

Advice to Younger Legal Professionals

What advice would you give to women aspiring to enter the legal field?

Candace Dellacona: I think it's really important to think about what's important to you and for you to set up those boundaries now. And if it's important to you to be the best litigator that you possibly can and grow your book as large as possible in the shortest amount of time, then you should do that. Alternatively, if it is incredibly important to you in your 30s to be there for your children and to be accessible for after school activities, then you make that a priority and you find a way to also be successful in your legal career. I think you have to define your own success and it's all what you make of it. I had different choices to make when I was in my 30s, then I did when I was in my 40s and now in my 50s, and it's evolving. You have to give yourself permission to allow for that evolution, to change your mind and to pivot depending on what's going on in your own life and what your priorities are at that particular time.

Sidney Washington: Confidence is key. You have to believe in yourself in this field. You are working in a male dominated field and there are times where self-doubt comes about and I think that you have to really leaving yourself. Stay resilient. Don't take no for an answer. Advocate for the balance that you need, whether it be work life balance or advocate for different leadership roles that you may want. Take initiative. Don't wait for things to be handed to you. Build a network of other women professionals, judges, anyone to just kind of lead you and guide your career in the way in which you want it to go.

Have you faced any challenges as a woman in the legal industry? How did you overcome them?

Gwen Roy-Harrison: Certainly, a number of them come to mind. Being at the courthouse and interacting with the other attorneys or clients or opposing parties and the other party thinking that I'm the legal assistant or the paralegal, not the attorney who's running the case. Walk me into a conference room to greet a client and being asked to go get coffee or water for somebody when there's other folks in the room who aren't being asked that. So that's always a challenge, but I try to approach those type of situations and use humor to counteract any uncomfortable feelings and not show that it affects me at all. In terms of overcoming challenges, I think one in particular is trying to find strong female colleagues and mentors who can support you and support others.