

# LAWYER

THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION  
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## ‘Tis the Season to Salute Young Lawyers

**I am a huge fan of young lawyers and submit that our local Bar is fortunate to count so many talented and professional young attorneys as active members.**



I live in denial. I refuse to believe that I am no longer a young lawyer. In reality, I am now quite removed from the Bar’s definition of a “young lawyer” as I am no longer near being “under 36 years old or admitted to practice for five years or less.” Perhaps like many of you, my young lawyer days have faded somehow to a point where I can hardly see, hear, or recall moments that just yesterday I swore I would never forget. Curiously, this seems to resemble a phenomenon that has arisen on the home front as my wife and daughters diligently point out how much I fail to see,

hear, or remember (of course, they don’t know what they’re talking about).

Kidding aside, I am a huge fan of young lawyers and submit that our local Bar is fortunate to count so many talented and professional young attorneys as active members. Perhaps I am biased as I “grew up” in the HCBA-YLD, but in this year’s role I have observed firsthand our YLD continuing its tradition to do, serve,

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and achieve greatly. As such, it firmly remains a leader among its peers not only throughout Florida, but nationally as well. Indeed, the success of our YLD bodes well for our local Bar as it attracts lawyers early in their careers and helps to nurture and shape them into servant leaders who, through the relationships they build and the respect for the law they develop, go on to assure that our area remains one of the most professional places to practice in the country.

The above said, a number of young lawyers have asked me this past year for advice, tips, and, generally speaking, what I have learned that might help them in the early parts of their careers. Although I feel wholly inadequate to answer such and recognize that I am far from an authority, I recall that line from The Faces' hit, *Ooh La La*, "I wish that I knew what I know now when I was younger ..." and offer the following:

**1. Be professional at every turn.** Each case, transaction, or matter has pivotal moments, and one of them usually occurs early on. When it does, set the tone for all involved by extending professional courtesy.

**2. Find a mentor.** Sooner or later, we all need some help within the profession. Try to identify someone who will genuinely listen and really share what he/she thinks. Although many workplaces foster and even structure such mentoring, others do not. Here, I shamelessly plug and recommend the HCBA and Thirteenth Judicial Circuit's Mentoring Program (see "For Attorneys" link on our HCBA's new website).

**3. Be accountable.** Like life, each day is filled with choices. Sometimes, we screw up. When we do, don't cover up — own up. As the saying goes, the cover-up is often worse than the crime. Save yourself, and those around you, a lot of heartburn. Admit your mistakes, accept their consequences, fix them (if you can), learn, and move on.

**4. Give back to our profession.** Everyone has some time and talent. Take a *pro bono* case. Volunteer and serve on a committee. Write an article for this magazine. Speak at a CLE or similar program. When opportunity presents, educate friends, neighbors, and kids on our justice system and the importance of judicial independence. Toward this end and with a focus on delivering civics education to others, The Florida Bar's

Benchmarks programming is excellent. To learn more about Benchmarks while receiving CLE credit, I encourage you to attend the May 29 program that our friends at HAWL have coordinated (see the HCBA website for more info).

**5. Be nice.** Although I am sure I borrowed this from someone, does this one really need any commentary? Seriously, just be nice.

**6. Establish and build relationships.** If you value networking and its benefits, go to a YLD lunch or, perhaps better yet, a YLD Happy Hour or other event like the YLD Golf Tournament. Email friends or acquaintances and meet them at the Law Day Lunch on May 20. Go to a lunch sponsored by a section or committee that involves one of your practice areas. You never know where your next idea, tip, case strategy, referral, or friendship will originate, but your odds improve when you join other lawyers at such events.

**7. Smile, laugh, and have some fun.** The practice of law can be stressful. The hours are long. Clients can be demanding. Each issue is someone's crisis. I recognize it can be difficult at times, but find the humor in things and embrace it. Lighten up and laugh at yourself.

**8. Get active in our local Bar.** You have chosen a career path, so share it with others, especially your YLD peers with, and even against, whom you may well be practicing for years. You will not only learn from each other, but over time you will inevitably help and support each other, all the while becoming better lawyers. One of the best opportunities to grow more active is to participate in the HCBA's Bar Leadership Institute. If you have not considered applying to this terrific program, please do and visit the HCBA's new website for more information.

**9. Be a doer and never stop.** Although one should not say "yes" to every opportunity and should analyze the cost/benefit of each commitment, it is good to stretch yourself every now and then. Challenge yourself to do something outside of your comfort zone. You will not only grow in unexpected ways, you will positively impact — perhaps even unknowingly — someone else.

**10. Enjoy the moment.** As implied above, you will not be a young lawyer forever. Ask your rookie questions now and understand the answers. As King Solomon wrote, "[t]here is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." *Ecclesiastes 3:1*. Enjoy your "season" as a young lawyer!

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