

University of Washington School of Law, 2010.

- 1. Everyone knows that law school and the Bar are difficult and stressful, and California has one of the highest standards for Bar passage in the country; what helped to keep you focused and your head above water? Any tips for current students?**

I actually think what helped me most in preparing for the Bar and getting through law school was to do things completely unrelated to law school. One of my big outlets was working in a field that wasn't law-related. I don't know if that's recommended or not, but for me it was really really helpful to spend some time every week with people who had nothing to do with law school and working with something that had nothing to do with the legal field because other than that, you're living and breathing law school all the time. It helped me to hang out with a friend group and do things during the day that didn't have to do with the law.

- 2. July 2018 Bar pass rates in California saw a drop that hit a 70-year low, with 20 out of the 21 ABA-accredited law schools in the state suffering a [pass rate decrease ranging from 1%-21%](#). As a result, many students are preparing to take it again in 2019 (in addition to new first-time takers). If you did not pass the Bar on your first attempt, how did you prepare differently the next time around? If you did pass on your first try, what do you think helped you the most, and were you able to carry any of those strategies into your professional life?**

I did one of the Bar prep courses and I found it to be really helpful. I don't think law school really prepares you for the Bar – it's a unique set up. So I did the separate Bar review course and found that really useful, and I did all the lectures and all the tests. And I think it really sucks for those two months or however long you do it, but I really had to buckle down and do it every day, treating it like a full-time job. Interestingly enough, I didn't like that time period when I was going through it, but as a lawyer I can look back on it and say that I found it really useful because I think you go through the same thing as a lawyer. There are times where a whole month and a half might be you preparing for a really rough trial, or something to that affect. So the whole "buckle down and focus all of your energy on one thing" is good preparation for being a lawyer.

- 3. After graduating, what were the first few years of your professional life like? How did that compare to the expectations you had during school?**

I went to law school in Seattle and got a job that, at the time, I thought was my dream job in a practice area that I really loved. I did that for about a year and then I left that job, which really surprised me. I had always thought that after you become a lawyer you pick a job and you stay there, and that just becomes your life. So when I had been at that job for about a year, another opportunity that was just a better fit for my life at the time opened up and I took that, did that

for a little while. Then I decided I wanted to move my career up to Snohomish County, so I transitioned to a job up here.

The biggest thing that's different than when I was in law school is that I had envisioned you get a job and then that's your life, and my career has been the exact opposite [sic]. In some ways I think that's really good. A law degree is really flexible and it allowed me to transition into different things that really interested me and were a really good fit for my life and my family. That's been really nice, and totally different than law school in that I kind of thought you pick a practice area and that was it. What I'm doing now is a complete 180 from what I was doing when I graduated.

Side note: I had left my first job because the firm was undergoing changes at the time, and it was just that the firm wasn't a good fit. When I was younger I never really thought about that, and now that I've been practicing for a while it's something that I would focus on because I don't think when you're going through the interview process you necessarily look at what's the best personality fit for you. But on a day-to-day basis, that's really important.

4. Being able to effectively network with peers, associates, and employers is a major factor in furthering a professional career, particularly in the legal field. Are there any common misconceptions or outdated advice that you've heard regarding the "proper" way to network in today's work environment?

I remember in law school they'd have these really awkward events where a bunch of people would just get thrown in a room together, and they were "networking" events. In my adult life I've never gone to those and I've never missed those. I don't know that they were ever effective. What I realized while I've been practicing is that your network shouldn't be made up of a bunch of lawyers. Especially if you're working in the private sector in a smaller firm, a lot of your clients aren't going to come from other lawyers. They're going to come from your natural friend-base, maybe your doctor or someone from your kids' school. So don't just focus on building a good network of other attorneys and other legal professionals. Having connections in your community, through your kids, or other sources, that will be a greater source of clientele than your lawyer-relationships.

In terms of networking with other lawyers, I don't look at it as a formal process. Once you're in the field it starts to come naturally because you're not going to big awkward events. It's just a matter of staying in touch with your classmates as they go into different industries, continuing to have lunch with people you went to school with or did an internship with, people you worked with. So you have those natural connections that build over time versus what is essentially cold-calling at those events.

5. What are the top 3 things you learned as a lawyer that you wish you'd known when first starting?

One that isn't really career-related and that I thought I realized but didn't really see the significance (and all my friends are in the same situation): All of those loans you take out will stay with you! I wish I had been more mindful of my expenditures. First thing is to stop going

out to lunch all the time because you are racking up more student loans at whatever interest rate and pretty soon you'll be me, paying them off and thinking, "this is awful! Why did I spend money on XYZ?" But on a serious note, the amount of loans you take out can really start to impact your career options. Maybe at some point while you're still a student, run through loan repayment calculations. If I had done that I might have made smarter financial decisions while in law school... I think that influences people's career decisions more than a lot of other things for younger lawyers. Maybe you won't be able to do the things you want because you ate a lot of Thai food in law school.

I wish I had done a Superior Court clerkship in law school – I did one after I graduated and I think it was even more useful for me than practicing for years. I probably learned more in a month of the clerkship than I learned as a lawyer for the previous couple of years. That was something that was really useful but I hadn't thought of in law school. They never really talked to us about Superior Court clerkships, it was mostly just appeals court clerkships. For a lot of lawyers, if you're practicing at the trial courts level it makes more sense to actually see the environment you'll be working in than it does to focus on appeals. So I wish I had explored that when I was in law school. And even if you don't do a clerkship, you can still get experience by going and visiting the court that you want to practice in and seeing how it runs, familiarizing yourself with the rules and the local lawyers there.

I would've appreciated my law school experience more if I hadn't gone straight there from undergrad. I was kind of schooled-out at that point and I didn't appreciate school for what it was worth. Practicing is nothing like school, so just enjoy that time with your peers and the time to think about classes in law school because your real life will be nothing like that. That's the only time you'll be able to think about the kind of questions and experiences that you have in law school.

6. What are, or would be, the top 3 skills or characteristics you look for when hiring a new lawyer? Why are those so important to you?

Somebody who had a good work ethic because I think that transcends knowledge in a specific practice area. Somebody who doesn't have a completely repulsive personality. Someone who has interest in the practice area that you're in because places spend a lot of time training people and investing in their development, so ideally you'd have someone who's going to stick around for a while. They should have a genuine passion for the subject rather than it simply being one among hundreds of their applications.

7. Any last words of advice for our students and recent grads?

Focus on what you want. When I was in that situation (just graduated and looking for a job) I felt like I should just take anything that was offered to me because I was desperate for a job. But at the end of the day it will work out and you will get a job, even if it feels like you won't. We all felt the same at one point.

The other side of that equation is that you don't want to force yourself into a situation that will make you unhappy or negatively affect your career, somewhere that you don't want to go. So

focus on making sure that it's the right fit for you, too, instead of just taking whatever is thrown your way.