



Q:

If you could reach back in time to give some advice to your first-year-in-practice self, what would it be?



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Maya Missaghi owns and operates Missaghi Law, PLLC out of Saint Paul. She practices estate planning, probate and elder law.

I had major impostor syndrome starting out (honestly, it's only just getting better now, after six years)—who did I think I was, wielding the law and touting myself as a

hardnosed attorney? I was just someone's mom, wife, and daughter playing dress-up. This sounds old-fashioned even to me, but trust me, this is what I wrestled with.

Now I would tell that younger, sweeter, less confident version of me, "You're going to pull this off, don't you worry." Because once you start, the word "practice" really hits home—to repeatedly exercise one's skills in order to improve one's proficiency.

And that's all anyone else is doing—practicing. If you reach out, you'll find many fellow attorneys willing to share what their exercises in the law have taught them. And in the not-too-distant future, you too will be able to share insights on forms and circumstances you've seen before.

Just keep practicing.



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Sheina Long is a licensed attorney practicing in Minnesota and Wisconsin, although she also holds active licenses in Missouri and Illinois. Sheina currently works within the Claims Litigation Counsel Section for the Corporate Law Department of State Farm based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

I remember starting out as a first-year practicing attorney intimidated, overwhelmed, and, honestly, scared that I would fail. Although I had some experience from clerking with the local court and interning with a local attorney, I lacked confidence in my abilities as a new attorney. If I could go back and speak to my first-year-in-practice self, I would tell myself that, despite it all, remain confident in my practice, do not be afraid to ask questions of those who are more experienced than me, and do not be afraid to learn more on my own.

I spent three years learning the law and two years learning how to be a practicing attorney during my internships. I knew how to handle a case, how to try a case, and how to handle client interactions. I just needed to know that I could handle those things on my own. Had I been more confident in myself, I would not have spent endless hours worried that I would make a mistake. Having that confidence will not only make you more apt to get assignments from your manager and make you

seem like you have a stronger case to opposing counsel, but it will also make you a better attorney overall.

Along with being more confident, don't be afraid to ask questions of your managing attorney or other more experienced attorneys in your office. There will be times where something comes across your table that you have never dealt with before, but it is likely that someone else has experienced what you need help with. Remember, you do not have to reinvent the wheel. Ask those questions you need to ask in order to find an answer or strategize an approach that will help you achieve your end goal. Utilizing the knowledge of more experienced attorneys will allow you to learn so much more than you ever realized was possible.

Finally, do not be afraid to take the initiative to learn on your own. Whatever area of law you practice in, there is always room for development and ongoing learning. Whether it be by CLE, an additional designation, or certification, there is always something new to learn as a practicing attorney. Be confident in yourself, don't be afraid to ask questions, and don't hesitate to take the initiative and develop

yourself as a practicing attorney. These will only help you to become the best attorney you can be.

My views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the view and position of State Farm and they are given in my individual capacity.



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I was eager to put the first year behind me and get as much experience as I could, to build a network and build my practice, so I said yes to every opportunity I was presented with to join organizations and

take on new clients. I wanted to fast forward to a point where I would have the clients and the knowledge and the experience. Looking back, I would tell myself something that I know I heard but did not really heed: "Be patient." The experience and clients will come. But there is only a short period of time to prioritize learning something new, trying new experiences, and finding good mentors. Be patient and enjoy the freedom to try new things.



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George Soule is a partner at Soule & Stull LLC in Minneapolis. He is a civil trial lawyer, tribal court judge, and Rule 114 qualified neutral. His community activities include past service as chair of the Minnesota Commission on Judicial Selection.

My mentors at Gray Plant and Bowman and Brooke—Franklin Gray, Richard Bowman and others—gave me excellent advice when I was a young lawyer. They said to work hard, to do my best work on each case and for every client, and to always be prepared. They encouraged me to work independently and gave me opportunities to engage directly with clients and experts and to get great litigation experiences. They taught me to be a good partner, to be collegial, and to support all members of the team. They showed me how to act ethically and professionally, to deal with adversaries with respect, and to be forthright with clients, judges and juries. Finally, they afforded me time to connect with people and to get involved in and give back to the community.

My mentors were great trial lawyers and role models, while encouraging me to be myself, to find my own style, to be comfortable with my methods of advocacy. I am sure that I have made missteps, but I have tried to follow this advice and I have had an interesting, challenging, and fulfilling career. I could not have provided better advice to my first-year-in practice self, and I have given this same advice to many other young lawyers over the years.



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