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The Power of Women Working Together

By Leyza F. Blanco – June 12, 2015

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” These words from Helen Keller ring true for many women lawyers who have worked together to achieve much greater success than they would have achieved on their own. While many law firms and lawyers thrive on competition, women who support the business and professional development of other women create an environment where we can all prosper and succeed. Identifying mutual goals and finding the tools to achieve those goals can be the recipe for greater success in the practice of law.

To maximize success, take a personal interest. Be aware of the challenges women face in the practice of law, and then identify the tools we possess to work together. One way to begin is to invest time sponsoring women within your organization or practice area. Find those women who want to achieve similar levels of professional success and encourage them to take advantage of professional and business opportunities.

If there are women leaders who actively support other women in the community, reach out to them. Inquire if there are ways to join in the effort. Another way is to bring a group of women together to build deeper connections and relationships, based on common personal or professional interests. Plan events that bring the women together regularly, so that they can assist each other in reaching business or other common goals. Adopting a “ladder down” mentality with women colleagues is one way to build a team of women to work with on projects.

One example of women working together is a group of successful, more experienced women lawyers who reached out to women at various firms in their community, inviting them to draw on the group's experiences and their networks of contacts for business and leadership opportunities. This group's goal is to encourage women to assume leadership roles within their firms and in the legal profession. These women support other women in key ways. They invite others to serve in leadership roles in professional organizations. They provide opportunities to write, speak, and be highlighted as leaders in practice areas. And they give invaluable career advice. In addition, the group's extensive network of business contacts enables other women to connect with business leaders in nearly any industry in the community.

This group meets once a month for a “lean in” lunch at a popular downtown lunch spot. Those who see these powerful women—who often oppose each other in the courtroom—lunching together might ask, “What brings this group together? What important issues are they discussing?” They dine together to boost community awareness and promote discussion about the issues facing women in the practice of law. They share support, resources, and tools with young women leaders who practice business and bankruptcy law. Their goal is to inspire women to reach for success, and to inspire men in the community to enable and support women to succeed.

Another example of women working together is a group of strong women leaders who team up to host fundraisers to elect women judges. A third example is a group of women business executives who work together to find a seat at the table for more women. This group identifies and assists qualified women candidates who wish to serve on corporate, nonprofit, and government boards. Each of these groups has found a creative way for women to use their influence and networks to encourage other women to succeed in leadership roles.

There is a lot to be said for women mentors and sponsors who help others along the way rather than work against each other. Sabotaging other women inhibits women from seeking advancement. It excludes and devalues all women and is an obstacle to success. Women

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The Woman Advocate is by women advocates for women advocates. It contains first-hand accounts by successful women lawyers of their

attorneys should all share a realistic and positive vision of consciously eliminating career aggression. It is possible for women both to compete and to support each other. Focusing on working together to overcoming business and professional challenges is the recipe for greater success.

This collaborative approach provides the necessary tools for women to achieve confidence, flexibility, support, validation, empowerment, and accountability. Women can build their self-confidence through strength in numbers. There is nothing greater than meeting high expectations for yourself when others believe in you. To start developing collaborative relationships with other women, join groups of women in professional organizations within an industry. Join voluntary bar associations that have a collective goal of promoting women in their professional and business development. By working together and building alliances, women can better address the needs of clients, colleagues, and family. When a female colleague refers a new client or recommends another woman for a professional opportunity, it not only validates their mutual trust and support, but it also empowers the success of both. Working together also increases accountability and motivation to succeed. Together, women can achieve great things and be happier doing so. To achieve that success, inspire and support a fellow woman.

Keywords: litigation, woman advocate, mentors, community service, professional development

[Leyza F. Blanco](#) is a shareholder at Gray Robinson in Miami, Florida.

experiences at all stages of career development.

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