

LPIC

Mentoring initiatives

LPIC believes that mentoring is an effective risk management tool. The mentored lawyer is less likely to make substantive errors or incorrect choices of procedure when the benefit of someone with more experience is available. Mentoring lawyers, because of the mentoring process, undergo self-reflection and re-evaluate their own risk management techniques when they are providing mentoring to others.

For its part, LPIC has embarked on four initiatives: two encourage mentoring, the third is designed to remove a perceived roadblock to mentoring, and the fourth – a practicePRO resource guide on Managing the Mentoring Relationship– provides mentors and mentees with practical advice and guidelines on how to best structure a successful mentoring relationship.

Mentoring junior counsel

One way LPIC can itself act as a mentor – and encourage mentoring in law firms that do our defence work – is to bring junior lawyers in these firms to the fore. With the agreement of senior counsel in a number of firms, LPIC has assigned claims files of appropriate size and sophistication to lawyers who are generally called to the Bar between one and three years. Each firm has a senior lawyer who acts as a mentor specifically for this project, and the junior lawyer has direct access to that senior partner when dealing with these files. Similarly, each of the mentees works closely with two LPIC claims examiners on these files. By providing mentoring from the client perspective, the mentees gain additional insights about file handling and client relationships which might otherwise not take place until later in their careers.

The benefits for junior counsel are numerous: They have responsibility for their own set of files, they are

getting active mentoring from senior members of their own firm and from a client, and they are gaining excellent experience in litigation. Participating firms see this as an excellent way in which to offer to their junior members opportunities which they would not otherwise have had. Moreover, files are resolved in a cost-effective fashion by a lawyer with the appropriate level of experience and expertise. All involved in this initiative – firms, mentors, mentees and LPIC alike – say the program has been an unequivocal success; plans are underway to continue this initiative in the coming year.

Seconding a lawyer from a defence counsel firm

A year ago, LPIC entered into an innovative arrangement with one of its defence firms that saw the firm second a junior lawyer who, for a year, did only LPIC work. The lawyer practised out of the firm and so was able to use the firm's resources. The arrangement pro-

vided unprecedented exposure to litigation work for the junior counsel, who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to see all stages of litigation on a significant number of files. It also provided the seconded lawyer with an excellent opportunity to interact with LPIC and the insured lawyers, providing that counsel

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with greater understanding of a client's needs and how, as counsel, to best serve those needs. The insured lawyers represented by the seconded lawyer and LPIC were very happy with the expedient and attentive file handling by the seconded lawyer. The success of this pilot prompted LPIC to not only expand this initiative for 2002, but also to expand its role in mentoring through the junior counsel program, profiled previously.

Mentoring & professional liability: Holding mentors harmless

Through conversations with senior members of the bar, it became apparent that one perceived roadblock to mentoring was the concern of mentors that their involvement in a matter might lead to a claim against them.

To address this concern, LPIC has clarified its treatment of claims which arise out of a situation in which a mentor was involved.

Specifically, LPIC will waive any deductible and claims levy surcharges for the mentor for claims arising out of the mentoring relationship.

The only caveat is that the mentor and mentee must have some documentation which indicates the mentee assumes all responsibility for the legal services provided to the client, and the mentor has no direct contact with the client that could create a solicitor/client relationship. Sample documentation to this effect is found in the *Managing the Mentoring Relationship* produced by practicePRO and available on the web site at www.practicePRO.ca.

Managing the Mentoring Relationship: a new guide from practicePRO

This new booklet provides lawyers with practical advice and insights that help make the mentoring relationship work. It starts from the premise that today's young lawyers seek a different kind of mentoring than the traditional learning the craft at the foot of the master. The learner-centered mentoring model it promotes requires that mentees take an active role in directing the relation-

ship, including setting their own goals, finding their own mentors, where appropriate, and taking the initiative to establish their own mentor/mentee relationships.

The booklet also can be used at several levels, depending on the type of relationship desired by the mentor and mentee. For those needing only a broad framework, it provides general guidelines and sample forms that can be adapted to the specific needs of the mentor and mentee. Those willing to engage in a more comprehensive mentoring relationship will find detailed advice on how to prepare for and structure the relationship, how to make best use of time, and how to evaluate the success of the relationship.

The full text of the booklet is available on the practicePRO web site at www.practicepro.ca; for a printed copy, e-mail: practicepro@lpic.ca, or call 416-598-5899 or 1 800 410-1013.

Why Should I be a Mentee?

Many have said the real learning only starts after law school, with the hands-on experience of being a lawyer. But much of that learning cannot come from books; it occurs by trial and error. A mentoring relationship can accelerate this learning curve and more quickly provide you with the skills needed to develop a successful, profitable and satisfying law career. In other words, mentoring can jump-start your practice:

- Learn new things about yourself: The self-reflection that can result from a mentoring relationship can be a powerful growth experience and give a mentee new insights about himself.
- Make more of your strengths and exploit your hidden talents: A good mentor will push a mentee to do more with his/her strengths, and help a mentee discover and exploit hidden talents.
- Contribute to the success of your practice or firm: A mentee who builds a strong practice ultimately contributes to the success of his/her practice or firm.
- Career satisfaction: You will be more satisfied with your career if you have a successful and profitable law practice.
- Expand your personal network: Entering into a mentoring relationship adds your mentor to your personal network, and may open doors to other individuals in the mentor's network.
- A source of referrals: Your mentor may refer work to you once s/he knows and trusts your abilities.