



TAS REPORT: COMMERCIAL LITIGATION PRACTICE GROUP



Business Development Strategies for Women and Allies

Sapna Thakker, *Lax O'Sullivan Lisus Gottlieb*

On November 28, 2019, The Advocates Society's Commercial Litigation Practice Group hosted a panel discussion in Toronto on business development for women and allies, featuring Wendy Berman (Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP), Eliot N. Kolers (Stikeman Elliott LLP), Scott Hutchison (Heinein Hutchison LLP), and Shara Roy (Lenczner Slaght Royce Smith Griffin LLP). Reena Lalji (Bank of Montreal) moderated the discussion. The panelists offered practical tips on how women in private practice can build their profiles, develop business, and effectively work with allies. Here are three takeaways from the discussion.

1. Maintain relationships

Lawyers who remain in private practice should anticipate that some of their law school classmates and former colleagues will move into roles where they will be responsible for hiring and supervising external legal counsel. It is important to maintain these relationships, which can be excellent referral sources in the future.

2. Be conscious of how you report to your clients

One of the best ways to win over a client is to project confidence. Wendy Berman suggested that in reporting victories to clients, women should make a point to report the victory first, and any additional details after, while delivering the message in their authentic voice.

3. Advice on mentoring

Allies, both men and women, have an important role in promoting women at work. As Scott Hutchison said about a generation of men who want to help, "we are hopeless." He suggested the best way for women to ensure that they are being put in client-facing roles is to be specific and ask. Similarly, Eliot Kolers recommends what he calls the Jerry McGuire approach to mentorship. He asks his mentees to "help me help you" by making specific requests for what they want, whether that be to be put on a file, to be introduced to a specific client, or to run a meeting. ▀