

## 2022 NJSBA Annual Meeting

### **From the Classroom to the Courtroom**

Moderator/Speaker:

Hon. Lawrence Jones

*Former Superior Court Judge*

*Professor, Monmouth and Montclair Universities*

Speakers:

Hon. Marlene Lynch Ford, A.J.S.C., Ocean

Hon. Bonnie Mizdol, A.J.S.C., Bergen

Hon. Lisa P. Thornton, A.J.S.C., Monmouth

Frank DeRienzo, Esq.

*Leary Bride Mergner & Bongiovanni, PA, Cedar Knolls*

Professor Jamie Pukl-Werbel

*Seton Hall University Law School, Newark*

Prosecutor Esther Suarez

*Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, Jersey City*

Neil Wise, Adjunct Professor and Career Counselor

*Rutgers Law School, Camden*

## **THREE NETWORKING MISTAKES**

**By Neil Wise\***

### **Mistake #1 - NOT following up.**

Once you leave a networking event it is easy to forget to follow up with a new contact. Do NOT let your new contact's business card get lost in your bag, in your pocket, or on your desk. It is not too late! Reach out and follow up.

### **Mistake #2 - NOT using social media.**

There is so much professional networking happening online. Whether you are networking in person - online networking is a must! Commit to networking intentionally. Update your LinkedIn profile. Reach out to people on Instagram. Join a room in Clubhouse. Use your social media to network without having to put on a suit.

### **Mistake #3 - NOT having a plan.**

Without a cohesive plan and networking strategy you make networking more stressful than it needs to be. An intentional networking plan will help you maximize your time and minimize your stress. A great networking plan will allow you to network efficiently and successfully.

\*Professor Wise has been a Career Counselor at Rutgers Law School for 15 years. He taught Environmental Law courses for 25 years. A graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and an Honors graduate of Rutgers Law School, he spent 30 years as an attorney and manager at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Philadelphia.

## How to prepare for an interview

By Neil Wise, (from the Rutgers Law School Guidances)  
neilwise@camden.rutgers.edu

Dress professionally. The goal is to present yourself as polished and professional.

Know yourself – be ready to discuss anything on your resume in detail. Clarify your goals.

Think about responses to open ended questions or difficult questions, i.e., Tell me why you decided to enter law school? or Why is your GPA not on your resume? Employers are as interested in how well you respond to such questions as they are in the actual response.

Review and consider your responses to the Common Interview Questions listed below.

### **Presentation**

Self-confidence, enthusiasm and engagement are important in any interview. ]

Make good eye contact. ]

Make an effort to be conversational; listen actively and respond to the question asked.

Don't interrupt the interviewer.

## 2. Common Interview Questions General

### **Personal**

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell us about something about yourself that is not on your resume/no one has asked you about yet
  - How have you changed since starting your legal studies?
  - Why should we choose you over other candidates?
  - What sets you apart?
  - What qualifications do you have that make you feel you will be successful in your area of interest?
  - What is your greatest personal asset? Your greatest weakness?
  - Is there anything that concerns or worries you about practicing law
    - What would you be doing right now if you weren't in law school, and how does that relate to the practice of law?
  - What are your ultimate career goals?
  - Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten? Twenty?

### **Work-Experience Related**

- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?

- What type of people do you feel you work with best?
- What type of people would you have trouble working with?
- How did you like \_\_\_\_ (work experience)?
- Have you ever been promoted? Interests/

### **Extracurricular Related**

- What do you do in your spare time?
- Tell us about your involvement in law school.
- Tell us about your participation in student clubs.
- How have you spent your summers?

### **Education Related**

- Why did you choose law?
- When did you develop this interest?
- Why do you want to be a lawyer?
- How do you like law school?
- Is law school what you expected it to be?
- How are you doing in school?
- Do you feel your grades are an accurate representation of your capacity as a law student?
- Why did you only get a "B" in \_\_\_\_?
- Please explain your course selection. 3
- What courses have you liked best? Least?
- What courses are you planning on taking?
- What type of law do you want to learn more about? Why?
- Why are you doing a joint degree?

### **Employer Related**

- What are you looking for in a job?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why do you want to work in [city]?
- Why a large/small/specialized firm?

- Why do you want to work in X area of law?
- You aren't taking any course in our area of practice, are you really interested in it?
- What can we answer for you today that will differentiate us from every other firm you've seen?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the employer for which you hope to work?

### **Behavioral**

- Tell us about a challenge you faced.
- Tell us about a time where you managed a conflict.
- How have you been involved in a team in making a decision?
- What obstacles have you encountered in a leadership role?
- What is something you have struggled with in the workplace and how did you overcome it?
- How would people describe your leadership style? Give us an example.
- Tell us about a time when you had to overcome an intellectual challenge.

Prof. Wise is a graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and an Honors graduate of Rutgers Law School. He taught Environmental courses at Rutgers Law school for 25 years, and has been a Career Counselor for 15 years. He was an attorney/manager at the U.S. EPA for 30 years.

## STAY HOME, STAY FOCUSED, KEEP NETWORKING

By Neil Wise

Having to stay home, taking classes remotely, and maintaining social distance does NOT mean stopping, or even reducing, your job search and networking activities. Here are some tips on how to ramp up your visibility, marketability, and networking effectiveness.

Note that 70% of jobs are obtained through networking. Note also that the key to networking is DO NOT ASK FOR A JOB! If you are asking for a job, you are not networking. Besides, lawyers hate saying "I don't know," so a negative reply to asking 'do you have a job or know anyone who does?' is a conversation killer. Note, also, that finding a job is itself a job; it takes a lot of time, work, focus, and effort. There is no reason for your effort to stop now, so here are things you can work on any time at home:

- 1 **NETWORKING:** It's worth repeating that 70% of jobs are obtained through networking and the key to networking is DO NOT ASK FOR A JOB! If you called 100 people in your network and asked if they had a job or knew anyone who had one, you'll get 99 negatives, and that's a conversation killer. But if you called the same 100 and told them "I'm planning my **job search strategy**, it occurred to me that you would make an **excellent resource**, may I have **20 minutes** of your time for **information and advice**?", most of them will say yes. They like to impress you with how much information they have; and they're happy to give you free advice even if they're in the business of charging for advice, because, like most professionals, lawyers like to mentor. They'll tell you they don't have time to look for it, but it's not an imposition if the opportunity comes to them. Some call this an informational interview, but you'd need to treat it as a formal interview. That means you must do your due diligence and look up the person and firm or company to gather information and prepare questions in advance.

Once you get the actual meeting, whether in person or by phone (video chat is better than just phone), you should have your questions ready; and the best way to get the person comfortable and talking is to start with questions about them. Here's a few suggested questions: How did you get your job? What do you like most about what you are doing? How did you become an expert at X? (If you get a false modesty response, such as, "I'm not really an expert," it's ok to disclose that you had that impression from looking at the web page.) Also ok to say, "I see from your web page that you have a family, how have you been able to balance your work life with family time?" Note that it's OK to disclose that you did your homework/research, but NOT more than once.

Here's three questions that you do NOT ask: 1. Don't ask for a job! Actually, you don't have to ask, they'll know you're looking for a job, or you wouldn't be there in the first place. 2. Don't ask what they hate or like least about their job. Ask instead, "What's the toughest part of your job? You'll get a better, more revealing, answer without being negative. 3. Don't ask what's 'hot'. Firstly, that's where everyone else is probably looking. Besides, that risks characterizing you as a short term thinker. Instead, ask, "What areas do you think are being overlooked, but have promise for the future?" This characterized you as a longer term thinker, and is a more thought-provoking question. If you get any positive answer to that question, here's your perfect follow-up: "Can you give me the name of someone else I can talk to for **information and advice** about that area?" Since you did not ask for a job, and you came prepared with intelligent questions, you are more likely to get another name; and that expands your 'network' not just by one, but potentially by up to 150. The "Rule of

150” defines the limit of the number of people you can keep track of, and you will be tapping into the mental rolodex of the next person’s list of 150 with a similar question.

Finally, the one other question you must ask is, “May I give you my Resume? If you hear of something, please feel free to forward it. Just as likely, if you have already handed your resume to the person; your final statement would be, “You have my resume, please feel free to forward it if you hear of something.” Within 24 hours, or as soon as you have called the next person, send an email to the first, saying, “Thank you for taking the time to speak with me, I learned a lot. I have called X and will be meeting with her next week. I’m attaching an electronic version of my resume, which might be easier to file and forward if you hear of something.”

Note that you have two levels in your network: an inner circle of people you see on a regular basis (your ‘intimate network’), and an extended circle of people whom you do not see regularly (your ‘casual/extended network’). In a study of 1500 job seekers several years ago, 20% of jobs were found through the inner circle, 20% through publicly available sources such as job ads, and 60% through the extended circle. Why? What do people in the same circle as you know that you do not already know? Nevertheless, do not ignore that inner circle or publicly available sources, since 40% is significant. However, I recommend starting on that inner circle as your comfort zone, until you are practiced at this networking. Then you will find the outer circle more fruitful.

What we in the Career office like about this type of networking is it is more productive and far less frustrating than just asking for a job. While your long term goal of a job is still the same your short term goals are far more easily obtained: 1. Make a positive impression by being prepared and asking intelligent questions; 2. Get a resume on this person’s desk; and 3. Get another name.

- 2 PER DIEM: Most law firms are seeing large reductions in work load, some are cutting back on partner payouts, some are even reducing or eliminating contributions to retirement plans. Nevertheless, small firms still need short-term help on an episodic basis. Since small firms do not have the personnel capacity to cover a spike in work load from a big case or a current one, they often give smaller cases to their friends, or take on another firm’s help on a big case. You can be the solution to this potential loss of income as a per diem (temporary hourly or piece-work) hire. Per diem is a very attractive option for small (5 or fewer) firms because it (1) avoids the problem of long term commitment; (2) whatever they pay you, they’ll bill 3 or 4 times that amount, so you can increase their income with little or no effort by them; and (3) there’s no overhead, only an hourly or per job payment! Here’s how to get on a firm’s ‘per diem’ list (actually, there’s no such list, because small firms do not have the time or inclination to maintain such list; and they are too swamped to look for per diem help when they need it most). You can find the very small firms on <Martindale.com> using the school’s law library, starting with your zip code, and get the name(s) of the partner(s). You can get access by zip code and firm size. Normally, it’s best to show up at the firm, ask for the partner by name, and just give that person your resume, saying, “I live in the area, and I’m available to do per diem on short notice.” Although it’s better for the partner to see you (more likely they’ll remember you), that’s not practical this month. You can still email the firm, state that you live in the area and are available to do per diem from home on short notice, and attach your resume. After you have done that, mail a hard copy, repeating the statement.

- 3 WRITE AN ARTICLE: If you have the time, academic inclination, and an idea, you can try for a Law Journal quality article; but those are not usually read by your ultimate target audience. A more pragmatic route is an article designed for a weekly journal that practicing attorneys frequently read, such as the New Jersey Bar Journal or the Pennsylvania Law Bulletin, both weeklies. There's also the Legal Intelligencer, a Mon.-Fri. daily in Philadelphia. All of these are more like newspapers than law journals, and they're always looking for material. The hardest part of writing an article is coming up with the topic; so I suggest something in your comfort zone, where you have already written, studied, or read something that interests you. You might even consider writing an analysis of how the Covid-19 is affecting students, and the ramifications from a legal or professional standpoint. Once you have a topic, the next step is to do an outline; and it should be substantial and dynamic, meaning updated as you write. Step three is the easy part: research and writing (what else has law school trained you to do?). Step four is once you are well over halfway done, to the point where you know when you'll be finished, start calling the target publication(s); tell them you are currently writing an article on X, and ask if they can use it. One reason they will likely say yes is they don't pay! But they might ask for an outline, to which you can respond, "I have it right here, where shall I send it?" If they ask to see what you have so far, tell them you'll get it to them within the hour; and spend that hour not making it longer, but going over it again to eliminate all typos, syntax errors, incomplete sentences, etc. If it's published, it will have a 'by line' and your contact information.

Prof. Wise is a graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and an Honors graduate of Rutgers Law School. He taught Environmental courses at Rutgers Law School for 25 years, and has been a Career Counselor for 15 years. He was an attorney/manager at the U.S. EPA for 30 years.

***December, 1979***

Dear 25 year old Marlene,

Congratulations on your graduation from Seton Hall Law School, Class of 1979, and your admission to the New Jersey Bar! If there really was a “Way Back Machine” in the year 2022, I would seize the opportunity to write you this letter. Let’s see what advice I can give you from the future.

Don’t be discouraged. The year of your admission to the New Jersey Bar found the job market for new lawyers to be poor. In 1979 the economy has tanked, the President admonishes us to wear an extra sweater at home, keep the heat down and wait in line for gas for your car. In 1979, women lawyers are still a novelty.

Compared to 2022? Don’t get me started. Who would have imagined the development of domestic and world events, and how they impact us every single day.

I learned a very good lesson in life from one of my college friends, who has worked at 45 different jobs after college graduation. She has been an educator, including as superintendent of schools in two different districts. But she also worked selling Kirby vacuum cleaners, bartending, landscaping, and too many other jobs for me to remember. I will tell you this: she never regretted the choices she made, and she never tied herself to one job because of the salary, the pension or the geographic location. She learned from each job, and she often tells her students today they should seek out adventure even in the workplace to guarantee a happy life.

So please: when choosing your path in life, do not always select the obvious, the easy, or the safe career choices.

Think about why you became a lawyer in the first place. Was it because you want to make money? To effectuate social policy through legal advocacy? Do you like to litigate? Do you want to be a prosecutor or public defender? Is your home the Courtroom or are you an excellent writer, and attracted to Appellate Advocacy? Do you want to use your degree for a legal hybrid type of career, for example, in finance, or technology, as an entrepreneur or as an instrument for change?

After 40 plus years as a lawyer—and almost as many as a judge—I have noticed the happiest lawyers are those who took reasonable risks with their careers, who gave of themselves expecting nothing in return, and who ultimately achieved great professional satisfaction.

Let me tell you this: if you are in this only for the money, I promise you will be disappointed many times over.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to make money in this profession. We all need to eat, provide for our families and pay our bills. Looking back over the past 43 years, I have witnessed the rise and fall of the stock market many times over. We have endured recessions and booms, and great transformation of the legal profession. I can’t find the words to explain the past few years, but just be prepared to experience the unexpected.

As long as you can represent a client, hang a shingle and work diligently, you will never be unemployed. However, your retirement accounts will expand and contract with each upheaval in the investment

sector, and you will wonder whether it was all worth it. I wish I could tell you what stocks to buy, but let me say this: the next four decades will indeed be a wild ride. Commit to a lifetime of learning, because the ability to grow in this profession will make a difference in your career.

If you want absolute job security, work for yourself. But if you work for a law firm, a corporation or government entity, work like you work for yourself.

Don't be a clock watcher. No lawyer ever became a great lawyer by working 9 to 5. There is much to be learned, so work hard at being the best lawyer you can be. Invest for your future and for your future family. Live modestly, in other words, live under your means. At 25 you are not thinking about retirement, but it will come in the blink of an eye.

Make sure even if you get a fee on that million dollar case, you do not change your lifestyle. Pay off your student loans early. Prepare for the rainy days.

Participate in your local and state bar associations. First of all, it is a great place to make friends. These are the friends who will send you a case when they have a conflict, or upon whom you will rely for their expertise. When you attend bar seminars, events and conferences you will not only become a better lawyer, but you will meet lawyers who are experts in their field and very generous in sharing the value of their experience with young lawyers.

Even though I advise you to make friends within the profession, it is important to preserve old friendships, including your college and high school friends who are not lawyers. These are the people who have known you for the longest time, and observed your personal and professional development. They will ground you. They are unimpressed by your title, by your notable case or by your large settlement.

Take care of yourself. This means not only attending to your own medical needs, but also providing within your life for travel, volunteer work including to advance social justice and human rights. Take time to love music, or art, or plays. Don't regret one minute you spend with your father or mother, or your brothers and sisters. In fact, maximize the time that you spend with them.

So now with the benefit of hindsight, you must be thinking: What should I change?

My answer is nothing.

I don't want to spoil the surprises, but look forward to a career that is diverse and varied, productive and fun, and most of the time, very satisfying.

With my best personal regards from the future,

Marlene

May 19, 2022



**CLASSROOM TO COURTROOM  
PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICS**

**May 19, 2022**

**By**

**Bonnie J. Mizdol, A.J.S.C.**

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak on the topic of Attorney Responsibilities to the Court.

The topic falls squarely under the umbrella of Professionalism and Ethics, both of which are a part of your practice from the day you are sworn in. Both remain your legacy long after your retirement.

You don't need me to tell you:

- 1) Don't date or sleep with your clients.
- 2) Don't take your client's money without rendering services;
- 3) Don't invest in your client's business;
- 4) Don't take cases you are not qualified to handle; and
- 5) Don't ever forget to keep your client informed.

I might suggest that once or twice a year you open up to Appendix I of the Court Rules and reflect upon the Rules of Professional Conduct – or the RPCs as they are affectionately known. They're not that long -- there are only 8 of them.

The principal reason for the RPCs is to preserve the confidence of the public in the integrity and trustworthiness of lawyers and judges in general.

The RPCs are mandatory, black letter standards that establish a minimum level of conduct. Failure to abide by the RPCs may result in disciplinary sanctions, including disbarment.

Professionalism, on the other hand, is grounded in aspirational goals, principles and civility -- models of behavior a lawyer "ought" to aim for. It concerns itself with what you SHOULD do – beyond the bare minimum of what you MUST do.

Lawyers must temper bold advocacy for their clients with a sense of responsibility to the larger legal system, which strives, however imperfectly, to provide justice for all. We all took an oath. Admission to practice or to the bench is an honor and privilege that carries with it significant responsibilities, not only to clients, but also to the public and the justice system.

The preamble to the charge of the New Jersey Commission of Professionalism reads, “The conduct of lawyers and judges should be characterized at all times by professional integrity and personal courtesy in the fullest sense of those terms.”

One thing I can say to you as Assignment Judge is that lawyers who appear before Judges in Bergen County all have reputations. Those reputations permeate the courthouse among judges, lawyers, law clerks and court staff. As a result, when a lawyer steps into the courtroom, their reputations precede them and impact their effectiveness. Lawyers with “good” reputations often get the benefit of the doubt—whether it be at actual substantive argument or merely a simple adjournment request; those with “bad” reputations face more difficulty persuading judges that their arguments have merit or that their requests for adjournment are legitimate.

None of us starts out with a reputation, but all of us develop one.

Know that GOOD or BAD, it is tough to shake a reputation once you have it.

Often, issues of ethics and professionalism raise complicated questions, involve shades of grey, and require serious thought and contemplation to resolve. Sometimes, however, all it takes to figure out whether a given action or decision is the right one is to take the Ain’t Test:

Simply stated:

“If it ain’t true, don’t say it.”

“If it ain’t right, don’t do it.” and

“If you have to ask, it ain’t right.”

I read an article in the Law Journal some three (3) years ago, by an attorney named Timothy J. Murphy, who summed up five (5) things to constantly keep in mind while developing and protecting a GOOD reputation.

1. Ignore the misconceptions about what it takes to be a good lawyer.

Clients retain lawyers to advise them on legal problems that are more often than not adversarial in nature. Some lawyers think adversarial is synonymous with confrontational. NOT TRUE. Adversarial simply means representing your client. The notion that you must be aggressive, tough and even fierce, ascribing to the mantra that “winning is everything” is the first step in the wrong direction. So, when you come to that crossroad – remember that being reasonable in solving your client’s problems takes a great deal more effort and thought.

Clients appreciate an attorney’s candor and their keeping an eye on the end result – meaning an appropriate resolution at a reasonable cost. When faced with a choice between a lawyer with a reputation who will fight just for the sake of the fight or a lawyer who will work toward a reasonable resolution, clients will opt for the reasonable resolution. If you think I am wrong, just ask a few of your clients.

2. Keep your Word

Practicing law is not easy. You, as lawyers, serve as buffers between adverse parties, guiding them through business or family dispute resolutions. Don’t do what they do in

advertising – “Puff” that which cannot be delivered. If you want to live a frustrating life as a lawyer, don’t make promises you can’t keep.

As between lawyers, there are many many times that you must rely upon each other’s word. Documents have to be delivered, witnesses produced at depositions, extensions of time, and the like. If you don’t keep your word, THE WORD GETS OUT and the process breaks down into a morass of accusations and hostile communications, along with a boatload of unnecessary legal expenses.

You want to be the one referred to as a good lawyer who always does a great job for her clients, and you can trust her when she says she will do something. Instead of, get it in writing, you can’t trust a word she says.

### 3. Be accurate on the Facts and the Law

As an advocate, you apply facts to the interpretations of the existing law in the most persuasive manner possible. To be an effective advocate, the judge must have confidence that you are stating the facts and law correctly. Once you mislead a judge, you can never re-establish that trust and that reputation is a disservice to your clients.

Let me give you an inside skinny. If you have developed a good reputation and make a submission to the court by way of brief – judges develop trust that while your argument is not always the most persuasive, it can be trusted for accuracy in presentation of the facts and citations to the relevant law. If the facts are in your favor argue the facts. If the law is in your favor argue the law, but don’t taint either. Imagine the harm you do to yourself and your client by doing otherwise.

Leads me right to No. 4.

4. Admit when you are Wrong – To use a quote from the movie Dirty Dancing – “When I’m wrong, I say I’m wrong”.

During your career, you will make a mistake – everyone does. What you do with that mistake defines who you are as a lawyer. Lawyers who immediately acknowledge an error and do whatever they can to correct it are respected. People are reassured they can trust what you say. Lawyers who try to cover up mistakes rarely succeed and when they do their reputations plummet or ethical issues emerge.

5. Be a Human Being.

Never check your humanity at the door. Everyone -- clients, opposing lawyers, witnesses, experts, judges and staff -- have issues in their lives that add to stress. Everyone has family members who get sick, who have unexpected deaths, whose children are “butterflies” in the school play, who have pre-paid vacations, weddings and anniversaries to celebrate. If at all possible, they should be accommodated.

Lawyers who take tactical advantage of other people’s conflicts pay a heavy price. Word gets out quick and when you need a favor from a fellow lawyer, good luck.

My best advice is to quote our former first lady Michelle Obama, “when they go low, you go high.”



## **Welcome to the practice of law!**

You are about to embark on an amazing journey. One that will take you from the highs of winning your first motion to the heartache of losing your first appeal. But rest assured that your law school education has prepared you in many ways. Gone are the days when you “learned on the job” as that ethos has been replaced in law schools across the country that now design engaged curriculums around practical experience and experiential learning. It is a good time to be a young lawyer.

So how can you harness the skills that you learned in law school and transition those skills into developing habits of a thoughtful, reflective, ethical, professional practice? You will be faced with decisions that will challenge you on intellectual, strategic, emotional, and ethical level. The good news is that you have been taught to address legal problems by thoroughly planning and executing your legal advice, and then critically reflecting on the choices you made. Your rigorous coursework and constant flow of assignments provided opportunities for you to experiment with the development of your professional voice, as well as to experience the deep satisfaction and joy that can be found practicing law. These lessons can be boiled down to a few essential skills:

### Professionalism

*Black's Law Dictionary* defines professionalism as “The practice of a learned art in a characteristically methodical, courteous, and ethical manner.” BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 1246 (8th ed. 1999). Lawyers refer to many things when they use the word professionalism, such as work habits (e.g., diligence and precision), approaches to communication (e.g., using formal, clear, and courteous language in written communication), and adhering to professional norms in the way we dress. Another way to understand professionalism is that it is the culture of legal

practice. One of the mysterious processes will undergo upon graduation from law school is the transformation from being a student and novice to becoming a professional lawyer. Commit to embracing the professional values that you have already mastered such as active participation in all activities, attention to the rules, effective planning, thoughtful reflection of your work and the work of your peers, and attendance and punctuality. Find a mentor as you explore and develop a professional role – I promise you that most senior attorneys consider mentoring young lawyers as part of their job. Use them as a sounding board for questions you have about the culture of lawyering.

### Ethics and Justice

An integral part of practicing law involves the pursuit of justice and a commitment to ethical standards. Commit to confronting and evaluating the ethical questions that arise for lawyers in everyday practice, and challenge yourselves to consider the role of lawyers in using the legal system to redress injustices.

### Cultural Competency

As a lawyer you will work with clients, colleagues, co-counsel, opposing counsel, court officers, judges, and others who will come from different backgrounds from yours or have different life experiences than yours. Think critically about how to communicate and collaborate across those differences without making assumptions about other people's experiences, values, and priorities. Maintain an open environment and establish "ground rules" for yourself that you will adhere to when engaging in legal discussion. Listen respectfully, without interrupting. Pay attention actively and with an ear to understanding others' views (do not focus on your response as another person is speaking). Criticize ideas, not individuals. Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language. Allow everyone the chance to speak, and avoid assumptions and

generalizations about social groups. Do not assume individuals speak for their perceived social group.

### Reflection

In practice lawyers often work in teams and collaborate on written work. Many lawyers ask a colleague to proofread their writing and often lawyers cut and paste from previously written briefs. Reinforce the habit of continuous self-reflection and prepare to provide helpful, specific feedback to your peers. Think critically about your own work and adopt the ability to accept feedback on your work product. While we all find it challenging at times to hear suggestions on how we could approach a task more successfully, your openness to feedback from others will help you grow and improve over the course of your career.

Best,

*Jamie*

**Jamie Pukl-Werbel**  
**Associate Professor of Legal Practice &**  
**Director of Experiential Learning**  
Seton Hall University School of Law  
One Newark Center  
Room 408  
Newark, NJ 07102  
Direct Dial (973) 642-8201  
[Jamie.Werbel@shu.edu](mailto:Jamie.Werbel@shu.edu)  
[http://law.shu.edu/Faculty/fulltime\\_faculty/Jamie-Pukl-Werbel.cfm](http://law.shu.edu/Faculty/fulltime_faculty/Jamie-Pukl-Werbel.cfm)

