issue. But one thing I do know is that I'll never have to worry about taking too long of a lunch or having to tell someone I have a dentist appointment again.

About Patrick:
Patrick B. Markey is a domestic relations lawyer with the Law Office of Patrick Markey, P.C. He is an Officer with the CBA YLS, and is currently serving as a Project Officer.

Lessons on the Road to Success

Jill Eckert McCall, *YLS Chair, 2010-11*

My goals during law school were likely the same as any other law student: graduate law school, line up a job before that time, and pass the bar on the first try. Outside of career-related goals, however, I also had the goal of buying my first condo upon graduation, getting married, and having four kids.

Thankfully, I've made good on each of those promises–but I wish the road was less bumpy. I think it's partially because I lacked role models.

I'm not sure why I didn't come across a lawyer who harnessed the description of success I wanted: performing strongly at work, balancing a full-time job, staying happily married to a spouse who was also working full-time, and raising wonderful children. It wasn't until recent years, thanks to my involvement in The Chicago Bar Association, that I've been able to identify a few who showcase that definition.

Here are some lessons I've recognized as I work to achieve my version of success that may be helpful as you embark on your own quest--most focus on transitioning into the role of parent:

1. *Agree to terms of engagement before starting out*. My husband and I come from families of six and enjoyed that enough to want to replicate it. We only took the minutia of that decision (e.g., financial impact, daycare type) in stride because having kids was our non-negotiable.

2. *Get waitlisted ASAP*. Get your name on daycare lists (there shouldn't be a financial commitment) as soon as you find out you're expecting--infant care is expensive and limited (there aren't any standalone daycare facilities in my home zipcode!). Then spend time exploring those options and the alternatives. You need to determine best and worst case scenarios, as well as options in between, because things can fall through last minute (e.g., facilities can close). We totally failed on this point when expecting our first: I waited until the end of my pregnancy before calling daycares and didn't find a spot until the Friday before I had to return to work. Thankfully, when I was expecting my second, I redid my daycare rounds. The facility across the street from my work made a sibling exception if we moved our oldest as well!

3. *Recognize the give and take of accepting help–and then accept*! I have taken advantage of the help my extended family has provided and have come to terms with the fact that when I am not there, it is someone else's decision (hard for a Type A person to come to terms with!). If I didn't have the support of my husband, his parents, and my sister in particular, traveling for work on a near-monthly basis during the past four years may not have been possible.

4. *Learn to say "no" (er, at least "not yet")*. I know this is probably the most critical point, but it's a struggle to follow because you have to get over feeling like you let someone down or aren't properly supporting a cause you believe in.

5. *Think about timing from all angles*. Your life may not be ready for kids yet (ie, your career could always benefit from a few extra years of waiting), but when will any of us (or our employers) truly be ready? I was working around two goals–completing my family before I was 35 and ensuring that my kids were at most two years apart. I can't articulate how thankful I am that I connected with an employer who provides flex time (which helped me see that I could do what I needed to do and still work full time) and paid leave. My employer also showed me its commitment by promoting me four months before my most recent due date.

I also thought about the physical toll of having kids–how my body would handle pregnancy as well as how caring for a new baby would impact it. Although my first pregnancy brought out more issues, at least carrying around a baby, her stuff, and her siblings is a good workout!

6. *Get organized*. My husband and I made the mistake of not strongly labeling our bins before renting a storage unit because we thought we'd have moved into a bigger place before our fourth child was born. Now we're paying the price–rebuying some of the things we know are in storage.

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7. *Be mindful of time passing*. Like many parents working full time, I feel like I'm on fast forward and have found making a big deal out of our kids' milestones helps me slow down when I need to. For example, our final addition is turning a month old and because we can't, as my mother-in-law would say, shrink wrap her so she stays little, I'll spend time doing a "photo shoot" with her. Also, this year we will celebrate our oldest starting kindergarten. Her grandma, dad, siblings and I are going to take her to her first day of school Sept. 7. And finally, although I haven't had time to make elaborate scrapbooks for the kids, I have made some quick ones via online services like Kodak Gallery. We read the one I created of each child's birth on their birthdays. I've also kept mementos for them with the hope that one day they can relive some of their own transitions and put together something more meaningful themselves. The extra bins may make my husband crazy and make our attic more full, but it's my way to try to preserve the memories we have.

8. *Seek out people who have done what you want to do*. It can help your morale and teach you less painfully than trial and error.

Anyway, I continue to wonder if today's law students see the lawyers who showcase the descriptions of success they've set for themselves. It may not be our place to judge how other people define success but it should be our responsibility to show young lawyers that no matter how they choose to do it, there's someone out there who proves that things can be done the way they hoped.

About Jill:
Jill Eckert McCall is the Chair of The Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section and Director of the American Bar Association Center for Continuing Legal Education. She recently became a Certified Association Executive and earned her JD/MBA at DePaul University and her undergraduate degree from Ohio University's Honors Tutorial College.

Finding My Ironman

Matthew A. Passen, *YLS Co-Editor in Chief YLS Journal, 2010-11*

As young lawyers, we are typically the low man on the totem pole at our firms and on our cases. We are handed work by partners and senior associates, and are expected to turn in a flawless work product. We are constantly making first impressions – with our colleagues, with our clients, and with our judges. This typically translates into one common theme: we are consumed by work.

In 2008, I was no exception to this pattern, as an associate in the litigation department of a large law firm in Chicago. I had been there a couple of years–keeping my head down, doing my best, billing my hours–when it struck me. I needed some rejuvenation; an outlet from the daily stresses of work.

Enter the Ironman: 2.4 mile swim. 112 mile bike. 26.2 mile run.

The thought of attempting an Ironman-distance triathlon first came to me at a wedding over Thanksgiving weekend. At the reception, I was talking with a friend with whom I grew up playing hockey. This friend was also a litigation associate at a large firm in Chicago. It turns out he had recently completed an Ironman triathlon.

This is a guy who I knew was a star associate at his firm–well on his way to making partner. He was also recently engaged. How in the world did he find time to train for, let alone complete, the Ironman? And then he said something to me I will always remember: "Ironman is a mental test. The race itself is 99% mental and 1% physical."

I remember thinking to myself: 140.6 miles in one day a mental test. Sure buddy.

Nevertheless, that conversation planted a seed in my brain that would not go away. If he can do it, why can't I? I always wanted to run a marathon–why not do it for the first time as part of an Ironman? A week later, I signed up for the Ironman, scheduled to take place that September in Madison, Wisconsin. I had eleven months to train.

Mind you, I was no endurance athlete. I grew up playing competitive ice hockey and then, after graduating college, I entered a few Olympic-distance triathlons to stay in shape. I had never swam longer than a mile; I had never biked more than 25 miles; I had never run longer than seven miles.

How was I going to find enough time to train without: (1) getting fired; or (2) getting divorced? Question two got even more complicated when I found out that my wife was pregnant–and her due date was only two weeks after Ironman race day.

But once I chose a plan, it turned out the training was surprisingly manageable. I trained six days a week. On weekdays, I trained in the morning before work–never longer than an hour and a half. On Saturday and Sunday, I did my "long" bike and "long" run, respectively.

The training barely impacted my work week–I had no problem putting in full days at the office. In fact, I was surprised at how good I felt after swimming laps or completing a short bike ride in the morning. As my workout sessions improved throughout the months of training, my confidence improved and I brought that confidence with me to the office each day. Moreover, the training sessions became my release from the everyday stresses that consume a young associate in a law firm.

Sure, there were times where I had to modify my training schedule because of work–coming into the office on the weekend, traveling out of state for a deposition, editing a brief or finishing up some research in the morning, etc. If I had to miss a day of training because of work or for some other reason, I didn't let it stress me out. Most of the time, however, I was able to find an hour somewhere in the day to get in a training session.

Fortunately, I also had a wife who was completely supportive. Not only was she pregnant at the time, but she was also an associate at a large law firm, so she had her own demanding schedule to worry about. It helped that she was so exhausted from the pregnancy, and I was so exhausted from the training, that neither of us minded taking it easy on the weekends.

Still, there were many stretches of adversity along the way. Times when it was cold and dark outside, when the last thing in the world I wanted to do was jump into a cold pool and swim laps. Times when

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I met with an orthopedic surgeon, chiropractor and a physical therapist because my knees or back hurt when I ran. Times when I was so tired after riding my bike for three hours, and knew that I still had three more hours to go. And many, many times when I thought I didn't have what it takes to complete an Ironman.

However, I made it to the starting line on race day. And when that gun went off, I knew there wasn't anything that would keep me from the finish line. The race was technically the most physically challenging day of my life, and there were certainly plenty of times throughout the day where I felt the physical toll. But my friend was right – the training had prepared me mentally to know that I had what it takes.

I finished the Ironman in thirteen and a half hours. And you couldn't wipe the smile off my face for months.

That was two years ago, and I'm still trying to find my new Ironman. Actually, I'd like to sign up for another Ironman race, but I think my wife would kill me, especially now that we have a two-year-old daughter running around at home.

There are times when work becomes my Ironman. As lawyers, there are simply times where we must become all-consumed with work. I am now a trial lawyer at a plaintiff's personal injury law firm. For me, preparing for trial is the same as preparing for an Ironman: you must have a well thought out plan; each day is a strenuous mental challenge; you must prepare for occasional setbacks; there is no substitute for preparation; and the end result is the product of your hard work.

I never thought it would take a 140-mile race to give me such perspective on my chosen profession. But that is exactly what the Ironman did for me.

About Matthew:
Matthew A. Passen is a personal injury lawyer with Passen Law Group. He represents individuals and the families of those who have been seriously injured or killed as a result of the negligence of others. Mr. Passen is an Officer with the CBA YLS, and is currently serving a two-year term as Co-Editor in Chief of the YLS Journal.

So Where is the Silver Lining?

Natasha D. von Will, *YLS Vice Chair, 2010-11*

We all have our good days and bad days at work. Often times in litigation, the bad days can feel like they will never be outnumbered: you lose a motion, a deponent testifies against your client's position and causes problems for your case, you have a contentious relationship with opposing counsel who lacks civility and continues to unnecessarily badger you and your client, you have to work all weekend, and the list goes on and on.

So where is the silver lining?

I love being a lawyer because no one day is the same as the next. I love the intellectual exercise of the practice of law; using logic and reason to help defend our clients. I love digging into the intricacies of each situation and developing a strategy with our clients. And at the essence of it all, I love helping people solve their problems.

But there is also a greater call to duty that I feel is a part of the legal profession and that I love; pro bono. As members of the legal profession, we are the keepers of the entire legal process and largely determine whether it works. When less fortunate citizens of our community are blocked from receiving the same assistance others can afford, they are truly at a disadvantage and are crippled from achieving the rights and benefits our legal system affords. If even one person is denied the benefit of our legal system, we do not have equal access to justice and we as attorneys are failing society.

Pro bono comes in many forms. As coined by the leadership of The Chicago Bar Foundation, there are many ways to "invest in justice." An attorney can help raise money for pro bono organizations; an attorney can also donate money; or they can donate their time and represent clients on a pro bono basis. Each contribution to the pro bono cause is equally necessary. Without funding, pro bono legal service organizations cannot afford to have attorneys on staff to train and partner with volunteer attorneys to assist them in their pro bono representation. And without attorneys volunteering their time to pro bono, legal clinics would not be able to serve all of the individuals in need.

The opportunities in prop bono are plentiful. For many attorneys, the thought of accepting pro bono representation for an entire litigation matter can be daunting, however, even short-term commitment pro bono opportunities are available and equally add tremendous value to our community. For example, in response to the tragedy of losing many first responders in 9/11, two attorneys founded the Wills for Heroes Foundation, through which bar associations could organize local attorneys to prepare wills and other estate planning forms for first responders at no cost. The Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section has proudly adopted Wills for Heroes and is now preparing wills for the Chicago Police Department. The program convenes on a monthly basis at the CPD headquarters. In a matter of one day, an attorney can help several families secure plans for their families in the event of a tragedy. Last month alone, forty-six wills were prepared.

I have the good fortune of working with a firm who recognizes the pro bono call to duty and acknowledges the pro bono efforts of their attorneys. I serve on my firm's Pro Bono Committee and lead their Homeless Experience Legal Protection Pro Bono Program where attorneys volunteer at local homeless shelters to speak with their clients on various legal issues that plague the homeless. When I first started at Segal McCambridge Singer & Mahoney, I was given the opportunity to assist on a pro bono assignment with our now Managing Partner. The assignment was an employment racial discrimination case assigned to our firm from the Federal Trial Bar. After defeating dispositive motions, we were able to secure a settlement for the individual who, as a result of losing his job, was near foreclosure. The settlement could not have come at a better time and certainly would not have been possible without representation. That was a good day, for our client and for me.

As part of my pro bono contribution to the legal system, I serve as Vice Chair of The Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section and as a board member of The Chicago Bar Foundation Young Professionals Board. Both organizations have a commitment to serving the public to promote equal justice and access to the legal system. Projects serving our community are abundant and provide attorneys with a variety of ways to contribute. A large part of our mission at

Continued next page

the CBA and CBF is to promote pro bono opportunities and help interested attorneys find the optimal method to contribute to the cause. To this end, the CBA and CBF are in their 6th year of sponsoring Pro Bono Week from October 25 – October 29, 2010.* This year's theme "Our Deeds Determine Us" is a quote from George Eliot. Although Eliot was not speaking of the legal profession, there is no better way of saying what we put into our legal system is what we get out of it.

On October 28, 2010, The YLS and CBF will hold our 14th Annual Pro Bono and Community Service Fair where 47 organizations will be on display to recruit volunteers for their organization. This year, we expect to exceed last year's success where 450 individuals attended the Fair. The Fair will be held from 5:00 – 7:00 pm at Kirkland & Ellis located at 300 N. LaSalle in Chicago. To attend, you may register online at www.chicagobar.org I encourage all attorneys and law students to attend this Fair. And perhaps you can contribute to the pro bono cause and help someone else, and yourself, say, "that was a good day."

About Natacha:
YLS Vice Chair Natacha D. von Will is an associate with Segal McCambridge Singer & Mahoney in their General Litigation Department. She concentrates her practice in insurance coverage for environmental contamination cases, products liability, construction litigation and other commercial litigation matters.

**Please note: Each year as part of Pro Bono Week, the YLS hosts the Pro Bono and Community Service Fair in Chicago. Visit www.chicagobar.org this Fall for information on this year's event.*

Holiday Networking Tactics

Paul J. Ochmanek Jr., *YLS Secretary, 2010-11*

The holidays are a great time to socialize with friends, colleagues, and classmates. Equally important, it is an opportunity to improve your current relationships and expand your network of contacts. As attorneys, we routinely prepare for tasks, litigation or client meetings. Your approach to networking should be no different. I have compiled a brief list of some best practices to help maximize your networking this holiday season.

1. *Be prepared to build relationships and you will gain new, valuable contacts.* Preparation begins long before you arrive at an event and hand out that first business card. Initially, determine your purpose or goal for attending the event. If you don't know why you are attending and cannot verbalize opportunities that may come as a result of attending, then why attend? Articulating a purpose will help you focus your time more efficiently.

The purpose may be simply to socialize with classmates. This can be a great reason as they may now, or soon will be, in a position to hire. Alternatively, you might attend an event, which focuses on a single practice area and meeting other practitioners. Take time to introduce people who would not have met each other but for your introduction. This shows you are interested in helping others succeed, and they will not forget it.

2. *What should you say when you meet someone?* As unnatural as it may be initially, ask open ended questions to determine others' needs and interests. Listen, as opposed to hearing, what is being discussed. Otherwise, the underlining needs may be missed. You will be surprised at what you can learn when you actually listen.

Eventually, people may ask, "What do you do?" Most respond typically stating, "I am an attorney." Congratulations! You are no different then 90,000 other attorneys in Cook County alone.

Instead, offer a five second introduction about yourself - commonly known as an 'elevator pitch'. The pitch needs to succinctly, but effectively, explain your abilities in layman's terms. Stating that you are "an attorney" or practice "real estate law" is simply too vague. Try, for example, if you are a community associations' lawyer, "I provide legal guidance to condominium associations such as how run their day-to-day business and ensure the unit owners abide by the association's governing documents."

The pitch may also include naming current clients or important deals and cases you worked on, if you can share that information. Be proud of your accomplishments and be ready to discuss them. Talk about organizations you are involved with and what you do in your free time. Don't forget that we are more than just attorneys. You will likely discover common friends and acquaintances, which will strengthen your connection to this new contact.

3. *Become a connector at social events.* One of your greatest and most readily available resources is your own firm! Have a working knowledge of your firm's practice areas, partners, and associates. Your understanding should exceed generalities such as simply real estate, litigation, personal injury, etc. Be prepared to give an example or two of the type of matters that differentiate each of your firm's practice areas in the marketplace. Sell your firm and your own practice will benefit. Impress your firm management by developing business for other practice areas as well as your own. And don't forget to actively seek out current clients at social events as retaining current clients should be a goal of networking as well.

Although beyond scope of this article, the firm's "rainmakers" are attorneys who service the clients' needs and consistently bring in clients. All attorneys are presumed to be competent and deliver meaningful work product. Yet, not all attorneys network properly to secure clients. An attorney who can both bring in a client and service them is a valuable firm asset.

4. *Have business cards available.* When obtaining business cards from new contacts, find time to memorialize the event on the back of the card and also write on the card a general description of the individual as well as bullet points of your conversation. This provides a natural way to follow-up and continued to build relationship in an authentic way.

Continued next page

5. *Moreover, you need to be yourself.* If you have a quiet and reserved demeanor, then you should not attempt to be loud and outgoing. You will not appear genuine and people will see through you. There is a very small chance for a follow up meeting if you do no not seem genuine during your initial contact.

6. *Most importantly, do not forget the follow up, which is after all the reason you prepared, asked questions, made your pitch, and obtained a contact's business card*. That card is useless unless you put it to work. Meaning, you wasted your time! Enter the information into your Outlook contacts as soon as you return to your office and schedule a calendar reminder to follow up with each person you met within a week to let them know you enjoyed meeting them. This follow up with provide another opportunity to build relationships, discover their needs, and explain how you can help.

In sum, we practice law daily, but those attorneys with strong networking skills reap the rewards of increased business generation, higher compensation, and more control over their destiny. Networking skills take time and practice to develop. Practice on your classmates or co-workers and eventually it will result in a seamless conversation as long as you are prepared, listen to others, and are yourself. Good luck! Looking forward to seeing you over the holidays and…don't forget to ask me for my business card!

About Paul:
Paul J. Ochmanek, Jr. obtained his J.D. from The John Marshall Law School in 2005. Paul is an associate at Levenfeld Pearlstein, LLC. Moreover, Paul is an active member of The Chicago Bar Associations Young Lawyers Section and currently serves on its Executive Council as Secretary.

Just Lunch

Kristen S. Knecht, *YLS Project Officer, 2010-11*

While some may say breakfast is the most important meal of the day, as a lawyer, I have come to learn that lunch is actually more important. There are those who swear by a lunch consisting of something from a vending machine, eaten at your desk while you continue to work. Indeed, as a new associate, I was among those ranks and felt that a lunch hour spent doing something other than work was usually a lunch hour wasted. It was quite possibly the perfect hour of the day. An entire extra hour when everyone else was out or otherwise occupied. An entire extra hour for catching up on things, or even trying to get ahead.

But, over the past six and half years, I have come to appreciate the value of a lunch hour that is not spent alone. This is not to say that I am totally against working through lunch. Let's face it, we are lawyers–working through a lunch hour is going to happen from time to time. But, so many unexpected things can happen during lunch. In fact, one of the things that has changed my career happened during lunch.

I was a young associate, sitting at my desk, getting ready for another solitary lunch hour when a partner at my firm came in and asked me what I was doing for lunch. I replied that I was going to stay in the office and work on a few things. Apparently my answer was not satisfactory and I soon found myself putting on my coat and heading to the elevator. His plan did not include me eating lunch at my desk.

In fact, we were heading to The Chicago Bar Association for a meeting of the Young Lawyers Section Intellectual Property Committee. I knew about The Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyers Section. One of the name partners at my law firm, David Hilliard, had helped found the Young Lawyers Section. I was even a member. But, at that point in my career, I had not yet attended any Young Lawyers Section meetings. I thought there would be plenty of time to become more involved in bar association activities later in my career, perhaps as a senior associate, after I had proven that I knew how to work hard and that I could pull my weight at the firm. But, there I was, at my first Young Lawyers Section committee meeting.

I did not know anyone, other than the partner with whom I had come to the meeting. We had our lunch trays and sat down in the meeting room. Before, I knew it, the partner I was with had introduced me to a few of the other attorneys attending the meeting and we were engaged in lively conversation.

I do not remember the substance of the legal presentation during that first meeting. I do remember, however, that as we walked back, the partner I was with began telling me about how, as an associate, he had been involved as a chair of the Young Lawyers Section Intellectual Property Committee and then later as a Director with the Young Lawyers Section Executive Council. But perhaps the most important thing he told me was that attending the committee meetings was "just lunch." I was not spending three hours at a dinner or taking a day off to attend a seminar. It really was just lunch, just an hour, and only once a month at that. Moreover, if I was going to eat lunch anyway, I might as well eat lunch at a place where I was going to meet new people and perhaps learn some new things about the law.

A month later, that same partner showed up at my office door–at lunch time–and asked whether I was ready to go to the committee meeting. Less reluctantly than the first time, I got up from my desk and joined him. Over the next months, it became my routine–the first Wednesday of the month meant that I had a lunch engagement with the Young Lawyers Section Intellectual Property Committee. Soon, I looked forward to going to the committee meetings, because the people who were going to be there were no longer just friends of the partner I was with, they were my friends too.

Eventually, one of these new friends asked if I had time to meet on another day, for lunch, of course. He wanted to know if I would be interested in being the vice-chair of the Intellectual Property Committee the following year. I was delighted! This was a position I had thought was reserved for senior associates, not me, a very junior associate at the time. Well, being a vice-chair eventually turned into being a chair, which eventually led to being a director and then joining the Executive Council of the Young Lawyers Section.

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Over the past five years, I have had the opportunity to meet wonderful people from all areas of the Chicago legal community, not just the intellectual property field and not just fellow associates. From law students to judges, from large firm lawyers to solo practitioners, and from family law attorneys to attorneys who have chosen non-traditional legal careers, the people I have met come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. But all have been willing to offer their time, expertise and friendship. The people I have met through the Young Lawyers Section have enriched my career and my life, whether in small ways or in big ways. I now look forward to attending Young Lawyers Section meetings or events, because I know I will get to catch up with a friend or meet the friend of a friend. All because someone encouraged me to get up from behind my desk and go to lunch.

There are still days when there are just a few too many things that need to get done and I think that I cannot make it to a Young Lawyers Section meeting. But then, I have to stop and remind myself, it is just lunch. And a lot can come from just lunch.

About Kristen:
YLS Project Officer Kristen S. Knecht is an associate at Pattishall, McAuliffe, Newbury, Hilliard & Geraldson LLP, an intellectual property boutique in Chicago. Ms. Knecht focuses her practice on litigation and counseling in the areas of trademark, unfair competition, and copyright law, and on brand development and trademark prosecution.

About the Young Lawyers Section

The Young Lawyers Section (YLS), founded in 1971, was created to address the needs and interests of newly admitted attorneys. To satisfy these needs the YLS offers substantive practice committees as well as public service committees and projects. The diversity of committees and projects affords a wide variety of ways for attorneys to participate in the YLS. Through this participation, the YLS encourages attorneys to develop and pursue innovative ideas and programs.

Since its inception, the Section has enjoyed national prominence, having repeatedly received the American Bar Association award for the best Young Lawyers Section in the United States as well as numerous awards for individual projects and programs. With over 9,000 members, the Section has its own officers, rules, budget, staff and administrative structure.

Get involved today! Visit www.chicagobar.org/yls for a list of upcoming events, committee descriptions and meeting times, and volunteer opportunities.