

New grads get professional training from mentors on grooming, attitude

By Brian Sodoma
Special Publications Writer

When it comes to learning from mentors, even with the uniqueness each new generation of lawyers brings to the job market, the tradition of watching the old guys is a tried and true method in law that isn't likely to change in the

near future.

Paul Hejmanowski, managing partner with Lionel Sawyer & Collins, who has been practicing in Nevada since 1972, said the young lawyers starting out in today's market still look up to

the old in this profession.

"If you were to go back in time a few years before I joined the firm it was typical for a lawyer to apprentice themselves to an older lawyer. While at the current time we don't do it quite the same way, it's similar," he said. "A lot of students try to work in law firms in the summer to get opportunities to

observe (older attorneys)."

Hejmanowski said that a lot of new attorneys today have the opportunity to attend legal seminars that could help them with how to handle elements of their work if they feel they didn't get enough exposure to it in their education or internships.

"Locally, it's really a cottage industry. There's always a legal seminar available on how to do this or that," he added.

Chris Orme, a recent Boyd Law School graduate and now an associate attorney with Hutchison & Steffen, a 25-attorney firm in town, said the on-the-job experience through mentoring with other attorneys has been invaluable; and to him, one lesson sticks out the most.

"The biggest thing I learned was that there is no such thing as a rough draft. These people don't ask for you to do things to hand it back to them and have it be sloppy," he said. "That doesn't mean there isn't more than one draft, but never a rough draft."

Jennifer Poynter-Willis, an associate attorney with Jolley, Urga, Wirth, Woodbury & Standish, has been out of law school for two years and recently signed on with the local firm. One of her biggest lessons has been to stay open to all the information in any given case.

"I think it's important to look at both sides of everything. Sometimes it's too easy to get oriented toward your client's needs," she said. "You need to know the other side's arguments to know how to defend against it."

Dress for success

With the last decade ushering in new standards on dress code, most leaning toward greater acceptance of casual wear, being old school when it comes to looking professional still seems to win out in law.

"Now, I don't have any casual days because sometimes you may not be scheduled to go into court, but you may have to fill in for someone," Poynter-Willis said. "I wouldn't want a client to see me looking sloppy anyway. I think it also helps by not only making you look professional, but it gives the client the feeling you know what you're doing."

Michael Bonner, partner at Kummer Kaempfer Bonner Renshaw & Ferrario, said his firm went completely to business casual about five years ago, then after about a year switched back to a professional dress code.

"We found that the bar kept getting lower (for casual dress). You would think that most people would know the difference between business ca-



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