

# Where I Lead, You Will Follow

## Developing Women Lawyer Leaders

By Ann Farmer

During this year's Women in Law Leadership Academy, Mary Cranston, keynote speaker and chair of Pillsbury Winthrop, shared one of her primary disciplines for reaching this pinnacle of success: she practices meditation. That's right, the first woman to lead a global top 100 law firm sits quietly by herself and meditates every day.

"You don't often hear that," says Bettina Lawton, who chaired the planning committee for the education program, which was cosponsored by three entities of the

American Bar Association: the Commission on Women in the Profession, the Section of Litigation, and the Young Lawyers Division. She says Cranston provided the perfect antidote to the commonly held notion that women must be severely hard driving and tough to lead effectively. "I wanted women to see that they have more options than they think they have," Lawton says. "Don't get sucked into thinking that there is only one way to be a leader."

Lawton also focused the two-day Chicago seminar on dispelling another myth about leadership: "That it's inherent; that you've either got it or you don't," she says, noting that many women lawyers have never benefited from any leadership training. Therefore, she presented a number of panels offering effective, practical tools and strategies that don't require aspiring leaders to sacrifice their individual authenticity.

"I was struck by how there were close to 500 women in that room, all committed to making career plans and leadership plans," says Lisa Horowitz, senior manager of professional development at the international law firm McDermott Will and Emery LLP, who was one of the presenters at the event. She adds that during the 18 years that she practiced law, "there was nothing like this going on."

In fact, when she thinks back to that filled-to-capacity hall, she says: "It's hard for me to believe that there's not a pipeline to women's leadership."

### S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Current statistics indicate that women comprise only 17 percent of law firm partners and even fewer general counsels of Fortune 500 companies, according to Catalyst, a leading business research organization based in New York.

One way to turn the situation around, experts say, is to develop concrete and impassioned leadership goals and, like Cranston, find the chutzpah to see them through. "I had the courage to believe that nothing could stop me," Cranston explained at the event, "and didn't stop till I got there."

To that end, Horowitz provided a pragmatic, hands-on plenary session titled "Creating Your Own Personal Leadership Plan." She first asked the participants to define their vision. "Becoming a leader means having a dream and clarifying that dream," says Horowitz, who next had them list their individual S.M.A.R.T. goals, which she describes as specific, measurable, acceptable, results oriented, and time-bound. "Writing things down is key," she adds. "It stares you in the face and makes you accountable."

She and other panelists also encouraged the participants to take a good, hard look at which leadership competencies they need to work on. "The first step is learning self-leader-

ship,” says Ellen Ostrow, a principal with Lawyers Life Coach LLC, who led the participants in a self-assessment. A questionnaire was circulated which, for example, asked them to rate the degree to which they set a personal example, ensure that others are recognized for their contributions, or motivate others with their ideas.

Ostrow says the same core competencies apply to women and men. However, women have a stronger tendency to be held back by certain conditioning. For example, she notes that it’s very difficult for women to be highly successful if they are not passionate about what they’re doing and are only doing things to please or satisfy the needs of others.

### Calculated Risks

Pointing out other behavioral tendencies of women lawyers, Ostrow says: “As in all situations, minorities focus on working hard to demonstrate their abilities and play by the rules.” However, she adds, “the rules are made by men.” She encourages women to take calculated risks and set their own style of leadership. “You have to pick your head up over your paper and pay attention,” she says, suggesting that women develop more savvy about office politics and build alliances with those women in senior-level positions who have demonstrated that they are interested in helping other women succeed, especially because men still tend to favor other men when it comes to developing business protégés.

“We’re anxious to move the dial forward,” says Diane Yu, immediate past chair of the Commission, who originated the first and only other women lawyers’ leadership academy, presented in 2004. Yu says after assuming the chair position, she became acutely aware of the need to retain women lawyers who were leaving the field prematurely. “They want a piece of the action,” says Yu, explaining that many young and mid-career female lawyers are looking for more answers and a better understanding of the op-

tions available to them. “They don’t get adequate nurturing and guidance on how to drum up business, for instance,” says Yu, who believes the 2004 conference was the first of its kind in the United States, but has since sparked similar programs on local and state levels.

With support from the ABA’s Center for Continuing Education

### Books to Inspire Leadership

- *A New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle
- *Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership* by Joseph Jaworski

*Recommended by Mary Cranston, chair, Pillsbury Winthrop*

and the Section of Litigation, one breakout session in this year’s conference focused on effective strategies for becoming a rainmaker. Another demystified the process for developing the top-shelf litigation skills necessary to ascend to lead lawyer. And just as it did in 2004, the Academy presented a number of inspiring role models who described how they overcame skepticism, difficult work climates, and other obstacles to achieving their career objectives.

### Cultivating Media Contacts

“There were excellent speakers,” says Sarah Loomis Cave, 32, a law associate, who was sponsored by her New York firm, Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP. She says the conference also provided lots of networking opportunities. “We talked to women all over the country about what they were doing to build their careers and develop business skills,” she says, describing how she picked up further tips from “Meet the Press,” one of her favorite panel discussions. “They explained how to be ready to take advantage of media opportunities when they come available,” she notes.

“A lot of what we talked about was how to practice sound bites in front of a friend or a mir-

ror in order to get more comfortable doing it and to build confidence,” says Mary Wisniewski, a panelist and business reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, who says women lawyers, generally speaking, act more cautious and reserved with the press than do their male counterparts who more readily use the media to build name recognition. “Men will go on and on

about a case. Or they’re more likely to say something pointed or funny,” says Wisniewski, who encourages female lawyers to step into the spotlight and avoid giving dead-end answers like, “It’s in the indictment.”

She recommends that lawyers read newspapers and familiarize themselves with which reporters cover their area of expertise. “You can call and say, ‘Hey, I’m familiar with that issue. Do you want to get together and talk?’” She also suggests that lawyers would benefit from making themselves more available to speak on background. “We want to get it right, and we have a lot in common with lawyers. We’re both interested in analysis and stories,” says Wisniewski, explaining that even if a helpful lawyer doesn’t get a quote in the newspaper the first time, “we will remember them the next time.”

### Flying Above the Radar

One lawyer who is not one to sit on the sidelines is Delissa A. Ridgway, a judge for the U.S. Court of International Trade in New York,

### Choose S.M.A.R.T. Goals

**Specific**  
**Measurable**  
**Acceptable**  
**Realistic and Results Oriented**  
**Time Bound**

*Presented by Lisa Horowitz, senior manager of professional development, McDermott Will and Emery LLP*

## Nine Positive Leadership Traits

- **Develop self-awareness:** Formulate an accurate self-assessment.
- **Learn self-management:** Build self-control and hone your ability to create a vision, pursue possibilities, and let go of the past to create a future.
- **Aspire to excellence:** Understand necessary core practice skills and participate in substantive professional development training.
- **Be versatile and adaptable:** Be able to adjust your leadership style to meet the needs of different individuals and teams.
- **Effectively manage relationships:** Relate well to people at all levels. Develop and empower others. Be a team player.
- **Communicate with meaning:** Foster open dialogue. Keep others informed. Provide feedback. Express your ideas clearly. Question effectively.
- **Inspire trust:** Communicate clear values through your behavior. Maintain high standards of personal integrity. Value diversity. Treat others fairly.
- **Heighten your social awareness:** Understand your organization and work environment.
- **Refine your systems thinking:** Transform strategies into action. Assume personal responsibility for organizational improvement. Challenge the process. Be optimistic. Persevere.

*Recommended by Lisa Horowitz, senior manager of professional development, McDermott Will and Emery LLP*

## Nine Ideas on How to Grow Your Practice

- Choose the areas of law in which you would most like to practice that will attract clients.
- Determine the areas of practice that are growing and likely to need lawyers.
- Talk to other lawyers about how they attract clients.
- Explore and act on ways to create more name recognition for yourself.
- Create and utilize a network of colleagues and mentors who can help you attract business.
- Write down your short-term and long-term business development plans (e.g., how many people you plan to take to dinner during the next three months).
- Annually reassess where you want to be in five years and readjust your goals accordingly.
- Focus on obtainable goals.
- Don't be shy about your accomplishments!

*Adapted from strategies recommended by Pamela Bresnahan, Hilarie Bass, and Pamela Roberts at [www.abanet.org/women/leadershipacademy/2006/handout/businessdevelopmentplan.pdf](http://www.abanet.org/women/leadershipacademy/2006/handout/businessdevelopmentplan.pdf)*

## Six Steps to a Leadership Plan

- Conduct individual preparation/self-assessment.
- Articulate your vision.
- Set goals!
- Action plan your way to success.
- Communicate your plan.
- Monitor progress.

*Advocated by Lisa Horowitz, senior manager of professional development, McDermott Will and Emery LLP*

who moderated the media panel and spoke on another panel about taking charge of your leadership potential. Between panels, she was constantly pulled aside by conference attendees who wanted coaching tips on how to get more established in the profession. “A lot of lawyers just don’t get it,” says Ridgway, describing some very concrete ways she’s gone about promoting herself.

One way is to organize a talk or program that involves a speaker who could potentially help your career and perhaps eventually hire you. “You can dramatically shift your career,” she says, describing tactics to ensure the success of the event while also showcasing yourself. For instance, besides packing the room and treating the speakers with kid gloves, she always pre-scripts a thoughtful, glowing introduction and jumpstarts the Q&A session with a well-researched question of her own. “What you’re trying to do is distinguish yourself from everyone else,” Ridgway says, explaining that in a short time, you’ve established yourself as an expert and a peer. “It’s the halo effect in a big way.” [Editor’s Note: To learn more about how to organize a successful event that can grow your contacts and advance your practice, see the list of tips online following this article under What’s New—Perspectives Magazine at [www.abanet.org/women/home.html](http://www.abanet.org/women/home.html).] [or click here.](#)

Encouraging young women lawyers to learn to fly above the radar was a sentiment shared by many speakers. Lawton says many of the law associates may not yet feel empowered in their law firms, but they seemed to gather strength over the course of the two-day program. By the end, Lawton says, “I heard, ‘I never seriously thought about becoming partner, but I think I’m going to try and do that.’” 📍

---

*Ann Farmer is a freelance journalist who lives in New York City. She works as a breaking news reporter for the New York Times, and writes about television, law, dance, women’s issues and other topics for EMMY Magazine, Court TV, Dance Magazine, Women’s eNews, and others.*

## **Make Friends and Influence People by Organizing a Successful Event**

One way to take charge of your leadership potential as a woman lawyer is to organize a talk or program that involves a speaker who could potentially help your career and perhaps eventually hire you. Tactics to ensure a successful event while showcasing and distinguishing yourself include the following:

- Identify one or two people whom you'd like to know and who can advance your career.
- Choose a trendy topic for them to address.
- Create a catchy title for the program.
- Send fliers to other contacts you want to cultivate (and include your name as chair or moderator).
- Pack the room (if you miscalculate the interest, downscale it and spin it as an intimate conversation).
- Impress the speakers with your outstanding introduction (sprinkle in a positive book review or little-known fact; make yourself appear the expert).
- Have a photographer take pictures of you and the speakers together.
- Engage the audience and impress the speakers with your memorable introduction.
- Plant questions in the audience to keep the Q&A rolling and ensure that questions are posed to each speaker.
- Cut off questions before exhaustion sets in.
- When the audience throngs afterward, politely control monopolizers.
- Present the speakers with a tasteful memento of the occasion.
- Whisk the speakers comfortably off in a cab.
- Immediately dispatch a personalized thank you note.
- Follow up with a second letter including photos of the event.
- Publish an article with photos of the event in an appropriate newsletter or magazine and forward a copy to the speaker(s).
- Send the article to each contact on your mailing list.
- Continue to cultivate the contact(s).

*(Adapted from an interview with the Hon. Delissa A. Ridgway, U.S. Court of International Trade, New York)*