

Decalogue's Revitalized Mentoring Program

by Michael Rothmann

Happy Rosh Hashana! With the coming of this New Year, I hope you make a resolution to become a mentor for newly licensed attorneys and law school students. If you are a law school student or a new attorney who has been practicing less than five years, please take the opportunity to become a mentee.

Teaching others about ideas and sharing experiences provides others with wisdom, which in turn creates a desire of the mentee to become a teacher who will share their wisdom with others and so on. As lawyers, we often share our "wisdom" with our clients. However, we often neglect to pass on what we have learned and how we got where we are with new attorneys, who have been sent into the world ill equipped by law schools to deal with the practical aspects of the law.

Mentoring develops effective and intelligent lawyers. At nearly every waystation in attorneys' careers, new attorneys have opportunities to take advantage of a wide variety of mentors. That said, mentoring isn't just for novice lawyers—even the most experienced attorneys learn new ideas and improve their practice through their relationships with peers and subordinates.

Most lawyers will agree that mentoring is one of the most critical components to a lawyer's success. A mentor can provide tools needed to understand how to navigate a career, whether as an attorney in-house, firm, non-profit, or a government agency. Mentors provide insight, experiences and skills and can help mentees feel more comfortable and included in organizations. The mentor also can actively advocate for the mentee with others. This type of education cannot be discounted.

This summer, Decalogue started its mentorship program in which lawyers who have more than five years' experience will be mentoring lawyers with less than five years' experience, who will mentor law students. This chain provides law students the benefit of two mentors. Unlike other mentorship programs, this is not just a one-year program, but will provide mentorship and relationships that will last a lifetime.

To benefit from any mentoring relationship, both the mentor and mentee must ensure that they are trustworthy, open and willing to participate in the program and in a relationship which requires give and take.

For mentors, it is imperative that they can commit the time needed to make the relationship work. The meetings are vital for the future of the mentee, therefore mentoring is not something that you do when you have time for it. A mentor also needs to listen, offer guidance and be candid, even about one's own background and challenges. Mentors need to be able to push their mentees out of their comfort zones and inspire them to be better.

Mentees must also make the time to meet. They must understand that they have a lot to learn and explain their expectations about what they intend to gain from mentorship program. A good mentee will have insight to understand one's own strengths and weaknesses. Like mentors, good mentees must be good listeners, not worry if they appear to not know everything, and be able to accept a mentor's advice and put those teachings into practice.

Whether you are a solo practitioner, a large or small firm attorney, part of a government agency, or a member of a corporate law department, or a new lawyer seeking your first job, you will benefit from the mentoring program experience. This opportunity allows established lawyers to mentor new lawyers and help them develop practical skills, judgment and networking skills as a foundation to practice law and become successful. It also helps instill ethical and professional values that will remain with them for their careers.

If you are interested in signing up, please contact Decalogue, decaloguesociety@gmail.com or Michael Rothmann, mrothmann@glinklaw.com. We are planning to have an event this coming Fall to formally initiate the program in a fun way, whether online or in person. Thank you and we all look forward to seeing you.

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