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YLDNews

The newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division

5 Things an Associate Can Do to Keep Up

BY VAUGHN J. RICHARDSON

In my practice, I primarily focus on domestic relations cases, including family law, divorce, custody, parentage, and domestic violence. I have been as associate for over a year, and have learned an innumerable number of lessons during my first year. Of those lessons, here are five that I think would benefit any associate regardless of practice area or experience level.

(1) Introduce yourself to opposing counsel over the phone and use phone calls to discuss difficult topics with opposing counsel.

You've just been assigned a new case from your partner and the opposing counsel is someone you have never heard of. We forget that the legal community is small within our respective niches (e.g., Family Law, Personal Injury, Criminal),

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An Associate's Checklist for Preparing for Trial

BY SUSANNAH J. PRICE

Now that courts are reopening and jury trials are recommencing, young lawyers will return to the time-honored tradition of trying cases before juries. Jury trials require extensive advanced planning because, like so many things, preparation is key. Below is a non-exhaustive list for the associate attorney who is preparing to try a simple case to jury verdict.

1. Talk to the partner on the file. The style of the partner (from control-freak to laissez-faire) will control much of your workload. Some partners will have a hand in every single task from beginning to end, while others will let go of the reins and rely on your training and experience to execute some tasks. To determine the best use of your time and avoid any surprises, the starting point should be a trial preparation meeting with the partner on the file 60 days before

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so ask some of the partners at your firm if they have experience with this attorney before you reach out for your introductory phone call.

In this digital era of emails and Zooms, arguably the most human thing you can do is call opposing counsel to make your introduction. I guarantee they will appreciate it. With an email, you run the risk of your voice, tone, inflection, mood, and intentions being misinterpreted. A phone call mitigates that risk and avoids misunderstandings.

Many associates make the mistake of considering opposing counsel to be their adversary and not their ally. The clients are adversaries with each other– not the attorneys. Attorneys subscribe and adhere to the same ethical teachings and principals. And the odds are that you will likely work with them again in the future. That one introductory phone call could be what establishes a rapport with your opposing counsel that will help resolve issues in this case, including potential settlement, and cases to come.

In that same vein, phone calls are a better tool than emails to communicate difficult and complex issues to the other side. The amount of time you would spend trying to get your point across in an email can be halved by simply picking up the phone. Further, with the phone call you decrease your risk for misinterpretations.

(2) Set up deadline reminders in your calendar immediately upon learning of the deadlines.

Deadlines are just as easy to keep track of as they are to be overlooked. A missed deadline could mean the M-Word for you and your firm – malpractice.

You've just received your order back from the clerk's office. Now it is time to set every single due date contained in that order in your calendar with 7 day reminders, 14 day reminders, and 21 days reminders backtracked from the due date. While tedious, in total, this could take 5 to 10 minutes, maximum. That short amount of time that you took immediately upon receiving an order could be the difference between making or breaking a deadline and hours of subsequent chaos and scrambling as a result thereof.

When you add these entries into your calendar, make sure to separate each deadline out so that you do not accidentally miss anything. As an example, recently, a discovery deadline was merged with a responsive pleading deadline in our calendar, and we missed the filing due date for our Response to a substantive pleading. This could have been avoided if each deadline had its own calendar entry.

Thankfully, we had a good relationship with opposing counsel, so they agreed to let our team file our Response on a later date; otherwise, we would have had to seek leave of court to file our Response.

(3) If you anticipate that you are not going to make a hard deadline or a self-imposed one that you set for yourself, let the attorneys and clients know in advance.

You promised the client you would get a draft agreed order to them this week, but you just had a huge emergency fall in your lap that took two days to deal with. That was the time you would have spent drafting the agreed order, but instead your attention was elsewhere through no fault of your own. Let the client know about this in advance, so that they are not expecting that agreed order, and you end up falling short. People are understandably human and cannot do everything all at once. That includes us. Part of being a good lawyer is also managing client expectations.

The same is true for the attorneys you work with and opposing counsel. If you cannot turn something around by your own self-imposed deadline, let them know. Odds are they have been in the same situation countless times. In these cases, honesty is the best policy.

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(4)Ask partners in your firm for their take on a case.

My team recently had a difficult case and needed to appoint a 750 ILCS 5/604.10(b) evaluator to determine how to allocate parenting time and decision-making in best interest of the minor children. I went around my office and sat down with three partners and two equity partners that I did not know very well, and I asked them who they would recommend as 604.10(b) evaluator based on the facts of my case. I received about 12 recommendations, and I ended up getting to know 5 senior attorneys that I did not know very well. Two of those attorneys have since assigned cases to me to work on together because of my initiative.

You are not an island. No one is expecting you to have all of the answers as an associate. It is okay to lean on your fellow attorneys and ask for their guidance and opinions when you are facing uncharted territory. Some of the best ones do!

(5)Update your case to-do list at a minimum on a weekly basis then forward that to your partner for them to review and add tasks to.

Recently, I have gotten in the habit of typing out my to-do list and sending it to my team which consists of an equity partner and a partner. This serves several functions for my team.

First, the team knows that I have a handle on my cases and that I am keeping up to date on my deadlines and action items for each case. Second, it gives my team a chance to point out things I am overlooking. Often, my to-do lists have about 50 tasks for me to complete that week, so I am bound to have overlooked something for a case. Just this week, my equity partner added three things to my list that I would have otherwise forgotten. This is a good way to keep not only yourself accountable, but to keep your team accountable as well.

Thank you for reading, and I hope these tips help you in your practice!■

Vaughn J. Richardson is an associate at Beermann LLP, focusing her practice on family law, divorce, custody, parentage, and domestic violence.

An Associate's Checklist for Preparing for Trial

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trial to find out their expectations of you and the division of labor.

2. Trial themes. Spend some time making sure you have a clear idea of what story you need to tell the jury to best make your case. Think of what themes a jury will relate to. Think of the characters who will best tell the story.
3. Witnesses. Make sure you have you witnesses lined up. Send your trial subpoenas 30 days before trial. If you are a corporate defendant expecting to call current employees to the stand, talk to your inside litigation coordinator with plenty of lead time to make sure the witnesses are available. To that end, something to keep in mind is who is under your control as a corporate defendant and whether your opponent will expect you to make witnesses available for the plaintiff's case in chief. See Illinois Supreme Court Rule 237.
4. Exhibits. Gone are the days when blow up pictures and medical records need to be ordered with plenty of time. Now, there is an app for that! Even though you no longer have to wait in line at your local Kinko's, you still need to identify the exhibits you plan to use at trial so that you can easily access them and know your evidentiary basis for their admission.
5. Trial technology. It has been said that "bad technology is worse than no technology." The technology available in your courtroom will run the gamut, so make sure you are aware in advance of what will be available to you, and what you will need to haul into court yourself. And, of course, make sure you know how to use it!
6. Motions in limine. Consider what evidence you want to keep out of your case. It could be prior incidents or a criminal history or something that is just wildly prejudicial with no real substantive value. Review the discovery that has been exchanged and spend some time examining your case from your opponent's perspective.
7. Jury instructions. Get yourself a set of jury instructions that you can retool easily so you are not last-minute scrambling in advance of the instruction conference. Remember, in Illinois, if there is an Illinois Pattern Instruction on point, it is probably going to be given.■

Distinguishing Yourself in a Crowded Legal Marketplace

BY STEPHANIE TANG

For young lawyers, it is difficult to know how to find a niche for yourself in a congested legal market. Below I explain methods of networking and ways to set yourself apart from other young associates and build your book of business.

1. Figure Out What Type of Networking You Are Comfortable With

As young lawyers, it can be overwhelming to figure out what networking events to attend in your first few years of practice. There are three primary types of legal networking: large events, networking groups, and one-on-one networking. Large events are often offered at reduced rates to young lawyers and are a good opportunity to make many contacts. However, if you feel overwhelmed in large group settings, these events may not be the most comfortable or productive for building connections and, instead, networking groups may be more beneficial for you. Networking groups (like BNI, ProVisors, or EPWNG) are often structured in a similar way: each group is restricted to a certain number of members from each field. At the meetings, each member has the opportunity to give an elevator pitch, one member gives a more extended presentation on their field/services, and then there are smaller breakout rooms. These groups may be beneficial to younger attorneys to build up their cross-referral network because members track referrals, so they are incentivized to refer business to other members in the group. Both large event and networking groups can lead to one-on-one networking opportunities for young lawyers to build more meaningful relationships with other professionals. The most important aspect of these one-on-one meetings is to keep track of who you meet with and set up follow-up meetings a few times a year to keep the connection going. If none of these networking options seem like the right fit for you, remember that networking connections can be made anywhere. If you like dogs, consider volunteering for the Anti-Cruelty Society. If you like soccer, consider playing for an intramural league. They are likely to be less congested, allowing people to see your passion for other activities. You never know who you will meet in these non-legal activities.

2. Volunteer for Leadership Positions in Organizations

As a young lawyer, it is often tempting to get involved in as many organizations as possible. While it is good to explore different options, it is better to get involved in a few organizations and rise to leadership roles within those, rather than joining many organizations and not getting involved in planning events or attending meetings because you are too busy. Showing your commitment allows people think of you when they have a referral as they will remember how devoted you are to the organization and view it as a positive reflection on how devoted you are to clients.

3. Play to Your Strengths

Playing to your strengths applies to a wide array of topics. Generally, if you know a second language, it sets you apart so make sure that is on your online bio. As a young lawyer, you have many strengths that can help distinguish yourself in your firm as well. For example, many firms are now turning to their younger law clerks and associates to help them create content for their law firm's blog sites and increase their social media presence. If you gain a basic understanding of social media marketing tools like Canva and BombBomb, you can help your firm develop a plan to reach younger clients. ■

Evaluating Objections to Workplace Vaccine Mandates

BY TERRILL A. WILKINS

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in fundamental changes in the relationship between employers and employees. Across every sector, union-based, government, and private-sector workforces are now grappling with critical questions surrounding workplace rights and responsibilities. This is especially the case with respect to COVID-19 vaccination, as the increase in government and private employer vaccine requirements has garnered a wave of legal challenges across the country. The relative legal uncertainty surrounding workplace vaccine mandates has left employers and employees alike with more questions than answers concerning return-to-work plans, and when employees may be entitled to medical or religious exemptions from a vaccination requirement. Despite that uncertainty, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) recently updated "technical assistance" on the COVID-19 pandemic and the federal employment laws provides some helpful guidelines for evaluating requested medical and religious exemptions from employer vaccine mandates. Understanding the updated guidelines and their impact on workplace vaccine mandates is essential for advising employers and employees through this uncertain legal landscape.

The Federal EEO Laws and Workplace Vaccine Mandates

The recent updates to the EEOC Technical Assistance on COVID-19 reiterates that the federal EEO laws do *not* bar employers from requiring COVID-19 vaccination of employees working in the physical workplace. Thus, so long as employers adhere to the reasonable accommodation provisions of the EEO laws (*e.g.*, religious accommodations under Title VII and health-related accommodations under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)), the federal employment laws do not generally bar workplace vaccine mandates. *See* U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, What You Should Know About Covid-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws, Technical Assistance Questions and Answers, § K.1 (hereafter, the "EEOC Guidance") (updated October 25, 2021). This means that employers are generally permitted under the EEO laws to promote their vaccination requirements, which can include providing employees information to educate them on the available COVID-19 vaccines, the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination, and addressing common questions and concerns from employees. *Id.*

While the EEO laws do not entitle employees to accommodations or exemptions from employer vaccine mandates for generalized concerns about vaccination, or for personal, philosophical, or political objections to vaccination, employees with these objections may also have health-related or religious reasons for their objections to COVID-19 vaccination. In both scenarios, the employer and employee are generally required to engage in a "flexible, interactive process" to identify potential accommodation options once an accommodation has been requested. The EEOC Guidance also emphasizes that accommodation issues with respect to workplace vaccine mandates should be individualized inquiries in which the accommodation decisions are based on the facts of the particular employee's situation.

Guidelines for Medical and Religious Exemptions

Employees seeking a medical exemption from an employer vaccine requirement due to a covered disability under the ADA must directly request an exemption from the requirement. *See id.* at §K. 6. The employee does not have to mention the ADA explicitly or use any "magic words" like "reasonable accommodation" to trigger ADA obligations; however, employers are entitled to seek more information regarding the nature of the health condition preventing the employee from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. This can include asking for supporting medical documentation regarding the employee's disability.

Similarly, employees seeking a religious exemption from an employer vaccine requirement must tell their employer of their conflicting religious beliefs and request the exemption directly. As with medical exemption requests, employees seeking religious exemptions are not required to invoke Title VII explicitly or use any "magic words" referencing their need for religious accommodation – notifying the employer of the conflict between the employee's sincerely held religious beliefs and the vaccination requirement is generally sufficient. *Id.* at §L. 1. The updated EEOC Guidance, which was issued amid the recent proliferation of federal lawsuits under Title VII challenging employers' responses to religious accommodations to workplace vaccine mandates, clarified that while the protections of employees' religious beliefs are broad, such protections do not extend to political views. *Id.* at §L. 2. As a practical matter, this means that an employee's social views, political or economic views, or personal preferences, are insufficient grounds for obtaining a religious accommodation to an employer vaccine requirement under Title VII because such views do not qualify as protected religious beliefs.

An Uncertain Legal Landscape and Questions for Clients

Employment lawyers should keep in

mind that the legal landscape surrounding workplace vaccine mandates is rapidly evolving as challenges to employer and government vaccination requirements continue across the country. The majority of federal challenges to workplace vaccine mandates have been filed in the last three to four months and have focused more on the application of medical or religious exemptions rather than the validity of the employer mandates as a whole.

Litigants have especially focused on employers' handling of religious accommodations in recent weeks, following the Biden Administration's early September announcement of COVID-19 vaccination requirements for federal contractors and healthcare workers. Employees have filed at least 20 federal suits involving religious objections to workplace vaccine mandates since the announcement of new federal vaccination requirements.

Given the recent focus on medical objections and, particularly, religious objections to employer vaccine mandates, it is critical that practitioners develop a roadmap for evaluating these issues for both existing and potential clients. Here are some preliminary questions that may prove helpful in such evaluations:

- *What is the specific health condition or issue preventing the employee from complying with the vaccination requirement?* This may seem like an obvious question, but many employees assume (incorrectly) that simply requesting a "medical exemption" from a vaccination requirement is enough to trigger the employer's accommodation obligations under the ADA. If the health issue is related to severe allergic reactions to vaccines, for example, the employer may ask for specific supporting documentation from the employee's medical treater outlining which drugs in the available COVID-19 vaccines are of concern, and the nature and severity of the allergic reaction, before approving the accommodation request. Getting down to the specifics here is an important first step, as generalized health concerns that are not connected to the employee's health condition under the ADA are generally not covered by the ADA.
- *What religious belief does the employee feel prohibits them from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine?* This question is especially critical for practitioners representing employees. Again, while the EEOC Guidance makes it clear that no "magic words" are needed to trigger religious accommodation obligations under Title VII, the employee must still request the accommodation to start the process. And employers can generally ask employees seeking such accommodations to articulate their religious beliefs. Having this discussion at the outset of your representation will help avoid pitfalls such as religious exemption requests based on "nonreligious concerns" or "personal" or political preferences, which are not covered as religious beliefs under Title VII.
- *Did the employee seek religious exemptions from prior vaccine mandates or other workplace rules?* Longer-tenured employees may have a documented history of disclosing their religious beliefs in connection with religious accommodation requests. While this is by no means a prerequisite for obtaining a religious accommodation, a history of seeking such exemptions may help demonstrate the credibility of the employee's religious belief, especially if there is that history relates to prior workplace immunization requirements.
- *Did the employee request a religious exemption after a prior exemption on other grounds (i.e., medical or other non-religious reasons) was denied?* The EEOC Guidance notes that an employee requesting a religious exemption from a workplace vaccine mandate *after* a secular or non-religious request such as a medical exemption was denied can be an objective basis for an employer questioning "the religious nature of the asserted belief, or the sincerity of that belief." *See id.* at §L.2. While this does not mean that the employer can reject the request out of hand, employees who submitted religious exemptions only after other requests were denied should be prepared for additional inquiries into the nature of their religious beliefs and how those beliefs conflict with the employer's vaccine requirement.
- *Are the employee's beliefs likely to be viewed as "nontraditional" or otherwise unfamiliar to the employer?* Title VII's religious protections for employees generally covers beliefs that are nontraditional or that may be unfamiliar to employers. This includes beliefs that are different from the more mainstream tenets of an employee's religion. The EEOC Guidance cautions employers against assuming an employee's religious beliefs are insincere because some of their observances deviate from the "commonly followed tenets of the employee's religion" or are stricter than the observances of other adherents. *Id.* at §L.2. For example, an employer would likely be prohibited from denying a time off request from a Jewish employee observing the High Holidays on grounds that other Jewish employees did not request time off. Regardless, employees may still face additional questions about their beliefs if their belief is not familiar to the employer, especially as the volume of exemption requests increases in a workplace. A basic awareness of how the employee's religious beliefs are viewed by the employer and whether they are

likely to be familiar to the employer is essential to advising both employees and employers through these discussions.

Like many employment issues, the legal parameters of workplace vaccine mandates, how and when they can be enforced, and who is entitled to exemptions and under what circumstances, involve difficult questions that are often deeply personal to individual workers and to the decisionmakers implementing those policies. But having a thoughtful, thorough roadmap for evaluating these issues, whether your client is the employee or the employer, will help employment practitioners counsel clients in a way that is practical, compassionate, and effective. Taking care from the outset to pay close attention to the details with hot-button issues like vaccine mandates can go a long way towards creating a positive and constructive dialogue that may help your client avoid a workplace dispute.■

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The Six-Figure Elephant in the (Court)room

BY KALEIGH BARRETT

No matter what courtroom you practice in, there is one common denominator that bonds nearly 90 percent of attorneys:[1] student loan debt.

In the last 20 years, the average law school debt at graduation has increased from $75,900 to $118,400.[2] When you combine pre-law school debt, the difference rises from $84,300 to $160,000.[3] The latter represents an increase of approximately 89 percent without adjusting for inflation.[4]

While you might assume law school graduation marks the summit of one's student loan debt balance, the ABA Young Lawyers' Division 2021 Student Loan Survey suggests that tackling student debt does not get any easier for over a quarter of lawyers as they enter their careers. Nearly twenty-seven percent of survey respondents reported they had more debt than they did when they graduated—citing loan forbearance/deferment, income-based repayment plans that do not cover the principal, and lack of increase in salary as some of the most common reasons for their increased balances.[5]

The implications of student loan debt are far-reaching. Student loan debt causes many young lawyers to rethink their career paths—oftentimes resulting in a pivot from pursuing opportunities in public service to pursuing opportunities that will allow them to pay back their loans faster.[6] The impact of student debt, however, extends far-beyond one's legal career. Nearly 90 percent of borrowers report delaying major life events as a result of their student loan debt, including buying a house and starting a family.[7] Student loan debt is not just a strain on one's wallet either—it also has an adverse effects on lawyers' mental health and wellbeing. Apart from being a source of stress and anxiety, the financial burden facing young lawyers also causes a sense of shame and embarrassment.[8]

Although student loan debt has long been the elephant in the [court]room, it is starting to become a leading topic of discussion. Maureen Keiffer, assistant dean of career services at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, believes that these discussions are an important step in the right direction. As Keiffer has observed, there is oftentimes a lack of transparency in the legal field as to the salary amount students can expect to earn post-graduation, thereby making it difficult for students to engage in a meaningful cost-benefit analysis when determining where to attend law school. Keiffer is hopeful that by increasing awareness of the financial burdens facing law students and young attorneys and by expanding accessibility to financial resources and scholarships, we will make strides towards combating student debt and transforming legal education into a more financially manageable endeavor. ■

Kaleigh Barrett is an associate attorney at Momkus LLP in Lisle, Illinois, representing clients in various civil litigation matters.

1. A.B.A. Young Lawyers Division, Student Debt: The Holistic Impact on Today's Young Lawyer (2021), at 4, https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/young_lawyers/2021-student-loan-survey.pdf.
2. Emily Guy Birken, *Average Student Loan Debt for Law School*, Credible, Nov. 1, 2021, https://www.credible.com/blog/statistics/average-law-school-debt/
3. *Id.*
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5. Student Debt: The Holistic Impact on Today's Young Lawyer, at 6.
6. Student Debt: The Holistic Impact on Today's Young Lawyer, at 8.; *The Impact of Law Student Loan Debt*, The National Law Review, Nov. 30, 2021, https://www.natlawreview.com/article/impact-law-student-loan-debt.
7. Student Debt: The Holistic Impact on Today's Young Lawyer, at 10-13.
8. *Id.* at 14, 20.

The Class of COVID-19: New Attorneys Navigating the Pandemic

BY ROBERT O'CONNOR

We have heard several times a day for the better part of the two years that we are currently living in unprecedented times. In a profession that focuses so heavily on precedent, this constantly changing landscape has been difficult for attorneys to adjust to and especially so for new attorneys trying to find their footing amidst all this uncertainty. New attorneys have been trying to navigate these uncharted waters to find a place and position that fits what they are looking for while learning what they like and, oftentimes more importantly, finding what they don't like. The pandemic has seen a great deal of turnover among these new attorneys, but in the same way that when one door closes another door opens, when one attorney goes to join a new firm, they leave behind an opening for someone else. This has led to many new attorneys moving into and out of firms in a manner similar to hermit crabs continuously swapping their shells. While this fluid job market dynamic can be difficult on both the firms and attorneys, many newly practicing attorneys have found that it has afforded them the chance to better negotiate what they want and situate themselves in a position that best meets their goals for work-life balance. We spoke to three young attorneys who have transitioned to different firms during the pandemic and explored their reasons for doing so. This is what they had to say:

"I decided to move because I wasn't getting what I was looking for out of the job, I just needed a different scene. At the beginning of the pandemic work was very light because we were all trying to acclimate to the new living style. Everything was shut down for months. It wasn't until about fall of 2020 that things started to pick up where it was starting to feel like work but of course doing it from your kitchen table, couch, or bed. However, I would argue I was more productive working from home as I had more time to do work. The lifestyle changed from waking up, doing all the morning routines of getting ready for work, traveling to work, work, coming home, going to bed turning into waking up and immediately pulling my laptop out and working. There was no travel involved so I was gaining hours of meaningful work in a day."

"I transitioned to a new firm with flexible work from home benefits during this pandemic in order to better suit my needs outside of work. Through this pandemic there have been many challenges and the flexibility of being able to cut down on commute times and being able to instantly address issues that arise at home has been beneficial for not only my work-life balance but my partner's as well. I have felt more productive in my work knowing that I can also take care of any concerns that arise at home during these tough times."

"During the pandemic a lot of changes happened within the legal industry. The courts closed, trials were rescheduled or put on indefinite hold, employers let workers stay at home, courts came back on zoom, office spaces shrunk, and more (not even mentioning politics). During this time, a lot of young attorneys were let go from their jobs due to financial concerns, impossible billing quotas, and law firm mergers/acquisitions. I personally know some young attorneys who were out of work for months due to pandemic related issues like these. Ultimately, my job as a personal injury attorney working in the medical field was safe, and actually busier than ever. I was a lucky one. As time in the plague went on, I explored some new considerations about what being an attorney living through these times should really be. Do I want to work from home? Should I insist on working from home / pursue a job that will allow that option? These questions were perhaps the most debated amongst young attorneys in my circles. On the one hand, we want to appear willing and able to perform the duties that our senior partners/employers always had to exhibit 'in their day'. On the other hand, working from home meant less time commuting, less time getting oneself in their work attire, and thereby more time to just work. Staying at home also meant potentially saving large amounts of money. Haircuts became less frequent, buying lunch and daily coffee went away, dry cleaning bills were down, and commuting costs as well. Peloton at lunch became a possibility too. These life changes were serious things to consider, especially when many young attorneys are desperately in saving mode with massive looming loan repayments. While I chose to come to work every day since as early as March 2021, I fully understood why over half of my office attorneys chose not to. Ultimately, I valued the work environment more than the rest. I knew my productivity was better at the office, and I owed it to my clients to be at my most productive. I think those who stayed at home certainly used the same reasoning as well, and that's amazing. The trick was to know myself – and because of the plague I was able to learn lot more about what really matters to me as an attorney, and as a person.

I decided to transition during this plague after being head hunted by a recruiter who was looking for young attorneys with medical litigation experience. What really stood out for me in this entire process was that I felt wanted – or at least I felt that someone wanted my skill set. Previously in my career, getting hired meant countless hours of drafting resumes, cover letters, networking, reaching out to friends, colleagues, and family for advice or connections, and lots of rejection. This time was different. I agreed to sit and listen to the offer presented and engage in the interview process. I was letting myself be sold on an opportunity just as much as I was selling myself as an applicant.

That balance did not exist before, and it felt like a sign of the times. Ultimately, I interviewed with several attorneys and partners in this process, and after nearly a month I was offered a position at a much higher salary point than my then current position. After a lot of the considerations mentioned previously, I chose to accept this new job – and I felt extremely accomplished for navigating the process as I did. The pandemic was a great opportunity to consider what really mattered to me as an attorney. I love(d) my previous job, but because of the chaos and mass job relocations that happened in the last dozen months, an opportunity that may not have been available to me actually came knocking on my door. Change must be welcome at times, and for this young attorney, I was ready to roll with it."

As is evident from the above anecdotes, while we are continuing to face a worldwide pandemic, the silver lining is that it has allowed attorneys to choose their job and design their work life as best suits their lifestyle. This welcome change appears to have produced happier and productive attorneys. We all hope the pandemic concludes soon, but that the loosening of requirements of being in the office remains.■