DAILY BUSINESS REVIEW, "CAREER GROWTH: SUCCESS MENTORSHIP IN THE LEGAL INDUSTRY"

May 20, 2022

By: Gina Clausen Lozier

Daily Business Review

View Full Article

In this process, mentorship provides us with the tools to face the challenges we will encounter in our professional development and push through those challenges with the knowledge of those who share similar experiences.

I knew from a young age that I wanted to be a lawyer. All my academic choices in middle school, high school and college were laser focused on achieving that goal. What I have since learned is most of the time is spent in the process and not in the result. The process is where we have the opportunity to shape our careers, strengthen our weakness and fine tune our strengths. In this process, mentorship provides us with the tools to face the challenges we will encounter in our professional development and push through those challenges with the knowledge of those who share similar experiences.

As with all relationships, communication is key in an effective mentorship. Miscommunications can cause unnecessary anxiety and uncertainty if the parties do not openly and honestly express their thoughts and opinions. It is important to provide feedback not only when something goes wrong but also when something goes right. These conversations provide opportunities for both professional and personal growth. Everyone wants to feel valued in their professional roles and reminding your mentees you appreciate them, even in times of intense work pressure, is integral in building a strong relationship. It is equally important to request, and accept, feedback from your mentee as to how you can continue to facilitate their development and what shortcomings you may have in the mentor relationship. The mentee should feel comfortable sharing their thoughts so mentorship can remain effective.

It is also important to recognize that not everyone receives and processes information in the same way. To establish effective teaching methods, knowing your audience is key. Some may learn from analyzing writing samples or listening to educational courses focused on their practice areas. Others may be better served by jumping in and taking a role in a legal proceeding. Recognizing how someone learns allows a mentor to establish methods that are tailored to the personalities and learning styles of their mentees.

Oftentimes young professionals may perceive they are not ready to tackle certain milestones in their legal career such as taking their first deposition, arguing a significant motion or participating in a business development event. These misperceptions can manifest into internal constraints that prohibit them from breaking free from the roles they arbitrarily place themselves in. Having a mentor that recognizes these patterns is crucial to assisting mentees in taking on challenges outside their comfort zone. Devoting the time to prepare younger professionals for these challenges through observation, practice and a practical understanding of how the event will transpire will instill confidence. Most importantly, a mentor should remind their mentee that they trust them and will be there to support them until they feel comfortable on their own. This is true in many aspects of life. One wouldn’t go skydiving for the first time alone and it may take many jumps

until someone feels comfortable going solo. Exhibiting patience and allowing mentees to develop at their own pace encourages mentees to feel confident in unfamiliar settings.
One of those unfamiliar settings, is the remote work environment that was forced upon all of us during COVID. Remote work took away the everyday encounters and impromptu hallway conversations that were crucial to informal mentoring. Because of these drastic changes, there has been a heightened need for connectivity within the mentorship relationship. Although we may default to emails as a primary means of communication, phone calls allow for more in-depth discussion and avoid miscommunication as oftentimes the tone of an email can be misconstrued. Organizing weekly meetings to discuss current projects, concerns and further mentoring activities can also help establish connectivity and a strong foundation while living in a remote world.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from one of my mentors, Michael Higer and join Berger Singerman in 2015. Higer exhibits every important quality one would want in a mentor and is still someone I learn from and appreciate every day. My experience in joining the firm, along with the mentorship and support of Higer as well as many others at Berger Singerman provided me with the confidence to continue the growth of my career. At Berger Singerman, our collaborative firm culture enables an environment where attorneys mentor and support one another in developing business and serving clients. Given the legal and business complexities in which the firm operates, we work hard to instill a team atmosphere across the firm. The foundation that the firm has established is evident in its leadership and instrumental in shaping the firm's next generation. Those of us that have been mentored by the people before us are now passing along the lessons learned to the younger professionals who will continue to teach those that come after them. Taking the time to mentor the younger generation of professionals ensures the future of the firm and is always a worthwhile investment.

Gina Clausen Lozier is a partner at Berger Singerman. She co-leads the firm's insurance team.

Related Team Member(s)

Gina Clausen Lozier