

Traversing the legal world as a female attorney

It's no secret that women face significant challenges within the legal profession. Though the tide has substantially changed in the last 20-30 years, many female attorneys continuously deal with the legacy of gender discrimination. But the industry is filled with examples of successful women flourishing in their legal careers. I collected the following tips and recommendations from a variety of industry experts.

Embracing your feminism and supporting your peers

In a [Huffington Post article](#), attorney Susan Smith Blakely advises female lawyers to embrace the uniqueness of working within a male dominated field. She finds no problem with using the charms of womanhood to gain support from peers and other professionals within the field. But she warns about the fine line between femininity and sex appeal. Blakely says women should not deny their womanhood, but they must also maintain a high level of professionalism at all times.

Blakely's advice also includes professional relationships with other female attorneys, particularly as a tool for advancement within the legal industry. Young female lawyers should look to their more established counterparts for valuable guidance. Blakely warns that jealousy and pettiness should never hinder these types of relationships, instead women should support and celebrate each other's accomplishments.

Be service oriented

An featured podcast on [Forbes](#) addresses the success of female lawyers in large law firms. In the article, Victoria Pynchon shares her professional lessons on climbing the legal ladder. She advises women to join the specific sections of their local and state bar associations, but only for the networking value. She says that new lawyers should establish themselves as hard workers and contributors within these organizations. This is especially true within the current legal environment, where attorneys frequently move between several firms before settling into a long term, partner track. The relationships you form within professional organizations can be key to your next great career opportunity.

Tips for the female entrepreneur

For female attorneys seeking to start their own practices, an [Attorney at Work](#) article offers some valuable tips. First, create a supportive environment. Practicing law is already challenging, but doing so inside of a solitary bubble can be even more difficult. As stated in the article, female solos should take advantage of office sharing arrangements or serve as of counsel to an established firm. Look for opportunities to work with and around knowledgeable senior lawyers.

Another suggestion for the solo practitioner is to embrace the “female-owned” designation. Consider using this information as a marketing tool. This may open up networking and business opportunities with firms and companies looking to diversify through outside counsel relationships.

The road of a female attorney can prove difficult, with numerous bumps and challenges along the way. Hopefully, these tips and recommendations will make your load a bit lighter and filled with great success.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.

