



PAYING IT FORWARD ▶

Bringing Up the Next Generation of Attorneys

Blair K. Walsh

“TO DO MORE FOR THE WORLD THAN THE WORLD DOES FOR YOU—
THAT IS SUCCESS.” —HENRY FORD

We each joined The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) for different reasons, some for business development and networking, some in search of new job opportunities, and some simply to get CLE credit. Regardless of our respective reasons for joining BASF, as members of one of the most reputable and powerful professional associations in the country, we each share a responsibility to equip the next generation of attorneys with the skills to excel in the practice of law. More importantly, we have a duty to instill in them the core values of professionalism, civility, integrity, passion, and zealous advocacy that have earned BASF its reputation for excellence.

When reflecting on our own journeys, most of us can credit the advice of a more senior attorney at one point or another when contemplating a career move, handling a difficult opposing counsel or challenging legal issue, or just plain feeling overwhelmed. As the old saying goes, “there is no better teacher than experience,” and sometimes a pearl of wisdom from someone with more life experience can put it all into perspective and serve as a comforting lifeline when navigating the legal profession.

Although we can never quite “pay it back” to our mentors, we can “pay it forward” by giving that same gift to newer attorneys in need of some insight. It is our responsibility to help teach them the skills that they did not learn in law school and to connect them with opportunities to utilize those skills.

Fortunately, BASF has created programs specifically geared toward grooming the next generation of attorneys. One of the most recent is the nationally acclaimed Mind the Gap program, established by 2013 BASF President Chris Kearney of Kecker & Van Nest, whom I am lucky enough to call my own mentor. Mind the Gap provides recent law school graduates with training and mentoring to ease the transition into the practice of law.

This year, as discussed at the Annual Membership Luncheon in December, 2016 BASF President Michael Tubach is rolling out an “incubator program” that will allow new attorneys to essentially “hang their shingle” for six months to a year using fully equipped offices at BASF, complete with built-in mentors to assist.







The Justice & Diversity Center also provides numerous pro bono opportunities where newer attorneys can obtain liti-

gation experience and practical skills while working under seasoned attorneys.

Finally, BASF members within their first ten years of practice automatically become members of the organization's Barristers Club, made up of eighteen sections and three committees, which hosts numerous networking events and CLEs throughout the year. While hosted by the Barristers Club, attorneys of all levels and in all practice areas are welcome at these events and seminars, each of which provides additional opportunities for professional development.

However, while BASF does its part through these formal programs, as practicing attorneys, we need to do our part by providing the personal connection and support that are essential to our growth as legal professionals.

There are many informal ways to make a positive impact on the next generation, whether it is a recent law school graduate on the job hunt or a junior associate at your firm. A few simple examples include:

-  Setting aside twenty to thirty minutes for a cup of coffee with a new bar admittee to explain the value of face-to-face networking on the job hunt
-  Sharing a few war stories over an after-work cocktail in the weeks leading up to a young attorney's first trial
-  Responding to an email from someone reaching out to learn about your specific practice area
-  Bringing an associate to a BASF event and introducing him or her to others to make a possible intimidating situation more comfortable
-  Forwarding an event flyer to a young attorney with a note suggesting he or she attend a Barristers Club event
-  Striking up a conversation with the new attorney sitting next to you at a lunchtime CLE

Be a connector—help new attorneys broaden their professional networks and provide them with opportunities to shine. If you must decline an invitation to speak on a



panel or chair a section or committee, provide the name of a newer attorney who might excel in the role. If you must decline to take a small case or one outside of your specialty area, refer it out to a young solo attorney trying to get his or her start.

As BASF members, we are surrounded by daily opportunities to serve as a resource and provide younger attorneys with valuable insight, and many of these only take a few minutes. If you do not regularly encounter these attorneys, swing by a Barristers Club event and I will happily introduce you to others.

As a member of the 2016 Barristers Club Board of Directors, I have the honor of working with BASF President Michael Tubach this year to connect the more experienced members of the bar with the next generation and continue the longstanding tradition of mentorship, education, and teamwork that has made BASF the strong organization it is today. I invite you all to join us in these efforts to pay it forward.

Blair K. Walsh is the 2016 Barristers Club president. She represents victims of catastrophic injury and wrongful death at Abramson Smith Waldsmith. She can be reached at bkw@aswllp.com. For more information on getting involved with the Barristers Club, please contact Barristers Club Director, Kallie Donahoe at kdonahoe@sfbbar.org.