

# A Simple Guide to Best Practices for Young Lawyers

By Hon. Cruz Reynoso (Ret.), Boochever and Bird Professor of Law, Emeritus, UC Davis School of Law  
& Aida S. Macedo, Esq., Second Year Associate, Miles, Sears, & Eanni, PC



Hon. Cruz Reynoso (Ret.)



Aida S. Macedo, Esq.

## 1) Do Not Be Afraid to Set Up Your Own Law Practice

Given the legal job market many young lawyers are faced with the decision of whether to set up their own law practice. If you do keep these in mind:

- Be practical about your finances and budget. Some solo practitioners run their offices from home or other low-cost office spaces. They have an agreement

with a law firm to meet with new clients in their law office. They wait some time to get an assistant.

- If possible, start in a small community. A solo practice is easier to start in a small community where your contacts and family live.

- Do pro bono or low-fee cases. This will allow you not only to give back to the community but also to get many case referrals once the

community gets to know you.

## 2) Value Experiences Working at a Small or Large Law Firm

You must value your work at a small or large law firm. There are advantages to both.

At a small law firm, you gain more hands-on experience because there are fewer lawyers; don't shy away from those challenges. Also, you have greater flexibility in what type of cases you can do, more variety, and close mentorship from more experienced attorneys.

At a large law firm, you have greater resources and assets. If it agrees to accept an important pro bono case it will have the resources. However, you should not shy away or ignore the smaller routine cases. You can still get great experience, more varied cases, and help people that still cannot afford representation in smaller cases.

## 3) Treat Everyone with Courtesy

It is a simple yet profound tip that many young lawyers forget. You should treat everyone with courtesy particularly if they are in a lower economic/professional level than you. You will interact with court personnel, clients,

opposing counsel, judges, etc. Courtesy is essential, and those who are not your peers professionally will help you when you need it the most.

## 4) Value Work-Life Balance

It is a rare circumstance that a beginning lawyer is not going to have to work long hours. Work hard but do not forget to make time for friends, loved ones, family, and for pro bono work. You need to keep a balanced life. You can also do pro bono community work that is not just legal. In our view, lawyers play a very important role in our community, are setting the tone for the future, and provide leadership. Simply put: make the time.

## 5) Maintain Your Independence

Just because you work for a particular organization or firm does not mean you should give up your independence as an attorney at law. Use your judgment and ethics to decide what actions you should take in your life and your profession. Remember why you went to law school and why you are an important member of the bar and your community.

