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# Careers in Trademark Law

Posted on March 21, 2013

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Networking remains the name of the hiring-game. As the summer rapidly approaches and IP-minded Cardozo students continue their attempts to secure IP-related summer employment, Cardozo's [Intellectual Property Law Society](#) brought together a panel of IP attorneys to discuss careers in trademark law. The consensus: all's quiet on the hiring front. Nonetheless, the panelists offered sage advice for legal job seekers in general and those interested in careers in trademark law in particular. Danielle Gorman, co-acquisitions editor of the Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal ("AELJ"), moderated the panel discussion.

While the panelists were very straightforward about the lack of openings at law firms, they still stressed the importance of networking. [Marc A. Lieberstein](#), a partner at Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP and a graduate of Cardozo Law School, got his first job in intellectual property through his cousin, "a partner at an intellectual property boutique." Similarly, [Michelle Mancino Marsh](#), a partner at Kenyon & Kenyon, got her first IP job after her firm was dissolved and a law school classmate told her to apply for a position at Kenyon's IP-litigation department. In other words, don't be shy about milking those contacts you already have. More importantly, take this time while in law school to make contacts that, in the future, might be able to help you land a job.

Of course, we've all heard this before. The networking-pill might be a hard one for a law student to swallow considering the fact that the panelists who preached the importance of networking prefaced their endorsements of that oft-reviled job-hunting tactic by reminding students that there simply aren't any jobs. No jobs, why network? "You have to start somewhere. Even if the big job that you wanted out of law school is not available after graduation, you can still get that job after you've gotten a few years of experience at a smaller firm," said Mr. Lieberstein.

Law students shouldn't limit their networking to the confines of their law school, friends list on Facebook, or the contact list in their cells. "I can't stress this enough. Get out there and get yourself immersed outside of school, into the professional world. Join the [Intellectual Property Law Section of the New York Bar Association](#). Join the [International Trademark Association](#). Get out there and get to know people, make an impression," said Mr. Lieberstein. The advantages are twofold: 1) the aforementioned networking and all the doors it can potentially open; and 2) your resume will look much more attractive to potential employers. "I can't tell you how many resumes I've looked over in which there is absolutely no mention of anything IP-related. I have an applicant telling me that he's all about

trademarks and yet his resume doesn't have anything related to trademarks," said Mr. Lieberstein. In other words, if you want a job in IP-law, you should probably have some IP-related experience on your resume. You can help your case by simply joining an IP-related organization.

You should always try to set up an informational interview prior to applying at a firm. It is usually helpful to seek out Cardozo alums, as they might be more willing to help out. When reaching out "don't be shy and just ask if the person has some time to meet up or talk on the phone. Many law students worry that they will be perceived as annoying if they reach out too often or ask for too much. Asking once is never too much. If you don't get a response, you should try again. If you still come up empty, then move on. Don't forget that these are busy people, and many are willing to help if they find the time, so don't be discouraged if you don't get a response right away," said Mrs. Marsh. "And if, in the future, you should ever find yourself in the position to give a law student an informational interview, try your hardest to do so. Always give back," added Ms. Marsh.

The panelists also discussed what employers are looking for in applicants. "The better your grades are the better your chances. Firms place a great importance on grades. However, the largest firms are starting to look outside the 10, 15, 25% and are looking even at the top 50%. What firms have noticed is that many applicants with lower grades have great life and work experience and that is very valuable at a law firm," said Mr. Lieberstein. So if you aren't in the top 10%, don't fret (so long as you have a few years of work experience at Merrill Lynch).

As for interviewing, the old adage remains true: practice makes perfect. "Practice with your boyfriend, practice with your girlfriend, practice with whomever. Just practice with actual people and try to get feedback. Understand your weaknesses and work towards eliminating them. If you have a twitch or something, have someone tell you. You want to know before you walk in the interviewing room. The most important thing, however, is don't come off as fake," said Lieberstein. [Alisa Hurlburt](#), senior attorney at Elizabeth Arden, agreed. "We don't just look at your credentials. We look at your personality. We need to know whether you are really interested in this job, or if you are just trying to fill a position." As noted above, one way to prevent yourself from looking like someone who is "just trying to fill a position" is to join organizations in the field you would like to work in. "The International Trademark Association has a lot of programs that you can go to to get skills. With these programs on your resume, it shows interest in the field. 'So you took a class on how to file an application at the USPTO?' So when you are in an interview...you can actually talk the talk," said Mr. Lieberstein. For those seeking in-house positions, Ms. Hurlburt added that she "look[s] to see if you are ready to hit the ground running, if you have the skills earned as a young attorney, do you know how to speak to people, do you know how to get from a client what they really want, not what they think they want?"

The most important thing for job-seeking law students, according to [H. Straat Tenney](#), an associate at Edwards Wildman Palmer LLP, is to be yourself and do what you like to do. "I know that everyone wants a job and IP is super cool but let me tell you this: IP isn't super cool if you don't like it," he said.

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