



Start Building Your Network Now



My grandmother is an immigrant with barely a sixth-grade education. She is also one of the smartest people I know. What she lacks in academic accomplishments she more than makes up for in hard-earned lessons about survival and life. She is sparing in the praise she gives those she loves, but infuriatingly generous in her praise of public figures—including celebrities. On a recent visit, she spoke highly of a socialite with a questionable record of giving back to society, so I pushed back, asking what it was about this person that could possibly impress her. Without hesitation, my grandmother said, “People know her. That is *something*.”

Now, we can argue about whether people know this particular socialite for the right reasons, but I can’t argue that my grandmother was onto something. And it’s something I wish I had learned much earlier than I did.

Your success and your ability to make an impact are limited only by the breadth and quality of your personal connections. Being known—and, in particular, being known for doing good work—matters.

Everything good that has happened in my career has been the direct result of someone trusting me, someone supporting me, someone believing in me, or someone simply having heard of me. Whether you went to law school to serve the underserved, to represent corporate clients, or to change the world, you’re not going to achieve your goals alone. You need to build a network of people who trust you, who support you, who believe in you. This is not as easy as it sounds, and it isn’t about handing out more business cards than the next guy. This is about working hard and being generous, consistent, and genuine.

And it starts now. Your classmates are your future colleagues. Your professors can be your first mentors. And if you haven’t already tapped into your local bar association or other relevant professional organizations to start giving back to your community, do it now. The connections you make will transform your career into that *something* you always hoped it might be.



ALLI GERKMAN is director of Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers (ETL), a national initiative of the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) at the University of Denver. Through ETL, Gerkman works with a consortium of law schools across the country and a network of legal educators, lawyers, judges, and legal employers to align legal education with the needs of an evolving profession.