

# How the “Millennial lawyer” can advance their career

BY STEPHANIE GARCES

**It is no secret that millennials**, or members of Generation Y, are commonly misunderstood by other lawyers and employers from preceding generations. Millennials encompass individuals born from about 1980 to 2000 and came after Generation X. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, millennials make up nearly half of the U.S. workforce. This is a sharp numerical difference when compared to Generation X who account for only 16% of the workplace. Millennials are growing rapidly and employers are trying to not only understand them, but find a common ground.

I have heard it time and time again that millennials are lazy, want to avoid the typical 9 to 5 p.m., frequently job hopping, and taking more vacations than employers may admit they are ok with.

The truth is that millennials have a different school of thought. They are tech-savvy, multitaskers, and are able to adapt quickly. Millennials are more willing to seek new professional development opportunities which differs greatly from Generation X who value job security, loyalty, and structure.

As a result, millennial lawyers clash with their colleagues from past generations and are disrupting the workplace. Millennials just have different work expectations than others from Generation X. Millennials value collaboration, learning opportunities, and desire to feel a sense of purpose with their every day job.

Despite the disdain for millennial lawyers, they are always looking for ways to advance their career. I repeatedly hear other millennials tell me they are unhappy where they work and want to do more with their career. As a millennial lawyer myself, I know that millennial lawyers can use their strengths to their advantage to make

progress in their career. Here are ways the millennial lawyer can take their career to the next level:

## 1. Ask yourself what you truly value

Millennials are generally are not seeking a work-life balance, instead they value flexibility and greater fulfillment in work tasks. Millennials should ask whether they see themselves becoming partner at their firm, whether they wish to practice litigation or transactional law, and whether they are getting the proper training to become a better lawyer. This can really put things into perspective and help you maintain control of your career, before someone else does. Self-assessment creates a greater determination to help you develop your skills and career.

## 2. Use social media to market yourself and generate business

Millennials were raised using technology and simply understand the way the world communicates. Young lawyers often think they may face difficulties getting clients. The opposite is true.

Millennial lawyers can continue integrating social media to promote their career and gain prospective clients through Facebook, LinkedIn Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, or other phone apps. Social media is very powerful and is an excellent method to advertise. The best part? It's free! What better way to get your own clients and bring in business to your current place of employment?

Young lawyers should always be think of the bigger picture and constantly be selfpromoting themselves because they never know where their career will take them. While newsletters and websites are still used to market, posting on a social media account is an outlet that reaches individuals outside your mailing list.

## 3. Find more than one mentor

Find various mentors who will advocate on your behalf, offer career advice, teach you the tricks of the trade, and will believe in you. The best mentors are the ones who remember what is it like to be a young lawyer and are willing to build you up. If they are willing to teach you the ropes and willing to dedicate time to your needs, you have found the right mentor.

So how do you find a mentor? Finding a mentor can be as easy as asking someone who practices the type of law you currently practice or are interested in. There are also a number of mentoring programs through local bar associations from which you can get CLE credit. Mentors also are often well-connected in the legal industry and can open doors from you which will only further expand your career.

## 4. Take calculated risks to grow your career

Millennials are often risk takers. Young lawyers should take risks now when their personal and financial commitments may be less than they will be ten years from now. Calculated risks include asking for a promotion from your employer, learning a new practice area, switching jobs, or altogether doing something different with your legal career. How does one take a risk and how do you know if it is worth taking? The best way to handle this, ask someone who has taken the risk before you, so you that you know what to expect. Weigh out the pros and cons and remember that where there is no risk there is no reward.

## 5. Take on a leadership or professional development position

Millennial lawyers should always be involved in their legal community. There are endless opportunities to get involved in the legal community and to meet other professionals. This can be through the local

bar associations or a young professionals board. This is an excellent way to market and be your own personal advocate. This also helps you brand yourself and serve a purposeful role in your community.

## 6. Listen

You've heard it before that lawyers love talking about themselves. Millennials can learn a lot from listening to senior lawyers whether it is for particular assignment or how to become a better attorney. Taking the time to listen to others with more experience may serve as the best tool for your success. A millennial lawyer should always strive to be a student and learn from others. There is always room to grow your knowledge which truly enriches your career and makes you a better lawyer.

## 7. Challenge yourself to think outside the box

Do not be afraid to speak up at the next

meeting, court hearing, or other attorney function. Projecting your thoughts in a wellthought out matters shows confidence and may actually help others who may not have thought of something yet. Similarly, I encourage you to always look for more opportunities to advance your career especially, if you are dissatisfied at work. Find a job you care about and practice an area that you genuinely like. If you plan to practice law for years to come, then why not practice something you like?

## 8. Ask for help when you need it

Do not be timid to ask for help whether it is how to take a deposition, how to address the court, how to prepare for a large transaction, or how to improve your work. The more you ask the more you will develop lawyering skills you will use in your career. Millennial lawyers should embrace mistakes, which will be always a part of the learning process, rather than let

their mistakes define them.

## 9. Establish and maintain a professional reputation

Your reputation is all you have, especially for lawyers. Strive to keep a good reputation and always remain professional at work and outside of work. Being ethical and honest with your colleagues, opposing counsel, and clients is the best way to form a great reputation.

Regardless of how millennials are perceived, the millennial lawyer is the future of the profession and they are a force to be reckoned with. Millennial lawyers can step up their careers and use their unique abilities to exceed their career goals. ■

---

Stephanie Garces is the founding partner of Garces Law. Garces Law concentrates its practice in the area of real estate, immigration, and civil litigation with offices in Chicago and Arlington Heights, Illinois.

**ISBA LAW ED**  
**CLE FOR ILLINOIS LAWYERS**

## SAVE THE DATE

### **On My Own: Starting Your Solo Practice as a Female Attorney**

**January 10, 2018 • 12 p.m. Central**

**Live Webcast**

**CLE Credit: 2.00 hours MCLE credit**

#### **FREE ONLINE CLE:**

All eligible ISBA members can earn up to 15 MCLE credit hours, including 6 PMCLE credit hours, per bar year.

#### **For more information:**

[www.isba.org/cle/upcoming](http://www.isba.org/cle/upcoming)

Every solo journey starts with a single step. Don't miss this online seminar that explores the practical business concerns of starting your own law firm and the special issues you may face as a woman branching out on her own. Discover how starting a solo practice can help advance women in the legal profession and what we can do as women to support each other in getting our practices off the ground. Learn how to fight the gender biases you will inevitably face and how these biases and stereotypes can affect your confidence. Listen as our panelists use their real-life experiences to advise you on a number key issues, including trust accounts, new clients, former clients, creating a business plan, and much more.

**Member Price: \$60.00**