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Mentoring Is for You!
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In *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus left for his journeys he entrusted the care, education, and guidance of his son, Telemachus, to Mentor, a loyal advisor and teacher. In our profession today, mentoring provides wise and experienced attorneys to extend guidance and promote professional advancement for inexperienced younger attorneys. In the high-pressure world of today's law practice, the need for mentoring is more important than ever.

Within the legal profession, mentoring means a voluntary, mutually beneficial relationship of professional growth, career development, and personal fulfillment that benefits the mentee and mentor, and provides a service to our clients. A mentoring relationship between experienced and less experienced lawyers facilitates the transfer of *valuable information and insight into the practice of law*. While legal theory and application can be learned during law school, many aspects of the legal profession must be acquired in the workplace, whether in private practice, government service, or corporate practice.

Law firms can facilitate the mentoring process by creating a culture in which all lawyers are expected to teach and to learn from one another. Firms can train lawyers in the skills necessary for successful mentoring relationships, recognize and reward outstanding mentors, and extol mentoring as essential to the future of the firm. Firms can also establish structured mentoring programs that can be highly beneficial if they are carefully designed and monitored.

More important than any program, however, is the willingness of lawyers in a firm to help each other advance professionally. In this kind of environment, mentoring occurs routinely among lawyers as they work together; lawyers ask for and offer explanations, guidance, and assistance because they trust and value each other; and lawyers look for mentoring opportunities in every assignment and work encounter.

Are you looking for a mentor? The Young Lawyers Division of The Florida Bar created, and for years has funded and operated, a program entitled SCOPE—Seek Counsel of Professional Experience. SCOPE aids those new to our profession by pairing them with a more senior attorney in their area who can assist them with a technical question or, in some cases, general advice about the day-to-day practice of law. Edith Trotman, Bar staff member in the Public Service Programs Department who maintains the SCOPE referral list and matches those calling in for help with a volunteer, advises that she receives many positive comments about this important program. It is an increasingly useful way for young lawyers to ensure that their clients receive the best service they can provide. Additionally, it is a fine way to give something back to the profession and advances our mutual goal of improving client service and thus improving public

perception of our profession. For more information on SCOPE, read Executive Directions by John Harkness on page 10.

Transforming from law student to lawyer poses many challenges. A young attorney must become technically proficient as a “real lawyer,” while at the same time balancing the demands of career and personal life. Young attorneys soon discover that law school only does so much to prepare one for a new career. A trusted mentor can serve as a guide or counselor to help a young attorney navigate new challenges.

I commend the many firms that offer formal mentoring programs for junior associates. These programs provide a true service. A mentor does not have to be at the same firm, be the same gender, or have made the same life choices as the young attorney. The focus of any mentoring relationship should be professional development. Short-term goals may include becoming familiar with and technically proficient in a particular area of the law. Long-term goals may include learning how to develop business and how to build and maintain client relationships. In order to make the most of the relationship, the mentee should let the mentor know what his or her expectations are and make specific requests to meet those goals.

Yet mentors are all too rare. In today’s profession, good mentors are a precious commodity indeed. Too often, even in a firm of hundreds, the same handful of individuals are the too few partners who make themselves available in the role of mentor, and hence are repeatedly sought out by the many associates in need of support and direction. I ask you to consider the value of your years of experience and how your reservoir of legal talent can benefit young associates.

Ideally, mentors and mentees will benefit from each other. Starting out in your career, you may feel that you have little to contribute as a mentor. However, as you develop in your career and it becomes your turn to be a mentor, remember how it felt to be just starting out and what meant the most to you about being mentored. Mentoring is a skill and the best mentors are those who learned from others.

Mentoring is for you! Whether you are new to the profession or an experienced member of the Bar. The mentoring relationship provides the young attorney with guidance, leadership, and much-needed answers. The older practitioner gives back to the profession and provides leadership for the future of our profession. All too often, experienced practitioners lament the pitfalls and shortcomings of those new to our profession. I encourage you to do something about it by seeking out a young attorney in need of your guidance.