

# Networking & Bar Involvement for Young Lawyers: The Power of Being Involved, and Reverting to Genuine Human Connection

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Everyone has heard the adage “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know,” but I never fully appreciated how true those words are until I graduated law school. While earning my undergraduate degree in business, I had a professor who required every person in the class to collect 30 business cards throughout the semester. At the time it seemed like a silly exercise. Most of the class just picked up spare business cards here and there at businesses they were already visiting—car repair shops, hotels, hair salons, etc. The exercise was, of course, supposed to demonstrate the importance of networking, but what it failed to acknowledge was the value of making an actual, honest connection with the person whose card you were taking.

In 2020, Cigna released its “Loneliness and the Workplace 2020 U.S. Report.”<sup>1</sup> In this study, Cigna conducted an interview of approximately 10,400 adults. They found that 55 percent of Gen Z respondents reported feeling disconnected from others at work, and 73 percent reported feeling sometimes or always alone at work. These figures decreased with each generation. The report also noted that 61 percent of all respondents reported getting less than two hours per day of face-to-face interaction. For a vast majority of us, jobs are becoming more reliant on technology. We e-file pleadings, we attend court hearings

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from our living rooms, and we do depositions via Zoom. While this reality creates certain undeniable advantages, we lose the human element. This is why networking is so important. It paves a pathway for us to meet other people with commonalities. It makes our experiences feel shared and gives us a place to go when we just need an ear.

When I moved to Las Vegas, I didn't know a soul. This was the third time in my adult life I had picked up and moved to a new city with no friends or support system. Upon moving, one of the first things I did was start looking into organizations I could join to meet people with whom I had something in common. I looked for alumni groups from my college and sorority, and I joined the Young Lawyers Section (YLS) of the State Bar of Nevada. The last turned out to be one of the best decisions I could have made.

In Nevada, we are all fortunate that we get added to the Young Lawyers Section automatically when we register with the bar, so long as we have been practicing in Nevada for less than five years or are younger than 36 years old. The opportunities provided by the Young Lawyers Section are invaluable. The section hosts socials where you can meet other young lawyers. It provides opportunities to volunteer at events and to earn CLE credits. Most importantly, section membership enables you to connect and engage with others who are likely experiencing the same frustrations and victories that you are. Being involved brings that human element back into the practice of law, which seems to have been disappearing for the past few years.

Joining the YLS board provides an even better way to go beyond making connections, and truly getting to participate in a bar organization that has the ability to transform your career. The board meets once per month and has seven executive board members, and several chair positions, who oversee specific programs, such as the Serving Seniors program, CLEs, and Trial Academy. The YLS board gets to make presentations to the Board of Governors quarterly, which means getting to meet some of the most powerful, game-changing people in the legal field in Nevada. The value of these connections cannot be overstated. Whether you are applying for a new job at a firm, or presenting a CLE, having your name be recognized by a member of the Board of Governors is a powerful tool.

And thankfully, it's not just the YLS that can provide these opportunities to you. The state bar has 26 sections to bring together attorneys from just about every field you can imagine, from the Cannabis Law Section to the LGBT Section, to the Solo and Small Practice Law Section. There are also local affinity bar organizations, such as the Clark County Bar Association or the Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association. There are also nationwide associations, with local chapters, such as the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association, the Asian Bar Association of Las Vegas, and the Nevada Latino Bar Association. The opportunities to get involved are endless. Each and every one of these organizations provides the ability to connect with people who have similar passions and interests as you do. People who will likely be able to answer questions you have as a new attorney or are happy to provide guidance and mentorship as you enter the field. Many of these organizations offer scholarships to attend state and national conferences, and some announce annual awards that recognize emerging leaders in their respective fields.

So, while Cigna's study said that 55 percent of Gen Z respondents reported feeling disconnected from others at work, the disconnect can be minimized by finding a group that fits your specific needs and interests. Maybe it leads to a new job, or maybe it simply gives you new friends to call when you're feeling overwhelmed and frustrated but getting involved in a bar organization is always worth the risk it takes to put yourself out there initially. After an isolated two years, away from our peers and the interactions we are used to as lawyers, joining a bar section or other organization provides an easy way to re-enter the world of human interaction, and helps us find solace in knowing that we are not alone in our experiences.

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## ENDNOTES:

1. Nemecek, D. (2020, January). *Loneliness and the Workplace - 2020 U.S. Report*. Retrieved May 1, 2022, from <https://www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/cigna-2020-loneliness-report.pdf>



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