WLF: Harnessing Opportunities: Career Transitions during COVID-19- MINUTES

Date: December 9, 2020

Speaker #1: Rose Shawlee: lawyer at Harper Grey, over 13 years experience, estate planning and business needs

-stereotypical jewish lawyer, either be one or marry one, we are our own marketing teams, people come to us because of the relationships we make with them

-you are a brand, when you make a switch, make sure it doesn’t damage your brand

-if you’re making a change don’t make it something from something, if we just don’t want to be where we are, evaluate what you need and want, make sure you’re changing “to” not just “from”

-be thoughtful of questions over things that you cannot control, things that other people will be controlling, ask about their strengths and weaknesses

-positives from covid: going to work in sweatpants, reduced networking lunches and coffees

Speaker #2: Erin Brandt: human rights law, 7 years, Porta Law, helps business owners find joy in what they do

-she started her own law firm in the middle of covid, she did it with a little baby at home, currently 14 months old

-went on mat leave, planned to have a short mat leave, and be full time again by a year, went back to work when her child was about 5 months old, she then decided it was time for a career change

-make an intentional decision about what you want to do next, reach out to people you know, that you have relationships with, ask them why you like what you do

-thought about brands, identities, office set up, they chose porta law, because porta means a door opening, symbolizing one door closing, one door opening

-they made the decision to have a female led firm

-they have home offices set up, they chose not to have a regular office space, having access to a small line of credit, during covid they basically just needed a laptop to get started, using Microsoft teams frequently, setting up website and getting social media going

-when leaving a firm, you send a joint letter to the clients who get to choose which firm to hire

-next stage for them will be growth

-some tips: re-evaluate career choices every few years, set goals and expectations, re-review these goals, if you aren’t happy, make a change, especially if it’s a toxic work environment, or causing mental stress

-informal interviews are important, talk to friends, why they like what they like

-seize opportunities, find the silver lining, for her, that was being able to work from home with a small child, no boss telling her what to do

-ask for help, reach out to others in similar fields or businesses, figure out what kind of help you need and ask for help

-starting a business is like having a baby, there is no good time to quit, so just do it!

Speaker #3: Liz Sadowski, plaintiff personal injury, medical negligence and denied insurance claims, called to the bar in 2016, second vice president of TLABC, Collette Parsons Corrin LLP

-in early March she was given notice at her firm, ICBC came out with changes which will have an impact on the personal injury bar, she practices employment as well but her main practice was personal injury litigation

-she had over 50 clients, she started out feeling stressed out, then she felt relief, she reached out to the partners who reached out to others and shortly received job offers

-then the lockdown happened and the relief turned back to stress, job prospects were then put on hold, spent the next few weeks thinking about what to do

-she did not want to leave her clients behind, this was a huge consideration for her when thinking about where she could go

-she reached out to the non-profit groups that she had dealt with, wrote some articles, including an advocate article, she also reached out to Beverly McLachlin, writing articles was a good distraction for her, during this time, she realized she should not rush things

-she was connected through a friend and ultimately offered a job

-some advice: networking is important, making use of the connections you have with friends and employers, connecting through common values, try to connect with people on a human level

-find a firm where bosses are willing to be good mentors

Questions/Answers

-Olena: how did you control your panic and not take the wrong job?

-Liz: she had honest conversations with senior lawyers, including Rose Keith, who gave the brutal honest truth, she had a lot of support, lawyers who helped her stay accountable

-Olena: how did you integrate and meet lawyers being a new associate during covid?

-Rose: her advice is to publish things, connect through linkedin, have a sense of who is doing what, be responsive when people need something, be available, coordinating with marketing team, they will be able to tell you what could and could not work

-Olena: were people responsive to your questions while you were starting your own firm?

-Erin: lawyers love talking about themselves, so there were a lot of people who were willing to help

-Chat Question: what technology do you recommend?

-Erin: Clio, can use it for conflict checks, checklists, scheduling, clients can book meetings and pay online, time tracking and billing

-Olena: what’s your biggest challenge this year and how did you meet the challenge?

-Rose: be nice to yourself, things are going to evolve with or without covid

-Erin: joint responsibilities of being a mom and starting a law firm, there’s tension between paying attention to baby and working crazy hours, balancing breast feeding was challenging, compromising with spouse who also has a professionally demanding career, also, they did not have child care due to covid, they overcame this by compromising, child has gone to daycare

-Liz: managing clients, when the joint law society letter went out, challenges may be scary in theory, had fears in head, but ultimately the transition was smooth, finding a firm was also challenging

Adjourned