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Markowski of Peabody & Arnold, LLP: Women in real estate leading and succeeding

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This month the New England Real Estate Journal is highlighting the accomplishments of women in real estate. In my experience as a Boston litigation attorney and my involvement in the Real Estate Bar Association for Massachusetts, I have had the good fortune to work and collaborate with many talented women within the real estate industry. Many are leaders in their professions and have achieved great successes. From them I learn countless valuable lessons about establishing and growing a fulfilling professional practice. Of course, no two career paths are the same and fortuitous timing and circumstances, which are often a factor in career success, are unpredictable. Nevertheless, most of the women I admire have similar experiences with what has been most useful for achieving professional goals.

Time and again I hear about and experience the importance of developing a strong professional network. It is often difficult to break into a new industry or role and, at some point, everyone is new and looking for opportunities or guidance. Most people who stick with it long enough can look back and recall at least one individual who provided pivotal career support at critical times. Whether it is a recommendation for a first job or persuasion to accept a leadership position, at one point or another support can change a career.

Today, networking opportunities are endless. Professional organizations, social media, networking groups, continuing education, and the like are very useful in making connections and most of the women I have worked with have a solid network of individuals who can and do recommend and support them. While an argument can be made that people can never have too many connections, I think there is more to be gained from a few substantive connections than thousands of loose connections with little personal insight.

In order to develop quality connections, signing up for a professional group or attending an event is just the first step; participation is critical to establishing true connections. Many of the women I work with sit on committees, write blogs, volunteer, or maintain regular lunches or dinners with contacts and colleagues. Through those activities they establish meaningful professional connections. Of course, in practice, personal recommendations are frequently the determining factor in hiring and other business decisions where two candidates appear equally qualified on paper. Everyone needs an advocate (or several) to succeed.

An experienced colleague once told me very early in my career that I needed to be my biggest advocate because if I did not advocate for myself no one else would. This was, in fact, very good advice. In subsequent years I observed that successful professionals usually believe in themselves and their abilities or at least they appear to; and they should. With hard work, dedication, and a little luck, most goals are achievable so why not believe. Believing in one's ability can be most daunting when trying something new, but that is when confidence is most critical because new experiences

lead to personal and professional growth. For that reason, many of the women I have met who are at the top of their professions readily welcome new challenges and accept that they are up to the task.

Finally, as I consider the successes of the women in the real estate industry with whom I have crossed paths I recall one piece of advice a colleague gave me after I thanked her for advocating on my behalf. She asked that as I advanced in my career to return the favor by doing the same for other women. This is a favor I am happy to return. While there are far more women leading and succeeding in real estate today than a generation ago, there are plenty more talented women who are looking for their first opportunity or a little support or guidance.

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