

## MENTORS

# Working With New Attorneys Is One of the Most Rewarding Parts of Practicing Law for Dawn Attwood

"I never called myself a mentor or even thought of myself as one. I just wanted to help newer attorneys feel more comfortable and gain confidence."

By ALM Staff

*Dawn Attwood, Partner with Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, is a Law Journal Mentor honoree. The below responses were lightly edited for clarity and style.*

***Is the role of mentor one that you set out to take, or one you happened into?***

I had the incredible opportunity to begin my career as a deputy attorney general, which brought immediate and intense experience, and luckily, guidance when I needed it. That made me realize early on how important it is to help young attorneys navigate what can be a difficult and stressful, but rewarding, profession. I always remembered how I felt joining that office, and tried to return that guidance and support to new



Courtesy photo

**Dawn Attwood, with Pashman Stein Walder Hayden.**

deputies, and then new associates in private practice. In doing so, I never called myself a mentor or even thought of myself as one. I just wanted to help newer attorneys feel more comfortable and gain

confidence to help them progress in the practice of law.

***Why are mentors so important in the legal profession?***

The legal profession can be very intimidating to new attorneys,

especially when trying to handle the work-life balance. The best way to truly learn is through hands-on experience, rather than just observing. But, that works best when you have a mentor who can help guide you in the right direction, support wins as well as losses, and understand and help with mistakes. I am lucky to be at a firm that recognizes the importance of mentoring and implements programs that foster teaching new attorneys, and which also instills a culture that emphasizes quality of life and family, as much as a successful business model. I am proud to lead the Parenting Initiative of the firm's Women's Leadership Committee, which helps working parents navigate the issues surrounding parenting and professional development.

***Good mentors often have learned from good examples.***

***Who are some people who have mentored you?***

I was lucky to have learned from many brilliant and seasoned litigators throughout my career. Three who come to mind right away are Mark Fleming, Ben Clarke and Lil Kenny. Starting out, I met Mark and Lil, who made sure that I had someone to turn to when I was brand new to litigation at the Division of Law. Mark's advice, edits, encouragement, patience and unflappable nature helped me gain confidence to accept challenges and learn from the best. Lil's charisma with clients, adversaries and judges taught me how to interact effectively in the field and be a successful advocate while also being courteous and professional; it also helped me greatly develop and retain my client base. Ben's attention to detail, analytical and writing abilities, and overall

demand for excellence has had an everlasting effect and shaped who I have become as an attorney. I am fortunate to call them all close friends (and still mentors) today.

***Law is, for many, more than a full-time job. How does one create time for mentorship?***

The practice of law can be demanding and time-consuming. Many times, we think it is easier to "do it ourselves" rather than taking the time to teach others. But, it is so crucial to realize that taking that time not only benefits new attorneys, but also more senior attorneys in the long run, and it is a great feeling to see an attorney ultimately produce a "final" product, run a case, and eventually pass on the teaching to the next generation. Working so closely with new attorneys has become one of the most rewarding parts of practicing law.