



Keep It Casual

A glimpse of mentoring relationships and mentoring resources for the real world

By Colin Rigley

legal professionals that are newer to the practice. Learn about upcoming mixers at

[https://www.wsba.org/connect-serve/mentorship/mentorlink-mixers.](https://www.wsba.org/connect-serve/mentorship/mentorlink-mixers))

Larry, who's been practicing law in Washington since 2009, never really considered her relationship with Moglia to be an official mentor-mentee relationship. Mostly, she wanted to pass along tips she'd learned herself after moving from Houston—where she earned her J.D. from the Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law in 2009—and starting a solo practice in Washington. Larry was a young lawyer in a new state and not working at a firm where there were readily available experts.

"I feel like when I moved here, I didn't have anyone I could ask questions of," she said.

So she largely had to learn things on her own, as law school focused more on the law than on managing a law practice. Now Larry often attends MentorLink Mixers to share what she's learned. The format of these mixers is more structured than a networking event, where "table coaches" are at the ready to answer questions from attendees. Larry said many of the new and young legal professionals she's met have asked questions at the mixers and a few might follow up with a thank-you email or a request for a form template to use. Moglia just happened to be someone who kept asking questions.

Back in California, where Moglia first started practicing criminal defense law on the Central Coast, she had plenty of experienced lawyers to answer her questions. But when she moved to Washington and eventually started her own practice, she found herself once again with new questions to ask, but no one at the ready to provide answers. So she went hunting for help. Moglia joined the WSBA Solo and Small Practice Section, she signed onto the Solo and Small Practice list serve, and she attended the MentorLink Mixer, where she met Larry.

"I don't know what I would do without reaching out for help," Moglia said.

But there wasn't a formal agreement that Moglia would be Larry's mentee.

"I think mentorship, for me at least, works better if it happens organically," Larry explained. For her part, being a mentor is a relatively modest time commitment, and she's happy to do it to help other legal professionals succeed based on the knowledge she's gained. "I would say just don't be afraid to share your knowledge."

In addition to MentorLink Mixers, WSBA provides a number of resources to help connect mentors and mentees and develop mentorship programs such as the Find a Mentorship Directory, the Mentorship Program Toolkit, and the Mentorship Curriculum, all of which, and more, can be found at <https://www.wsba.org/connect-serve/mentorship>.

Many bar associations make mentorship programs available

THE WORD "MENTORSHIP" CAN BE A BIT OF A PROBLEM

—it conjures images of a wizened old master determinedly bombarding a young protégé with knowledge through rigorous training and, if movies are any indication, a lot of exaggerated beard-stroking.

This stereotype can be a hindrance for the mentor-mentee relationship because it implies an overly burdensome time commitment and an expectation that the mentor is an expert with all the answers at the ready. But for legal professionals, the reality is likely far less intense: a successful mentoring relationship might consist of a few emails or phone calls—maybe a cup of coffee or casual lunch—to answer questions or bring light to topics that don't get much coverage in law school.

If you ask Kate Moglia how she found her most recent mentor, she'll tell you "I figured I would just keep emailing her as long as she kept answering my questions."

Moglia met her mentor, Kristina Larry, at a WSBA MentorLink Mixer earlier this year. (It should be noted that MentorLink Mixers are single-day events and are not intended to establish a long-term mentoring relationship; rather, experienced legal professionals are encouraged to share their experience and knowledge with other

HELP A NEW OR YOUNG LAWYER DURING NATIONAL MENTORSHIP MONTH

In 2002, the National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health spearheaded National Mentoring Month to bring awareness to a national need for mentors and to recruit individuals, businesses, government agencies, schools, faith communities, and nonprofits to serve as mentors. To learn more about National Mentoring Month, visit www.mentoring.org/our-work/campaigns/national-mentoring-month/.

Many new and young lawyers in Washington need mentors to help them start their careers. To find opportunities to lend your legal know-how, visit <https://www.wsba.org/connect-serve/mentorship>.

and, in fact, several have mandatory mentorships for new lawyers. The Utah, Georgia, South Carolina, Nevada, Oregon, and New Mexico bars all require mentoring programs for new lawyers. In New Mexico, for example, first-year members of the bar are required to complete a mentorship, which counts toward their mandatory 12 CLE credits per year. The bar maintains a list of Supreme Court-approved mentors, which had about 400 mentors as of this writing, who can also receive six CLE credits (four general and two ethics) for their participation. Washington does not mandate mentorship, but mentors and mentees can earn one CLE credit for every 60 minutes of mentoring, so long as it's done through an approved, structured mentoring program as outlined in the Self-Directed Structured Mentoring Program Guide. (More information can be found at <https://www.wsba.org/for-legal-professionals/mcle/mcle-credit-for-mentorship>.)

In the state to our south, the Oregon State Bar has had a mandatory mentor program since 2011. Modeled after similar programs in Georgia and Utah, Oregon makes experienced lawyers available to new lawyers, and outlines a six-point mentorship curriculum that mentors must cover with new lawyers:

- **Introduction to the legal community, public service, and bar service**
- **Rules of professional conduct/standards of professionalism**
- **Introduction to law office management**
- **Working with clients**
- **Career satisfaction and work/life balance**
- **Completion of 10 practice area activities**

It can be easy to see what's in it for the mentee, but why should mentors donate their time and knowledge to less-experienced legal professionals?

Lionel Greaves IV thinks mentors have as much to gain as the people they're mentoring, in what he calls a "symbiotic relationship" or the "360-degree model of mentorship." There's an old saying, he said, that when you teach something, you often learn from it.

"It forces you to go back and think about and articulate what was your thought process," Greaves said.

Greaves is the Senior Assistant Attorney General and Chief of Labor & Industries Division for the Washington State Office of the Attorney General, and the 2017 recipient of the WSBA APEX (Acknowledging Professional Excellence) Award for Excellence in Diversity. He's had a lot of mentors throughout his career—too many to list, he said—and has been a mentor to many new legal professionals and law students. Actually, Greaves can trace his mentoring philosophy back to when he was a teenager and looking at the successful people he knew:

And one thing that stood out early... was this idea of you should always be a mentor and a mentee all the time. Even at that age, there were people behind me, there were 14-, 13-year-olds, people trying to figure out how to navigate high school, for example. You should be connecting those people who are coming behind you and trying to offer whatever guidance or insights you can, just as much as you're connecting with people ahead of you and figuring out how to take your next steps.



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Because law is a competitive profession, legal professionals can feel reluctant to put themselves in a position where it will be clear they don't know everything. There's also the somewhat formal stigma surrounding "mentorship" that might scare off potential mentors. But at least according to those who shared their insights for this article, legal professionals with a few years of experience and some practical experience are well qualified to help others in the profession.

"I do think a lot of people need to know that none of us has it all figured out, and I would include myself squarely in that boat," Greaves said. "We're all doing the best we can with the information that we have."

One of the main tips mentors have for new legal professionals is to get out there, join a list serve, ask questions, go to mixers, go to networking events, and make a push to be in the places where other experienced people are.

Of course, that can be easier in Western Washington's populated urban centers. King County, for example, is home to more than half of the licensed WSBA members in the state. Compare that to Spokane, the most densely populated Eastern Washington county, which still only houses about six percent of WSBA members. In more rural counties,



the number of legal professionals can drop into the double and even single digits. Rural legal professionals often have a relatively small pool of mentors to tap into and less convenient access to networking

events where lawyers congregate.

More pressing for rural areas is the impending “silver tsunami” as baby boomer attorneys approach retirement. There is both a need to draw new legal professionals to rural parts of the state and a need to connect them with older attorneys, to ensure decades of experience and legal know-how don’t evaporate.


“I think that we have a window of time in which new and young attorneys can move to the more rural parts of our state and learn from those who are still a few years away from retiring,” said Ryan D. Griffiee, a business and agricultural attorney with the Yakima-based firm Larson Berg & Perkins. “But I do think that that window is going to get narrower over the next five to 10 years.”

Young lawyers tend to end up in urban centers like Seattle (185 of the 473 people to pass the Summer Bar Exam were in Seattle), leaving rural areas wanting for new legal professionals to fill the ranks as older ones exit the profession. Griffiee stresses that rural areas offer a host of perks to new legal professionals like a more affordable cost of living, less traffic, and more opportunities to get hands-on experience: “There are some special things about mentorship that you can receive in rural areas, because the courts are not as busy as they are

in, say, King County. The litigators tend to have more trial experience on average than in some of the more urban areas because things can actually go all the way through trial here, where the court calendars might not allow it or make it economically efficient in other markets.”

Griffiee recommends that rural legal professionals get involved with their county bar associations and participate in local activities. If that’s not an option, he encourages mentor-seeking mentees to attend CLEs in-person, rather than via webcast, so they can introduce themselves and make connections with others in their communities. List serves provide another way to patch into a community of legal professionals who are happy to provide advice, and even legal professionals in extremely remote

areas can connect with other nearby communities. For the mentors, he said, it’s just as rewarding.

“For attorneys that have had some experience, it can actually be a revelation to them when they start to mentor someone how much they have to offer,” Griffiee said. “Sometimes you don’t realize how much you have to give until you start giving.” 



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