

Networking: YOU GOTTA HUSTLE

Valerie Uribe

“You gotta HUSTLE,” Liz Stone explained. In early 2014, I attended a law conference and heard Stone’s hilarious and extremely informative talk about networking. Stone is the managing director of the Dubin Group, a legal recruitment firm.

Very few people know how to network successfully. There are countless articles and presentations about how to network, but I have yet to see or hear anyone break it down in a practical and comedic manner the way Stone does.

Stone captured my attention immediately when she said, “While it is always ideal to graduate in a good economy, I definitely think that people who graduate in a bad economy learn to hustle early on, which has long-term career

benefits.” While her acronym does not follow the order in which one would execute these steps, the acronym HUSTLE is itself priceless:

H = Hidden job market. These jobs are never posted publicly, and there are a lot of them. You need to network to learn about the hidden job market.

U = Understand the practice, the market, and what you want to do. The more you understand these things, the more targeted you can be.

S = Stick to it. Stick to the process, stick to the networking, and stick through the rejection. Focus on the small milestones to keep up your morale.

T = Talk to people in person if possible. This is how you learn about the market and the job.

L = List all the people you want to meet, those that you can ask for job advice, and the companies you want to work for. These lists will help you approach this systematically.

E = Enjoy yourself to keep your sanity! This is a stressful process. This is a marathon, not a sprint. Do extracurricular activities that you enjoy. You never know when, where, or what will lead to a good job contact.

Knowing how to network successfully is important for all lawyers, from brand new attorneys to partners at law firms. “Law school tends to attract risk-averse people. People do not know how to put themselves out there. Do not expect a job offer after a five-minute coffee date,” Stone declared. We live in a world of instant gratification, but we often become impatient and forget that relationship building takes time.

Stone suggests that you focus on small goals and that you commit to these small goals the way you commit to billable hours. For example, make a coffee date once a week with someone from the lists you have created. This is where list making comes in handy—it helps you focus on the information you are attempting to obtain. What if you have not figured out what you want to do professionally? Stone suggests that you start speaking with different people to explore your interests. Once you figure it out, look for people who work in that area and reach out to them.

NETWORK WITH A PURPOSE

“Network with a purpose,” Stone exclaimed. “Do not just blindly show up to events. Do not just join a group or association and be an inactive participant. Be on a committee. Get involved.” Becoming involved with an association, such as BASE, is instrumental for professional development. You can demonstrate your work product by rolling up your sleeves and getting involved in a committee. In my experience, working with people on an event or on a committee provides insight into their personalities, interests, and work ethic.

WHAT IF YOU LOVE YOUR JOB?

“Everyone should know their market value,” Stone explained. “Even if you are happy, you should keep up with the market. Figure out what you bring to the table.” The practice of the law is competitive and at times volatile and unstable. Stone suggests that you read job postings to learn what types of experiences are valued by firms, companies, and nonprofits and that you apply for jobs once a year to assess your market value.

“Do not miss that period when you become unmarketable. The mistake I see with young associates is that they put their heads down and bill hours. Junior associates have recruiters hounding them until about year five, then the calls stop,” Stone warned. Even if you are happy with your firm, eventually you are going to make the transition from associate to partner. And partners have to make it rain. What book of business have you built? In addition to potential job prospects, networking is important to building your client base.

CLOSING ARGUMENT

“Control your exit strategy,” Stone advised. “Look ahead and figure out what you want. And most importantly, move! Get out of your comfort zone.” One of my favorite quotes is attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, “There is nothing permanent except change.” Be prepared for change; it’s inevitable.

Stone received her JD from UC Hastings College of the Law in 2005. She practiced litigation with Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, Goodwin Procter, and Buchalter Nemer. In addition to her position as managing director of the Dubin Group, Stone performs at stand-up comedy clubs throughout the Bay Area.

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