



# Professional Development Quarterly

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## **Book Review:**

### **Business Development for New Lawyers**

Ari L. Kaplan, *The Opportunity Maker: Strategies for Inspiring Your Legal Career Through Creative Networking and Business Development*. 2008, Thomson/West. (\$18.95, 224 pages)

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All the successful and interesting people I can think of – in any field – share many of the same characteristics. While they might not do all of the following, they do at least some: They show genuine interest in their work; have avid interests outside of work; publish; serve on professional and/or charitable organizations or associations; mentor others; have, or have had, a mentor; and have lots of contacts – people they help, people who help them, and people to whom they can go for answers, information, or even more contacts. Basically, they do more than just their jobs.

In his book, *The Opportunity Maker: Strategies for Inspiring Your Legal Career Through Creative Networking and Business Development*, Ari Kaplan reminds new and soon-to-be lawyers that their careers are about more than the classes they take and the jobs they get after law school, that the practice of law is also about human relationships. For them to become successful, interesting, and fulfilled

lawyers (and human beings), they need to work at networking and self promotion – but in a thoughtful and careful way. Mr. Kaplan points out that law schools don't teach students how to market themselves or grow their future careers; he then sets out to do just that.

*The Opportunity Maker* begins with inspiration – make the investment in your future – and follows up with many and varied ways to network, ranging from the more traditional lunch or coffee invitation to the newer technologies of blogging and even virtual reality sites. Every strategy is specific and accompanied by a short anecdote; one of my favorites is the story of the law student who found a wonderful mentor by cold-calling a lawyer who shared his outside interest – competitive power lifting.

Mr. Kaplan suggests countless ways and reasons to contact people. When he suggests joining an organization, starting one, publishing an article, or even starting a television show, he follows up with examples of people who've done so and long lists of sources: organizations in various localities,

websites and publications for different specialties, and public access TV stations across the country.

Throughout the book, Mr. Kaplan stresses that networking is about building relationships that last, not about getting something. When a law student or new lawyer contacts someone, he or she should do so to learn from that person or even to offer assistance. If the contacts lead to job offers or clients, that's great; but the point is more to engage with others and your profession. And Mr. Kaplan practices what he preaches: The book is full of quotes and personal stories of people he's reached out to or who have reached out to him.

My only gripe about the book is that there is very little mention, until the end, of how different types of people might use different strategies. As an introvert I was completely exhausted by all the talk in the first part of the book about social networking – the lunches, coffees, parties, meetings, and arranging of panels. Mr. Kaplan's transition to the need for publishing one's writing and the opportunity to network through writing was reassuring, and the last few chapters about customizing your own plans and goals definitely let readers catch their breath and figure out how to move forward.

*The Opportunity Maker*, while geared to law students and young lawyers, even got me (a not-so-young non-lawyer) inspired and thinking about the ways I already network and ways I could do more. I think it would be a great book for PD professionals to have available to new and summer associates. Just be sure to warn the more senior lawyers that they're likely to experience a sudden increase in coffee and lunch invitations.

- Nora Mara

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