



Establish Your legal community

Whether you are a new lawyer braving your first contract review or a seasoned practitioner handling a complex file, having mentors and knowledgeable colleagues is invaluable. Equally, the opportunity to mentor others enriches your practice and the profession at large. Here's a guide to building your professional network and paying it forward.

Learn from those around you

Your colleagues may be your most accessible resource and a gold mine of wisdom. Use them as sounding boards for ideas, watch how they navigate challenging clients, defuse tense situations, and tackle complex files with skill. Be curious: ask questions, observe, and seek guidance when needed.

If your immediate environment doesn't offer these opportunities, consider reaching out to lawyers you've worked with on the other side of files. A genuine compliment and simple request to stay connected can lead to long-lasting professional relationships.

Tap into law associations and the LSO

Many national and regional law associations, like the OBA and TLA, pair lawyers with experienced practitioners through mentorship programs. They also may provide structured opportunities to network. Visit *PracticePRO's website* for a list of mentorship programs.

The Law Society of Ontario Coach and Advisor Network program is another excellent resource. Coaches assist with developing best practices and improving practice management skills, while Advisors provide guidance on substantive and procedural issues in client files. The Practice Management Helpline is also available to answer questions about professionalism, the Rules of Professional Conduct, and practice management.

Make the most of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD sessions are excellent opportunities to learn and connect. Follow up with speakers who resonate with you to share thoughts or ask questions.

Networking tip: While virtual events are convenient, attending in-person gatherings offers a greater opportunity to meet new people. Push yourself outside your comfort zone -- strike up conversations at coffee stations, introduce yourself to someone new, or sit with new faces.



Engage with legal writers

Lawyers who publish articles or blogs often welcome engagement. If their insights have been helpful, reach out with questions or comments. While an email may suffice for a brief inquiry, a phone call can lead to deeper discussions and potential mentorship.

Cold calling tip: Cold calls can be intimidating, but the potential rewards far outweigh the risks. If you reach voicemail, keep your message concise and clear:

“Hi, my name is Elle Woods, and I practice criminal law in Toronto. I recently read your article [insert title] and had a question about one of your points. Could you call me back at [insert phone number]?”

Leverage social media

Facebook groups, LinkedIn communities, and specialized forums can be useful platforms for brainstorming, sharing ideas, and gathering diverse perspectives.

Cautionary tip: It is always a lawyer’s responsibility to independently verify any information they receive, but this responsibility becomes even more critical when the information comes from a large audience where sources may be unvetted.

Reverse mentorship: A modern twist

Mentorship includes more than just senior-to-junior dynamics. Increasingly, junior lawyers are mentoring seasoned practitioners in emerging areas like technology. For example, a senior lawyer

interested in using AI tools might seek guidance from a junior colleague well-versed in the risks and benefits of such technologies or want to learn about new platforms to reach out to potential clients. This exchange of knowledge benefits both parties and fosters a collaborative culture.

Give back, be a mentor

As you grow in your career, consider mentoring others. Sharing your experiences and guiding newer lawyers not only strengthens the profession but also deepens your own understanding. Mentorship is a two-way street: you learn as much from teaching as you do from being taught.

When in doubt, reach out to PracticePRO

If you are concerned about a potential negligence claim, unsure about file handling, or need guidance on an external file request, PracticePRO can help. Contact us at practicepro@lawpro.ca for risk management and claims prevention resources.

Final thoughts

Forging connections early so that when you need advice -- on procedural, substantive, or technical matters -- you already have trusted individuals to turn to. By actively seeking mentors, building connections, and stepping into mentorship roles yourself, you contribute to a collaborative and resilient legal community. Whether through formal programs, casual conversations, or online forums, these relationships enrich your practice and ensure the profession thrives. ■