

Unedited transcript of

## **Knowing Yourself and Defining Your Practice**

from **How New Attorneys Enter the Practice**

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>>: So I want to talk first very briefly about whether hanging your shingle is right for you, knowing yourself and defining your practice. When the people in person came in and you got a little handout questionnaire, I want you to pull that out. And those of you on cyberspace, it is included in your materials. There's - this questionnaire - it's got a purpose. It's to prompt you to think about whether starting your own firm or continuing your own firm is right for you. Every year in January, I actually sit back and I kind of like restock and figure out what I want to do. I look at my own personal and professional goals and objectives. I try to look at them in a new light to see if there are things that I could or would change to make my personal and professional life happier. It's a - I find it to be a refreshing and professional - eye-opening experience. So I'm going to invite all of you to do your own evaluation. So this is yours. It's not - there's not copyright on it. You can draw all over it. You can - if you feel like giving it to your kid to draw, you know, the picture for the refrigerator, that's fine. But I'm going to suggest that this questionnaire - I've prepared it and it's not - there's nothing scientific about it. It is the questions that I would have liked to have thought about before I started my own firm and that's part of why I give it to you all. It's - to me, if you go through and you do this questionnaire, you're going to start laying a really good foundation for your firm. Even if you've started it because you should never overlook a chance to step back and say, OK, is there something I could do a little different or perhaps a little bit better? There are some ground rules for these because I love rules. First - this is

the easy one - there are no wrong answers. No one's going to come along with a red pen and say, F because the only answers that are wrong on this are the ones that you don't answer truthfully because keep in mind you're the one that's reading this, nobody else. So be honest, if there's something you don't like to do, be honest about it. Second, this questionnaire is for you. You don't have to share with anybody. Third, some of these questions - easy peasy. We're going to answer them and move on. Other ones are going to - you're going to struggle a little bit with it and they're going to be the ones that you want to just kind of, well if I just put them off to the side, I can ignore them. Those are ones, for me, would be my financial ones. The financial ones scare the heck out of me. Take the time to look at the questions and give them the thoughtful consideration because understand, this is your life that you are planning. It is important that you look at it and make sure that you are doing what makes you happy. Use this as a tool to figure out where you should be. And fifth, as I said, this questionnaire is a tool you're welcome to adapt for your own use. If you find that there's a question there that's like, well that really doesn't fit my thing, but I wonder about this - please do two things. One, stick it in there. Number two, send me an Email so I can include it in the future because again, I try to adapt these things so it is the most helpful for the people that come. I'm going to look at some of the questions that are in here, just to go over them. So for those who have already tucked it away because you figured you would never have to look at ever again - ha - bring that out. Let's look at some of the questions. How would you describe the work that you are currently doing or the work that you were previously doing? What is your favorite part of the work that you are currently doing and the inverse, what is the least favorite part of the work that you are doing? What type of clients or persons do you enjoy working with and what type of clients or persons do you not enjoy working with? And I will tell you and I suspect everybody on this panel who's had, Oh, my God, that bill has to get paid, but the client comes in. I don't really like the person, but damn at least I'll get some money out of them. That's not really the way you want to live your life because one of the wonderful things about being in your own firm is you actually can pick and choose who you want to work with and what types of people you want to work for. This also, is designed so that you can start to think about what areas of law you might possibly want to go into. I always loved people who say, well, I'm going to have a firm and it's going to have

this, and this, and this and this. And then they get in there and they realize there's some oddball thing that they had never thought about that they become a specialist. I never would took law - landlord tenant in law school. As a matter of fact, I - as I clerked for the land court - the ivory tower of land law - and now I'm down in the gutter of land law where I'm talking about - hey, you know, you've got to make sure your dog doesn't bark - kind of thing. So sometimes law - your world will take you on a different tour, be open to that kind of thing. It's important to take stock now and keep on doing so in the future. Ask yourself this question - are you a rainmaker? Do you bring cases in? Are you a client server, that person that can put together the tightest contract or the best brief in the entire world? Are you an administrative star, somebody that makes sure that checks books are balanced, that you're able to - you've done your three-way reconciliation. There's nothing wrong with being only one of those three things or being two of the three. You just got to realize that it's rare that you're going to be all three of those things. You can't - mostly you can't always be a client, a rainmaker, an administrative star and a client server. You could be a mixture of both. In my case, I am the rainmaker and I'm a client server. Administrative Well, my star is kind of tarnished. So what did I have to do? The first things I realized is I had to reach out for help on that particular piece of area. If you're a great administrator or a client server, then maybe you need to think about - I need to find a source or somebody to be my rainmaker. Or you may want to consider hooking up with another lawyer who have the skills that you don't. Why do you want to leave where you are right now is the next series of questions, in some cases like mine you had no choice. In some cases it's like - you know what? I'm tired of having somebody else tell me what to do. I don't like the, you know - I would rather adapt my time to have a little bit more flexibility and, maybe, frankly, you just want to be doing something different. What are your worries about leaving where you are - and that's the part where you have to be incredibly honest. What do you expect to change if you left your current firm or place of employment? And what do you hope remains the same if you left your current firm or place of employment? We all hope that we're going to still be able to make the same amount of money, I understand that - but what else do you want to have happen? - this is going to get you to start understanding where you need to be, what it is. Because my view is - and this sounds very Pollyanna - but if you, in your

mind, say - this is what I would like to do - you are more likely to achieve it than somebody who's just kind of stumbling along and figuring - making it up as they go along. This is kind of like the reality check of this questionnaire. You're going to hear from our panelists. And it's also my firm belief that there are a lot of benefits and burdens of owning your own firm, not the least of which is you own your own firm. You can't blame it on somebody else. You can't say, oh, I won't want to do this right now. I'll have my alter ego do it. And frankly, if you were worried about the financials about leaving, that's OK. Worrying does not mean you shouldn't do it, it just means you know that that's a problem. So now, here's some more reality check things. How much time of your current day do you spend on administrative tasks? Copying, filing, billing - if you think that's magically going to go away, it isn't. OK? And I love people who have promised us the paperless office, well, we're trying, but we haven't quite gotten there yet. What support systems - personnel - are you used to having around? Because you may not have it in your new place where you're going to have to be the chief, cook and bottle washer. All right. So just be aware of what those are. And maybe there are things that you can ask for help or do some sort of trade or anything that's like that. How would you describe your working habits? Now, if you're me, as far as I'm concerned, the day could start at noon and we could go to court at like 8 o'clock at night. That would be awesome. I am not a morning person. I force myself to be a morning person. But the nice thing about having my own firm, I can be a night person now. I could be sitting there at 11 o'clock at night sending emails to clients because I want to do it, or if you're a morning person, you could do that as well. What makes you efficient in your work habits? What makes you less efficient? One of the things always comes up is - I'm going to work out of my house - I knew from the get go that wasn't going to work for me. Because you can tell by my svelte, athletic body that I have this lovely thing called the refrigerator at my house, which means I'd be going - well, I could write that motion or I could go see what's in the refrigerator. Go see what's in the refrigerator or come back and do what's on the television. I am distractible when I'm at home so I know that was not going to work for me. It may work for you, but again, it's being honest with what works and what doesn't work. OK. Then, the final question. This is the one that - I always love doing this one. What do you enjoy most about being a lawyer? People don't ask you that question

do they. What do you enjoy the least about being a lawyer? Now there's a reason I put that in there. And you're going to hear a little bit more from Susan talking about marketing. But I have a firm conviction that if you love what you do - doesn't mean you have to like everything you do every single day. But if you love what you do, people are naturally attracted to that as disposed to somebody who's just like - I have to do this for a living - so think about that because, again, that's going to tie into what you market, what you talk about. Listen - when I was reading what - when the website that was talking about - this is what we love. These are our clients. These are our number one people. It's that passion that is important to tap into because that's going to be your biggest selling point. OK. I haven't talked about financial questions because I don't like them. However, on the questionnaire, you're going to see sort of my random thoughts on things that you need to think about. What you need to pay to keep body and soul together between now and then - that's going to tell you what you're going to need to bring in, or have help bringing in, until you get it up to the point where people are actually paying you money. OK. So - because it's important for you to understand, you need to live in the style to which you have become accustomed. If you think somehow, oh, now I'll be able to start my firm, and the very first day, you know, someone's going to walk in and hand you that million-dollar check and say - you don't have to do anything I just love you so much I'm going to give you a million dollars - if you find that person, tell them I'm looking for a sugar person too so drop my name on there too. So I want to now talk to our - for our panel because you've heard enough from me. I want to talk about setting up your law firm as a business. So I want to just ask - and I'm going to randomly do this. I'm going to start with you, Nat. Tell a little bit about where you were. We heard a little bit about the more formal stuff, but let's hear the real deal about where you were and why you wanted to go out on your own.

>>: Well, when I started with the DA's office back in 2007, we gave - all of us that worked in the DA's office as assistant DAs - a two-year verbal commitment to the DA and, of course, ten years later I was still there. But along the way, I had had a couple opportunities to have conversations with lawyers - everyday, in other words - in court because that's what the assistant DAs do, they're in court all day. And it's not all business. There's a lot of milling around and socializing on the - off to the side. And I had had



a couple opportunities to go work for other lawyers that didn't pan out. And so, by the time I got close to the 10 year mark and the 10 years and my age - I had a different career before I started this - all worked out that I could actually preserve my retirement benefits with the state, that became my goal. So I had this finish line in mind as I got close to the 10 years. I said, all right, I can do 10 years. So what am I going to do then? As I had that plan in mind I continued to speak with lawyers that I worked with, asking questions - where do you get your health insurance? - that was a big consideration - that was probably the number one consideration besides the monthly bills, having a mortgage and car payment and those types of things - utilities. So having that type of exit strategy was really important to me. I was fortunate enough to have a good relationship with one of the higher-ups in the Essex County Bar Advocate's program - which does the public defender work in the district and the Superior Courts for Essex County courts - and got his card and was invited to contact him when the time was right and so that's what I did. I made the call and got the application process under way. It's time consuming, but with the years of experience that I had in, I was able to have the preliminary requirement of having attended and completed the zealous advocacy certification program, which they do here at the MCLE through the bar advocate program before you can start taking cases in one of the district courts. So I was able to get right on a bar advocate list shortly after stepping out into the void. I set an end date and I hadn't - I was not on a bar advocate list at the time. And I had no perspective of income at all. I did have a significant number of vacation days that I didn't use so the state pays you money back if you work for the state you don't take those days. So I knew that there was going to be at least a month or so of my bills that I could cover. And that's how I got started. I was - my first day on the job - you know, I don't want to get too ahead of myself - but my first day on the job I was lucky. Like, literally my first day, I got a phone call and it was a referral from somebody - another lawyer who had a client from years ago who want - needed help in a Registry of Motor Vehicles matter, which I had no experience in other than the way that the RMV intersects with criminal law - mostly what the repercussions are of criminal convictions and how it interacts with a person's license status - and that was my first client, and that was a paying client, and it got me through the next three months of my office rent. So it just - things happen. You Need to be optimistic and just to

keep plowing ahead.

>>: So how about you, Mike?

>>: So my journey was a little different than Nat's. And maybe a lot of people - some of you guys might be able to relate. But I went into law school at New England law and killed myself to graduate at the top of the class - do law review, you know, do all these things that I thought would position me to go right into a very high paying and large law firm. And when it - and it came time to do those on-campus interviews and investigate those opportunities, they just weren't there - you know, I think part of it was the economy in 2009 and then people going back to school because there were no jobs at that point. And then in '12, when I graduated, it was like we have all these lawyers and we just don't have enough jobs, so that did not work out. I am, you know, incredibly thankful that it did not because it kind of forced me into the situation that I am right now, which was starting right away. A friend of mine from law school got together as partners and we worked out of my living room for six to 12 months - somewhere in our timeline we took bankruptcy, collection defense. We took P.I. we took anything that we could get our hands on that might be paying. And over time, it kind of developed into something more real and, you know, more sustainable. But, you know, I want to commend all you guys for being here, whether you've been doing it for a while or you're thinking about starting it. Because, in my opinion, you guys have kind of identified the secret. You know, being in control of your own destiny and being in control of your own firm. And your ultimate success is something that I would never trade again. It's something that I covet and treasure every single day, not only because I know I can take this to where I want to take it but also it offers freedom. You know, you make decisions that impact your firm every single day and I - that's something that I really, really appreciate and look forward to. So, you know, you can get here a million different ways. You guys are obviously thinking about it. My journey, again, was from living room to a law office. Now we're seven years down the line, we have 10 people in the office and we have a caseload of 450 active cases. So it's, you know, it's very busy. And I think we're getting into more of this stuff in terms of ideas and ways that you get there. But yeah, that's how I started off and it was not, you know, it was not luxurious when

we started. There were some days in sweatpants in the living room...

>>: I think that's a great slogan though. From the living room to...

>>: Right.

>>: ...To the law practice.

>>: Right. Right.

>>: Let me ask you, though, Mike, because you had - you started - literally, started off from scratch. But you had had already some experience - correct? - in personal injury?

>>: Right. So those were summer interns, all of which were investigated for jobs. So I don't know if any you guys are experiencing this. The economy's different now than it was when I came out. But it seems like some of you guys have been out for a while. There just weren't jobs. And there weren't jobs that I was willing to accept for the amount of money that they were willing to pay, so I think that helped kind of with my frame of mind. And personal injury was more of a natural transition for us because we were able to sign and then settle a larger case, and I said - wow, that's the fee on this case? - you know, versus the bankruptcy that just took me 10 hours and I made, you know...

>>: Five dollars.

>>: ...Eight-hundred bucks on it. Yeah. So we kind of switched and tried to target more of those cases. And again, I think how you target the cases you want and how you bring them in and the systems you have in place to capture them and follow up on them and make sure they get indoors - probably a discussion to have further down the line but, you know, obviously all these things are very important. And, yeah, you know, it was not a straight line. You know, we were constantly pivoting and trying to figure out ways to make it work. But we kind of past the point of struggle at this point, despite the fact that - I think all of us could agree - that it could crumble at any point if you don't keep your eye on it. But it's been very



rewarding so far. Very happy with the decision.

>>: Well let's - now I'll talk to you for a second because you were leaving a public sector and I know that's a path that - there are a few DAs that go out into the private - but what were your considerations in terms of leaving that? Did you want to maintain contact with them? Did you want to - did you view the where you worked before as some sort of source for Cases coming in? He's got a perplexed look like - I didn't know you were going to ask me this question.

>>: Well, of course, when you're stepping...

>>: I'm going to have you pull the microphone a little closer to you too.

>>: When stepping from a prosecutor into a defense position, you can't work on cases that you worked on when you were the prosecution, that obviously would be a violation of ethics. No, I didn't have any type of income or cases referred to me through the DAs office at all. I didn't have any private criminal cases at first until - my only criminal cases, for several months, were from the bar advocate program. So those were - one - actually, one person left the program and there were about 10 files that he was working on and they asked me if I wanted to take that, it was at Peabody District Court. And seeing how I lived in Danvers and I opened an office in Danvers, that was perfect because Danvers doesn't have a court but Salem and Peabody are equally distant from Danvers - and Peabody has free parking. So those are some of the considerations...

>>: OK. You can snicker but that is actually a consideration.

>>: Oh, those - it's major consideration. Lifestyle, quality of life was all that I really was looking for. And income, obviously, is always a factor, but ease of getting to and from work is a huge factor for me - it's time, it's just stress that I didn't want and why I never came in to work in Boston and never even considered it beyond brief considerations. So I don't know if I answered your question...

>>: You did.

>>: ...But the - there were no - there was no business generated as a result of having been in the DAs office, the only business was - that has been, I think, a result of that was maybe my resume. That, oh, this was a person who might be right for the job because he's got the experience in these particular courts and in this area of the law.

>>: OK. Susan, you want throw anything in here? Or you want to...

>>: Sure. So I probably have a slightly different background. I started practicing law in 1985 so it was a different time and it was also literally a different place. My entire legal career was in the greater Philadelphia area. And I'm probably the poster child for adaptability because I can't tell you the number of things that didn't go as expected. So I thought that when I left Massachusetts - I went to college here - the weather sent me - and I got my husband to go - to Los Angeles for four years, that's where I went to law school. Always thinking I was going to come back here and practice but it didn't work out that way. We ended up in Philadelphia. My husband took a job at Penn Medical School. Nothing to do with Philadelphia so I was there starting from scratch and I was pregnant at the time and, because I thought I was coming back to Massachusetts - you know how all the bar exams are on the same day? - I took the Massachusetts Bar exam, so six months later, I also had to take the Pennsylvania. And when I first got there I - well, back in 1985, it's kind of difficult to, you know, get a job when you're visibly pregnant - it was in 1985 - and so that didn't quite work out. But when my daughter was 18-months-old, I thought I would put my background to work. And I applied and was offered a position at a firm that focused on toxic tort litigation, which would've been perfect. And then when they asked me that one question after I said yes, which was - so we know you have a small child. Will you be able to give us, you know, 60 hours a week? Of course back then it was facetime, there wasn't the technology. That didn't quite work out. So that was my first solo practice. And I thought, well, I need to work but that obviously is not going to work for me. And I just - by chance - was lucky enough to build up a practice that way. I then - I did actually have some experiences that sort of created a path for me, but it was always kind of being aware of the opportunities. One of my friends at the time - you might have heard of Lisa Scottolline, she writes New York

Times best sellers - she decided not to be a lawyer, and instead, you know, live on a horse farm and do really well that way. But at the time, she was practicing law and - just by chance - her dad was an architect in a firm where there was rampant employment discrimination. Like, out there, back in the day, when it was OK to say things - or they were saying things like - we just want a younger, you know - a younger face for the firm, things like that. So she brought me in to help - or represent her dad, and I was exposed to an area of law I'd never in a million years thought about. And it was great. So I did that on my own and with Lisa for a while. And then I joined a firm. And I was with a firm for a while. So I kind of went the back and forth. But for me, it's always been a situation of - I always have a plan, but the plan - whatever. You know? It just - it goes left when I think it's supposed to go right. So adaptability, I think, is sort of at the core of what has worked for me. And there were - there always are challenges. But, probably, the challenges that I faced back, you know, in the '80s and the '90s were a little different than you face today. But still, adaptability, it works.

>>: I want to ask you guys a couple - because I know that, like, Mike, you were talking about you took what came in the door. At some point, did you say to yourself I need help in either working on this stuff - and this is for anybody on the panel...

>>: Right.

>>: ...You know, did you just say, OK. I'm going to try and master this thing or - how did you go about trying to figure out what it is you needed to do things in an area you may not have been familiar with?

>>: Yeah. I actually made a note when Nat mentioned that earlier. I think you - one of your first cases that came up is something you didn't know much about. And I - you know, I think it's important, especially when you're starting out, not to turn away from something like that. Right? We all have law degrees. I know, you know, we might have had a background or a specialty in something in particular, but these are all - these are things that we can do and learn, especially when you're starting out. You need money coming in. Right? I mean, money is going to pay for - your phone, your

office, any advertising that you can afford or if you're going to bring someone on to help - unfortunately - and, you know, I sometimes wish that this wasn't the case - those things do cost money. So taking things in was important to us. We tried to put ourselves in a position to, you know, zealously represent our client. But we weren't scared to sign something that we didn't necessarily have a background in or feel 100 percent confident in right away. And there were certainly - you know, we've kind of mentioned you're going to hear some stuff that didn't go well. I remember being at a couple of the bankruptcy hearings with the trustee and my client, and being asked questions that I had no idea what he was talking about. And I looked like an idiot in front the client and, you know, they kind of realized that and they were nice enough to pull me aside. And everything was fixed and, you know, the client reached the result that they were supposed to. But the point in telling you this is that, if you haven't had experience in a particular area law, you know, there are people that are willing to help, you know - a mentor, you can reach out to an organization, someone that's doing it before. Someone has an injury question, I'm happy to get on the phone and help you through it. So that's kind of what - where I was thinking in terms of that, just because, when you are new - and it certainly was for me - it was where am I going to get cases? You know, how am I going to get cases? And, you know, without cases there's no income. Right? So that was a huge thing for me. And we were kind of spending a small amount of money in a number of different places. But we were getting a random group of legal issues that we were willing to help out on and try to develop a fee on. So my recommendation on that would be - don't steer away from everything, especially if you're trying to get going. Because for me, those small snowballs that were falling down the top of the hill turned into big snowballs, and bigger, and bigger, and bigger. And then, you know, I was able to shift towards something that I was more comfortable with. But certainly, it was important to take things on to get going, especially in the early days.

>>: I want to talk about your mentors because I think that's - that's an important thing. I think a lot of times people say - yeah, question.

>>: I just have a question on what you were saying before - and it kind of relates to what you were describing there. So when you're just getting

started like that and you have something you may not be so familiar with...

>>: Right.

>>: ...Like, I'm the kind of person, like, if I just crush and ask practice then I'll feel really comfortable with what I'm dealing with. But so how do you balance the time that you spend, you know, familiarizing yourself with the legal issues and what you - you know, because you can't bill a client for excessive amount of time, research or something. So how do you balance like what's a fair amount to bill for researching versus, you know, what you'd be expected to...

>>: And just so you know we have this less than subtle reminder to us, which is why I heard what you're saying but I'm going to repeat the question for the benefit of people in cyberspace. I'm going to shorten it up a little bit. So the question is dealing with how do you balance sort of like the learning curve, the time it's going to take you to get up to speed on that particular area, versus the I need to pay my bills.

>>: Right. Right. I think that that's a great question. I, ethically I, you know, I'm the wrong person to ask if you're stepping on any toes or doing anything unseemly with billing for education. But what we did, you know, and back to more of a mentor-ish thing was try to reach out to someone in our network group, or group or circle that I could say, hey, listen, you know, Nah - if Nah was, you know, years in front of me and he had he had experience here - I have a client, he's my client, you're not taking him but I need help with this particular issue. And there's a lot of collegial - you know, it's collegial in this industry and everyone, for the most part, is willing to help. So, you know, what I would have done and what I would suggest you do if you find yourself in those situations is try to get into a group of people who might be able to fire an e-mail or have a 10 minute phone call, because sometimes that's all it takes, you know, just to get you rolling.

>>: Let me also talk about something else too. There is, you know, it is - there are certain areas of law that are so hyper-technical. And I would suggest to you, for example, immigration is one of those where it is difficult to stick your toe in there if you've got nobody helping you. So it's - part of it,



to answer your question, is number one, figure out whether this is such a technical area that you would be better off handing it off to somebody else because keeping in mind when he talks about collegiality, you send me a case I might go, hey, wait, he sent me case, I can't do this one, maybe I'll give one back. But it also is to, to me is, being upfront and honest with that particular client and saying this is not my area of expertise. You need to understand that I am going, you know, I'm going to be learning as we go. And believe or not there are clients that are willing to say, OK, that's fine. I think if you're honest with them, but I also think what you need to do is to find out from somebody in the same field roughly how much they would charge for that. Because what you don't want to do, at the end of it you may get the best success in the world but you've charged your client 10-times what they would have done if they'd gone to somebody with expertise. A lot of this is honesty and saying to yourself what, you know, is this someplace that I really need to be in. And again, part of this is too, building up that network of people to ask questions about. I know in the personal injury area, for example, I think it's - is it MATA that has sort of like a - like a listserv where they chat with each other. And I know because I have lawyers that ran for me that are personal injury lawyers, they'll get on there and they'll say this is the type of case I have, can somebody give me a ballpark of what they think that they would be charging their clients for. Again, some of this is being transparent with the client and letting the client make the decision that you know what, this is a new area for me and, you know, we'll be learning this thing together. And I know that sounds discouraging but what actually ends up happening in that kind of situation is the client in some cases will say, OK, I'm - you know, they know that you're going to be learning along with them. The other thing I would also say is it is very important in that kind of situation to find out where you're going to go and set your client's expectations realistically. All right?

>>: Just then - just another thing to contribute here. Another idea is maybe thinking about a flat fee. Which is kind of scary sometimes because, you know, you might charge a fee and then the issue becomes more complicated, and you spend a tremendous amount of additional time on it. But you can restrict your contracts or your fee agreement with your potential client to cover particular issues and this is how much it's going to cost for that, and you can kind of build in the time that you think that it's

going to take within that agreement. I was always a fan it out before I got into injury, now I'm all contingency so it's a different animal. But even the accounting with the IOLTA was so, it was so hard to do just in a small organization. I mean they slap you on the wrist for a penny. And it's just - for me a flat fee was more attractive just because I perceived it as easier. You know just in terms of accounting and also, you know, I felt like I could restrict the agreement enough that I wasn't getting into trouble spending 20 hours on something I thought was going to take two.

>>: But if you if you're like me and you read the - because I do read the ethics decisions, sort of like the sporting pages. Like read the obituaries and realizing I'm still alive. The thing is those flat fees you got to be careful. If your client's unhappy with you, return the damn fee. I have read so many cases where you see the attorney's, they just dig in their heels and it blows up into something worse than that is possible. Yep.

>>: Sort of a quick follow up. You mentioned something else that might be asked about later. But expertise, and then - it sort of seems like a - it's like a circle here. How do you have, you know if you're just out of law school like you don't have expertise in something. You can't really get expertise unless you take on the matter and do it, and do more matters. But should you be taking those matters if you don't have expertise. I don't...

>>: It's sort of like the old, how can I get a job if I don't have any experience and I can't get any experience until I get the job. Understand something, I think that what he was saying is important. We have training as lawyers. You may not have training in that particular area, but you still have the basic training of issue-spotting and figuring out where it is. Again, don't sell that short. I know we think, oh yeah, law schools shut the door on that (unintelligible) just go out - you know, it's really funny because even today I'm sitting there going, OK, what issues am I spotting in this thing? And I feel like if somebody brings me a rule against perpetuities, I'd be thrilled. I know it's - it's been banned in the state, but by God, I remember that stupid little rule. Again have confidence in yourself. You do have the skills. My caution was not in necessarily, I mean - look, frankly, anybody could probably do landlord-tenant work if they wanted to take the time to learn how to do it. I just cautioned cases, things where it is really, really

super technical. Patent law, I would not try and dabble in because frankly, I just know that I'd be overwhelmed within two minutes. Listen to your inclinations. What is it that you like about what this person's coming in? And understand a lot of times clients come in and think they have one problem and you discover they have something else. I want to keep going back to mentors because I want to make a couple of suggestions on where to find mentors, OK. REBA, for example, has a huge mentoring program. And Susan you can throw in any one of those you want. I will also tell you this, anybody who sits in an MCLE panel, they usually - their egos are big enough that they want to help other people out. So you know, a lot of times I see people say, well I don't want to talk with people on panel because they're so important. You know what, if you love doing what you do, I can sit here and talk to you for about 10 hours about landlord-tenant law. And you'll be like, shit I should never have said anything to her because she won't shut up. Understand there are people that are generous in this field. They tend to be the people that volunteer. They tend to be the people that are teaching. They are - tend to be people that are just looking to give somebody else the benefit. And I know sometimes people say, well, you know, I don't want a formal mentoring, you know, I have to sit down with this person. You know what, I'm cheap. Buy me a cup of tea with milk in it and you could have me for an hour. Again it's that same kind of thing. I don't have any problem with sharing my expertise because you know what, the clients who love me, love me, they admire the quicksand I slither on. You know what, you're not going to get them, but that doesn't mean that there aren't other clients out there that you can get as well. Anywhere else where you can find mentors?

>>: So...

>>: No, go ahead...

>>: If you get active in any bar of the bar associations and you get to know the lawyers there, you'll be able to find mentors. I've worked on a number of committees and the problem isn't finding the mentors, it's finding the people who want to be mentored. So I think they're out there. I think to Catherine's point, it's just a matter of asking. But the bar associations are good.

>>: What I was going to say is, I have an actual mentor with the bar advocate program. So I'm still, kind of, a new advocate, but when I first got that first phone call that I was saying, I had literally just started at my office. It was July 1st - was my start of my rent, but I just said it was 4th of July week. I didn't even start till the 11th - right? So I paid all that rent for whatever - to go to the beach. And I have no clients and I have this office. So I needed to go and get a router. So I wanted to set my office up with a printer and my laptop to use and I needed my own little wireless network. So I'm at Best Buy looking at wireless routers and my phone rings. And I answer the phone and sure enough, it was somebody who is - obviously I'm not going to mention any names, but it was in an elderly client. Her husband had gotten his license suspended for what's called an Immediate Threat Medical. And a lawyer who I know - from not even a legal related relationship - had referred her for her husband to me. And I was like I have no idea, but how difficult can it be? It's the Registry of Motor Vehicles - not that they can't be difficult - but, you know, it's not that it can't be that complicated. So I said I'll come talk to you that day - I mean what else was I going to do? And because of their age and difficulty in getting about, I decided, I'll go to your house if you'd like. And as soon as I got off the phone, I called up a lawyer who I knew had a lot of experience in OUI's and therefore, tangential related matters, such as the Registry of Motor Vehicles; somebody who I've developed a friendship with in both a professional and personal friendship with when I was a D.A. I called - I had his cellphone. I called him right away. He answered the phone and I said Ed, I got this call - what do I do? And he walked me through what to do. He said, you go to this website and this is the form you're looking for. And of course, the form had phone numbers to the registry departments here in Boston. I started making calls. And you know, while I was on the phone with my friend, you know - unofficial mentor - I said how much do you think I should charge for this? And he threw out a number. And that's how I figured out what to offer. And I just - I actually took off some money from that number to accommodate for my inexperience - which I probably shouldn't have done - but it was good because in the long run it turned out that they agreed to my fee and then it took so much more work than I ever thought it would ever take. I was driving them here, there and everywhere, medical appointments and so forth. By the end of it all, I think I ended up

working for like five dollars an hour, but it was worth it. I had nothing else to do and it did cover my bills for the next two or three months. So I didn't have any expertise, but when you start finding phone numbers and you start making calls, whether it's to a court or to an agency that you might have to deal with, you usually find I think, biologically "correct me if I'm wrong" you get friendly people on the other end, as long as you are friendly and upfront with them. Tell them, hey, I'm new at this - can you help me out? Which way do I go? And I've got a lot of good responses by just being honest; by saying that I don't really know what I'm doing - can you help me?

>>: And I think that's actually a good point to talk about the clerks and people that work for agencies. Now there are some curmudgeons that will be curmudgeonly no matter what. But if you walk in there and you say, well I'm a lawyer. You have to wait on me. You're not going to get very far, but I - a lot of times I have gone and said look, I've never done this before - can you give me some help? I used to do that when you did zoning. I would walk into the City Hall and it was always some grumpy old city inspector expecting me to come in there and I'm going like, hi, I have no clue what I'm doing. Well let me fill that out for you. I'm like, oh, great, thank you. I mean I probably could have filled it out for myself, but it's looking - sometimes just looking in unexpected areas, that if you treat people nicely, they sometimes will come back to you. I'm also going to suggest if you are in any type of trial work, the other thing to do is to take some time and watch other lawyers that are arguing cases. And I will tell you this, if you go up to them afterwards, if you thought that was a really good argument and you say, that was really great - can I talk to you sometime for five minutes? - their egos are going to be on such overload that they're going to say, yes, of course I'll do that for you because again, it's flattering to be told that you were, you know, that, that kind of thing was going on.