



The Value of Mentors & Networking
By Benjamin Ipock, Title Counsel

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”
— Benjamin Franklin

At some point in our careers, we were all new to the practice of real property law. For some of us that point may have been 30, 40, or 50 years ago. For others, like myself, that starting point may have been more recently. Regardless of how long ago you got your start, more likely than not there was a friendly face to welcome you into the practice and help you search your first title. At other points in your career there were other friendly faces to help with challenging questions, complex issues and simply to listen and advise. In short, none of us got to this point alone. Instead, we have had influential people in our lives to lead us, teach us, help us and simply be available. These people have been our mentors, whether formally or informally. More likely than not, you have been a mentor to someone else in some capacity. I know that without various mentors I have had over the years I would not be where I am today in my career.

In my experience, sometimes the prospective mentee must take action to find their mentor. New attorneys need to seek out the best possible mentor and take steps to establish the relationship. The first step may be grabbing coffee together on a weekly basis or setting up a more formal schedule that involves job shadowing or training. Prior to electronic indexing and online records, it was easier to find a mentor for new real property lawyers because of the day-to-day interactions of attorneys and paralegals visiting the deed vault and clerk's offices to search titles. Now a majority of property titles are being searched from behind a keyboard and not in the deed vault or clerk's offices. Real Property lawyers, especially new ones, have lost an important arena to build relationships with their colleagues and to learn from them.

Yet with modern technology, mentoring can take place from one side of the world to the other. It is too easy to overlook a mentor-mentee relationship with an experienced attorney when you have e-mail, Skype, FaceTime, telephones (with free long distance), instant messaging, text messaging, list-serves, message boards and other mediums of communication. It might take a little more effort to meet a mentor, but once you do, communicating with them is easier than ever. The key to making it work is communication. You have to nurture and grow the mentor-mentee relationship so that it can be as fruitful as possible.

I think that one of the best ways for new attorneys to find and meet perspective mentors is by being an active participant in local and state bar associations and by participating in industry organizations. For me, one of the best resources for finding mentors (and meeting my colleagues) was by reaching out to those attorneys who were active on the North Carolina Bar Association Real Property Section e-mail list-serve. This list is essentially the modern forum for what once was the opportunity for conversations and questions in the deed vaults and clerk's offices. North Carolina real property

attorneys are also fortunate to have a number of organizations where we can connect with each other and learn. A number of statewide organizations host annual meetings and events that are great for networking. These organizations include the NCBA Real Property Section, Real Estate Lawyers Association of North Carolina (“RELANC”), North Carolina Land Title Association (“NCLTA”) and North Carolina Closing Attorney Best Practices Task Force. There may also be local opportunities to meet with other real property lawyers, such as the Wake County Real Estate Lawyers Association, Mecklenburg County Real Property Council and Greensboro Bar Association Real Property Section. Many counties across the state host informal lunches and meetings for real property lawyers. If your county currently does not, I encourage you to make an effort to start such groups. Start with a quick meeting over coffee and see where it goes. We all have a lot we can learn from each other, but to do so the conversation has to start somewhere.

Going back to the “starting point” of our early careers in real property law, we have all been pushed to a new common starting point with the introduction of “Know Before You Owe”. October 3, 2015, brought on a new set of rules, regulations, forms and best practices for loan closings. Whether you have spent months preparing or are just now taking the first steps for preparation and compliance, it is going to take a while to adjust and to learn how these new rules will affect our profession and practices. A lot of you may need assistance, direction or advice as to how to move forward in the “Know Before You Owe” loan closing world. A great resource will be your colleagues who are going through the same transition. There is no better time than now to find a mentor or to be a mentor to a less knowledgeable colleague. Now is also a great opportunity to reconnect with the professionals in your contact list (or Rolodex) and to meet new professionals.

As you begin to prepare for your first loan closings under the “Know Before You Owe” rule, remember that Attorneys Title is always available to assist with your questions and concerns.