



PCBA Young Lawyers Division

By Cathleen Henniges, PCBA YLD President

Helpful Insights for Young Lawyers

YLD introduced a 15-minute "Helpful Insights for Young Lawyers" segment at the beginning of the monthly board meetings where we invited local judges to share useful information and recommendations. Below are some highlights from the first three guest judges:

March – Judge Greg Sakall

According to presiding family law Superior Court Judge Greg Sakall, being involved in the Pima County Bar Association is a great way to meet people outside of your circle. Volunteering is also a great way to learn new skills and build your reputation as an attorney. Judge Sakall advised that you can make a name for yourself by becoming an expert in an area of law that is underserved in the Tucson community. Regarding salary negotiations, Judge Sakall indicated that you can gain an advantage by framing your salary negotiations around the idea that the law firm is making an investment in you rather than around comparing your salary to the salary of others.

The biggest don't for Judge Sakall is being rude to his staff. One item Judge Sakall appreciates is when attorneys prepare a detailed pre-trial statement. Lessons that Judge Sakall shared include to keep all your doors open and let other people close them for you and to go out into the community and make it better.

Judge Sakall recommends the books "Getting to Yes" by Roger Fisher and "Talking to Strangers" by Malcom Gladwell.

April – Judge Danelle Liwski

Associate presiding criminal Superior Court Judge Danelle Liwski suggests that new lawyers observe a judge's courtroom before presenting their case in order to gain an understanding of the flow of that judge's courtroom. Another suggestion for young lawyers is to have a plan for advocating for their client in order to combat being timid but remember to always be respectful.

The biggest don't for Judge Liwski is coming to court unprepared with a close second of dressing casually during a courtroom Team or Zoom meeting. Judge Liwski appreciates attorneys who treat the other side with dignity and respect which also builds the attorney's credibility. A lesson Judge Liwski shared is to always keep yourself open to different things and different people.

Judge Liwski recommends being in the courtroom to further develop your career if your area of practice takes you into the courtroom. Another recommendation is to find a mentor or someone with whom you could practice mock trials or mock interviews. Finally, Judge Liwski strongly advocated keeping your resume updated with your volunteer activities as you are doing them because you will forget something if you wait until you are applying for a new position. She also suggested periodically filling out the judicial application if you think you might be interested because it asks for a lot of information from every stage of life.

May – Judge Gary Cohen

Civil Superior Court Judge Gary Cohen empathizes with young lawyers. When he spoke with YLD, he said he vividly remembers his first years out of law school as a law clerk and his early years as an associate attorney. Judge Cohen set himself apart from

his peers during those early years by treating every assignment as if it was a United States Supreme Court matter. Judge Cohen is also a firm believer in training new attorneys. He said that if a new attorney goes to the frontline too soon, they can get defeated and/or pick up bad habits without even realizing it. Judge Cohen emphasized balance, whether it is knowing when to be aggressive vs. defensive, training vs. frontline experience, and, possibly the most important, work vs. personal life.

The biggest don't for Judge Cohen is stating that something is a fact because it is favorable to your case when it is not a fact. Judge Cohen appreciates attorneys who consider the reader when writing. Judge Cohen said that not only do you need to figure out what to say factually and legally, but it is well worth the time to figure out the right order in the least amount of words so that he understands your argument deeply and quickly. A lesson Judge Cohen imparted on YLD is to be humble. He explained that being graceful as an attorney, even when you have the upper hand, can pay off later because, in Tucson especially, the community knows who you are as an attorney.

Judge Cohen strongly recommends attending a seminar by Brian Garner as well as reading "The Winning Brief" by Brian Garner about two to four years after law school so that the lessons in the book will have a better chance to stick with you.

A HUGE THANK YOU to the judges who have spoken at our YLD meetings so far.