



Lowenstein Sandler's Women's Initiative Network Podcast: Real Talk

Episode 44: Navigating Generational Differences Among Lawyers

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Rachel Dikovics: Welcome to the Lowenstein Sandler podcast series, the *Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk*. I'm Rachel Dikovics, counsel in Lowenstein's white collar defense practice group, and a member of the Women's Initiative Network at Lowenstein Sandler. Before we begin, please take a moment to subscribe to our podcast series at Lowenstein.com/podcast or find us on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, or SoundCloud. Now let's take a listen.

Jessica Stewart: Welcome to another episode of the Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk. I'm one of your hosts, Jessica Stewart, and I'm an associate in Lowenstein Sandler's Executive Compensation, Employment & Benefits Practice Group.

Julie Werner: Hi, I am Julie Werner. I am a partner in the Employment Group.

Lauren Russel: I'm Lauren Russell. I'm an associate in our Emerging Companies Venture Capital Group.

Markiana Julceus: I'm Markiana Julceus. I'm counsel in our White Collar and Criminal Defense Practice Group.

Jessica Stewart: Now that Gen Z has entered the workplace, we have four generations working together, baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, and Gen Z. Today's episode is going to dig into a topic that's not only timely but personal for many of us: How different generations are navigating the push and pull of remote work and in-person work and the communication quirks that come with it. If you've ever worked on a multi-generational team, chances are you've seen these tensions firsthand. Maybe it's the Gen X partner who doesn't understand why Gen Z associates won't just pick up the phone; maybe it's the millennial that refers to Zoom chats or Slack channels as AIMs. These are funny anecdotes, but they point to something deeper. Each generation brings its own values, habits, and expectations to the

table. We're going to take a deeper dive to see how each group sees work differently, and how to bridge the gap so teams can collaborate more effectively no matter what generation they're lumped into.

Let's first go back to a world before COVID. What was the workplace like compared to now?

Julie Werner: I guess I would start by saying this, I started working at Lowenstein in 1997, and so it's not just a world before COVID, it's a world before-

Jessica Stewart: Before Lauren was born.

Julie Werner: Yeah, before Lauren was born, before we had laptops, before we had any real meaningful work from home, before, really, email. Email was really just emerging at the time that I started working, and I think people before me said they really didn't even have computers shortly before that. When I started, we did at least have computers, but if you were not in the office, you were constantly checking your voicemail, and there was a phone number, which I sometimes still call into if I have to check my voicemail, just check, but we didn't get an alert, you didn't get a thing, and you had to manually and compulsively keep checking into your voicemail.

Markiana Julceus: Sounds nerve wracking.

Julie Werner: Yes, yes. That was a thing, and so then obviously over time then we moved on to Blackberries, and then we became obsessed and glued to our Blackberries, and that was the way we would at least check in and know what was going on with email. Then when we got to iPhones, obviously all of that you guys are familiar with, and that was where things started and where we kind of were before COVID. But just even the notion of having to be in the office and be so physically accessible and available to work in the office, to be constantly checking voicemail, totally different dynamic than where we are now.

Markiana Julceus: I remember a time that is probably a little different than the time Julie speaks of 'cause when I joined the firm in 2018, we had internet, although we did not yet have laptops actually. It was a time before laptops, and so if you had something that needed to be done, you would do it in the office, or if you had to do it from home, you had to log in remotely through Citrix when you were on your personal laptop and you were remoting in to your computer, but it was so inefficient because Citrix was just impossibly slow. So anything you wanted to do you did in the office, and work from home was very much less of a thing I think in that era.

Jessica Stewart: How did that work with eating dinner at the office? What about if you had to work on a weekend?

Markiana Julceus: A lot more people ate dinner at the office. Row and the lab would just be full of dinners, and if I needed to work on a weekend, I would physically come to the office most of the time. I had a case once where we had a bunch of contract attorneys reviewing documents, and, again, this is before laptops, so they had to be physically on site here in the office, and if they had to be physically on site in the office, so did a full-time employee of this law firm, and, lo and behold, it fell to the lowest person on the totem pole, me. So, there was a period of time I think there were like six consecutive weeks where I was in the office every Saturday supervising these contract attorneys doing a document review.

Julie Werner: I just want to add that the best thing about the firm when I started in the early days was exactly what you just said. We used to have a couple dozen people who all gathered, had dinner together. You literally just sat down. There wasn't cliques or groups or whatever. There were just literally you sat where the next open seat was, and that was how you got to meet different people at different levels, different departments. My best memories, when I think back at the firm, it just was fun. It was a different energy when you were there in the evening, and everybody, a lot of people were here in the evening, and so that was to me really what established the culture of the firm. So, on the one hand you go, "Oh my God. I'm miserable." We had to stay late and work and eat and dinner at the firm, but that was really where people got to know each other in a very different way, and I would say I ate dinner at the firm probably for the first eight years of my tenure here and seldom if ever cooked, which was good and bad, I suppose.

Markiana Julceus: I think that's one of those things that gets lost a little bit in this hybrid world we live in, and we can talk about it a little bit more later, but I feel like that downtime in the day, the forced downtime when you're waiting for something to happen and you're at the firm and you're just forced to be here because you didn't have a choice, you were basically chained to the office if you needed to get something done, but maybe there'd be a lag in time when you chatted with people and hung out with people, or same thing with going to mediation, there was a period of time mediation was always in person, and so as a junior person on the case, if you're going with a partner to mediation, that's an eight hour day where, yeah, sure you're with the mediator but not all the time. So you're just chatting with the partner and the client in between. You're getting to know them, you're having those face-to-face interactions. Now, I've had a couple mediations this year, almost all of them have been via Zoom, and the

mediator leaves the room and everybody's like, "All right, I'm going to go off camera and work on this other thing." So you kind of lose that, and I think it means you need to be a lot more intentional about trying to connect with people.

Jessica Stewart: Let's talk about that. How has your approach changed to team building and internal networking now that people aren't in the office on Saturdays or don't always eat dinner here?

Julie Werner: I think your word was intentional, and I think you do have to be much more intentional, and so while we would... I'm sure Markiana and I both would gripe back in the day when you had to be here, like you said, nights, weekends, et cetera, that is really how you established those kinds of relationships, so it definitely requires more intentionality. And I will say on the one hand as the more senior lawyer, certainly I strive to do that, but I do think that it is at some level incumbent upon the junior lawyer to try to take more initiative in that way because I think most senior lawyers would be receptive and completely open to people stopping by or asking to have coffee or that kind of thing. At least my experience is it doesn't happen as often I would expect, and be... again, easy for me to say now, if I were in that position as a more junior lawyer, and I do know I took a lot of initiative in those days, I would expect that the junior lawyer should be taking the initiative and seek people out and try to make those connections.

Lauren Russel: As a junior associate, I've only having worked post-COVID, how do you recommend we maximize our time in the office and show our intention to team building and being committed to firm culture?

Julie Werner: I think that's a great question. I would say the people who you work most closely with, I would in the mornings, if you can, stop by, poke your... even if it's just like, "Hey, good morning," and just establish yourself in that way. I don't know, it depends obviously how close you are to people you're sitting with. I know the issue also which has changed is now that we have so many offices. You may be spending time working with people in our New York office and you're sitting in New Jersey, which on the one hand you'd say, "Well, it doesn't really matter where I am; I could just be doing this from home," but I guess even establishing the connection with the people in your office, even if some of the people you're working with in the other. But just literally stopping by, "Good morning. How are you doing?" and trying to sit in if you're going to have calls. Sometimes just sitting in the room with the person, they sometimes are more inclined during the call, after the call to just go, "Okay, here's what happened," or give you the play by play in a different way if you're sitting in the room with them

that they may not be inclined to do after the call is over if you're not in the same space perhaps.

Lauren Russel: What about you Markiana? What do you suggest?

Markiana Julceus: I'm a big fan of just doing my rounds, so I'm in our little White Collar L, and I will literally walk the hallway after three hours of sitting at my desk and just pop my head in people's offices and be like, "Hey, how are you?" just to get my face in front of them. One, I get my steps in, but, two, it reminds people that you exist and it gives you an opportunity for a five-minute chat. It seems a lot scarier than it really is. I think it's hard to get over that hump of feeling like, "Oh my gosh. I'm intruding. People are very busy. I don't want to bother people." But, one, if people genuinely don't have time to talk, they will not be shy about telling you to go away or come back later; and, two people do genuinely welcome the connection, and I think it's... to Julie's point, the partners all want it and enjoy it, but maybe doesn't necessarily occur to them to reach out and be like, "Hey, let's get a coffee," so it kind of is on the junior folks to initiate it.

Julie Werner: But it doesn't even have to be so formal as, "Let's get a coffee." It's literally, as you said, just sticking your head in, "Hey, how are you? What are you up to today?" or "Hey, I have some free time. Is there anything I can help you with?" or "Hey, I was just curious when we were on that Zoom, why did this person say this? Why did you say that?" Those kinds of things I think are good to do.

Markiana Julceus: And I think especially also when you're working cross-office to try and go into the office. I work a lot with some partners in New York, and I try, despite the fact that I hate going to New York, I try and go once a month just so that I know at least one time a month I'll get that face-to-face, in-person interaction, and I always make a point that one day when I go into New York, then I don't just go to my assigned office and hide away in there; I make a point to say hi to Rachel or say hi to Kathleen-

Julie Werner: Or email them in advance and say, "Hey, I'm going to be in the New York office on Wednesday. Will you be around?" That kind of thing I'm sure they appreciate too.

Jessica Stewart: That kind of leads into communication styles and how different generations want to communicate. How do you want junior associates to come ask you for work? Do you want them to stop by in person? Would you prefer an email?

Julie Werner: I'm not sure if it's so generational. I think that's the type of thing that probably is very person specific. I don't have really a strong preference. I like the Zoom IMs, but really only when I'm at my computer. It's not the first place where I would go to look. Maybe I should look after hours to just go, "Oh, did anybody IM me there?" because sometimes I'm not prone to just check there the way I would check email and stuff. I think that is more individual probably than generational. I don't know, Markiana, what do you think?

Markiana Julceus: I kind of agree with that. I also think to some degree it depends on the nature of the communication. Sometimes people will try and have substantive conversations about research in Zoom chat, and I'm like, "Please don't send me cases in Zoom chat and your analysis-

Julie Werner: Probably a bit guilty of that.

Markiana Julceus: No, no, no. Not you, Julie, but I'm talking about somebody that I've asked a research question that is sending me their formal summary of the research in Zoom chat. I'll never find that again. Please send me an email that I can save in iManage.

Julie Werner: I'll go worse beyond that. I always say save it then as a Word doc.

Markiana Julceus: Yes.

Julie Werner: Take your email and then save it as a Word doc or I'll never be able to find it. Yeah. But that's research.

Markiana Julceus: Yeah, that's different. Just like a, "Hey, I'm looking at this case," or "Hey, do you think this is something we should look into?" or a "Hey, do you have time to chat?" Those kinds of things I think are all very Zoom chat appropriate.

Julie Werner: Or email or a phone call.

Markiana Julceus: Yeah.

Julie Werner: Yeah.

Markiana Julceus: Any of the above. I think if you're in the office and the other person is in the office, maybe try and reach out to them in person, just pop by their office, just 'cause I think, again, we have to be intentional about meeting people face to face, but otherwise I personally don't have much of a preference.

- Lauren Russel:** I think there's something that's very Gen Z about being averse to a phone call, which I know I've worked with numerous partners who've been like, "Just call me," and I'm like, "I Zoom chat, I obsessively check calendars," and I think that's something that's very common in my generation. I share Google Calendars with my friends, you know what people are up to all the time, and I think that's probably one of the biggest communication frictions I've had, and maybe that's because building relationships now is different, so you maybe feel less comfortable going out and calling people. But I guess I just don't really call people in my regular life either. I don't know if you can elaborate on that, Jessica.
- Jessica Stewart:** Oh, I don't even like calling to make my own haircut appointments. So, when I get a phone call, I think it's a 911 emergency versus an email, and I don't think older generations feel that way about phone calls.
- Markiana Julceus:** Yeah, I'm pretty neutral on phone calls. My general preference is never... and this is just who I am as a person, I'm not a big caller. Unless it's an urgent thing and I need a response right away, then I'm inclined to call somebody; otherwise, I'll probably send an email. But phone calls don't really bother me. I know some people, they see an unsolicited phone call and they're like, "Oh my gosh. I'm getting fired. What's happening?" And that...
- Julie Werner:** That's an unfortunate reaction.
- Markiana Julceus:** I think it's something for more senior folks to be mindful of. Maybe it helps to send the Zoom chat that's like, "Hey, do you have five minutes to chat?" because sometimes it sends the junior folks into a tizzy if they just get the unsolicited phone call. Although I don't know that the Zoom chat is any better. Thoughts?
- Lauren Russel:** I think if someone says, "Do you have a quick second to chat?" I think, no matter what, at least speaking for myself and some of my other kind of Gen Z colleagues, I think the assumption is always a little bit of a spiral.
- Julie Werner:** Just to say, "Do you have a minute to chat?" What should they write? If not... just to say the-
- Jessica Stewart:** "Can we discuss this matter?"
- Julie Werner:** Oh, you want an agenda?
- Jessica Stewart:** Yes, I want an agenda.

- Lauren Russel:** I feel like so much of being a junior associate is needing to be prepared, so a cold call where you don't have... I'm a prolific note taker. Without all my notes out, I feel very caught off guard. So maybe something... "Do you have a minute to chat about this specifically?" would be good.
- Markiana Julceus:** So basically you want everything to be a scheduled call.
- Lauren Russel:** Yes, but maybe that's just me as well.
- Markiana Julceus:** Again, not sure if it's a generational difference or just a personality difference, right? I will say for the power of a phone call, recently I had an interaction with a government officer who was trying to schedule an interview of my client and really wanted this third-party present that did not want to attend. When they sent this email that was like, "I want this person to appear, blah, blah, blah," and I was like, "Ugh, gosh, I don't know how I'm going to get this third party to show up." I decided to just pick up the phone and call. The lady from the government was like, "Oh, yeah, they don't need to go. That's perfectly fine. Actually, we can do the interview of your client over Zoom. We don't even need to do it in person. You guys don't need to trek down to South Jersey." So, I think phone calls really can be a powerful thing, and that's just with a stranger. But I think this applies similarly at work with your colleagues. You can get a little bit more traction on a phone call. You get to know people better.
- Jessica Stewart:** Now that we have iPhones, and we have our Zoom apps on our iPhones so we can get chats 24/7, we can get phone calls 24/7, we have our laptops, we can use a hotspot anywhere, how do we set boundaries?
- Julie Werner:** I never had boundaries. I still don't have boundaries. I would give my kids... one who has since graduated from college, I remember giving her a bath, and I had my Blackberry right next to me, and when you have a newborn baby, it's like, "God forbid the baby's going to drown in the bathtub," and I would be giving my baby a bath, and I literally had my Blackberry there, and just in case... Look, when I say there's no boundaries, of course there are boundaries in terms of if you're going to be away on vacation, et cetera, of course, and I of course tell people, but at the same time, that is the downfall of having this technology of iPhones and whatnot is that you do have to essentially be responsive. Doesn't mean you have to answer in that second, but I do think it has always been and especially now so and particularly in a client service business that we are being responsive.

Jessica Stewart: I think that's a good nuance, being responsive versus, "I need to do a hotspot and get my laptop out right this second," versus sending an email acknowledging receipt and communicating.

Julie Werner: Yeah.

Lauren Russel: I guess I'm curious, are the constant notifications better or worse than compulsively checking a voicemail?

Julie Werner: No, I guess for ease, probably the notifications are better because it's just available as opposed to feeling, like you said, having to check the voicemail. You didn't do it as frequently. Maybe I'd check voicemail two or three times a night, where email I check every 5 or 10 minutes on the weekends, but pretty frequently still on the weekends, and I think it's the notion of being responsive. And, again, it's not, "You have to work on the thing that second;" it's that you have to acknowledge that you are going to respond with some sense and just being accessible and available. That is just inherently because we're in a client service business. I think if we weren't, maybe it's different, but that's the nature of our business.

I guess at some level also, people always say you have your internal clients and your external clients, and so for better, for worse, the prize for good work here is more work. It just is. So that is one of the things. I think all lawyers here like it when you are responsive, and it just shows some level of commitment that somebody who's less responsive may not be demonstrating.

Lauren Russel: How do you think that kind of shift that you've seen during your tenure here has affected your relationship with both your internal and external clients?

Julie Werner: I don't know that it's changed it in any way. I guess I would say one of the things that I think I've historically been known for here, maybe this is also me just sounding compulsive, because I think one of the things, my differentiator, is responsiveness, and I think clients appreciate that. When we are, I guess I'll go back to, in a business where we're trying to differentiate ourselves with other lawyers at other law firms, the thing that clients often will comment and say is, "I appreciate how responsive you were, how quick you were to get back to me."

Lauren Russel: Do you think that shifts as we spend more time on Zoom versus in person? I've only met clients a handful of times compared to, I think, going to meetings in person, going to do doc review in person, where you had to go to rooms and complete diligence on site.

Julie Werner: I actually would say it a little differently. Yes, there are definitely many that I'd met in person, but there were also equally as many that I spoke to on the phone, I had no idea what they looked like. So it wasn't until Zoom, which is really COVID, going back to your initial question about COVID, wasn't even until COVID when we started with Zoom that you even got to see what people look like, many people, because you just had no reason necessarily to meet them. I knew their voices. Before we had in our iPhone where you have them in your contacts, I used to have a million people call me and go, "Hi, it's me," and I had to figure out who's "me" 'cause they weren't in my contacts, or I had 10 clients named Mike, and they were like, "Hey, it's Mike," or whatever the name is. I go, "Which one is..." and I'd have to start talking and figure out who they were, but I didn't know what they look like, and now obviously with Zoom... Pros and cons, obviously, to all of the above.

Markiana Julceus: Any phone call that is prescheduled I do as a Zoom. I like seeing people's faces. Plus, it's a nice little connection point with clients. Julie and I have one client that we have a Zoom with and she's got all her medals from marathons, and you can ask her about the marathons. I feel like you get to know people a little bit more. It's closer to having those real life in-person conversations, which I agree are a rarity, but, to Julie's point, always kind of have been when you're in a firm of this size and you're serving people that are nationwide to some degree.

Jessica Stewart: What are ways that all generations can better accommodate each other so we can more effectively communicate and work together?

Julie Werner: Again, and not to sound as hierarchal as this sounds, but I think it's probably at some level, not completely, but the junior person's responsibility to accommodate the more senior person. I remember, again, I feel very old saying I walked up down the hill both ways in the snow and all that kind of stuff, I remember literally all-nighters here; but I also remember one of the partners with whom I work most closely, she was here at 2:00 in the morning also, and I was like, "Oh my God, when I get to be her age, I don't want to be here at 2:00 in the morning," and I was amazed that she was, and I am now probably older than she was at the time, and I'm not here at 2:00 in the morning, so I guess there's something to be said for that. But I reacted to her; I wasn't going to go home before her. I had to accommodate that that was her expectation, and I had to just go with it.

Jessica Stewart: That's an interesting mentality with remote work because I think the idea of getting here before your boss and staying later than your boss is just

very different when people leave and try to go home at different times to beat traffic or see their kids.

Julie Werner: Ed Zimmerman, I remember back in the day, when his babies were born and I was working closely, and he would leave every day at a quarter to 6:00 because he lived very close to the firm, and every day I think he had dinner with his family at 6:00, and I just really was impressed by that, maybe not to put a double standard, but as the male employee who wanted to go home and see his kids and put them to bed. And then I remember he came back to the firm, and I was still here because I was the more junior lawyer working, and that really resonated with me. So the idea, as you mentioned people, especially with young children and wanting to see them and put them to bed, I think obviously that is the benefit now. It's understood, of course you can take time to do that, and then it's understood also that you'll log back on after they go to bed, which is obviously better than having to come back to the firm, which people did used to do and have to hire babysitters at night to come back to the firm and that type of thing.

Markiana Julceus: I think the concept of beating your boss to the office and staying later than them has at least physically gone out the window just because people's work hours are kind of, I don't want to say erratic, but people are building work hours that suit their real-life schedule. But I think to some degree you can take that into effect in your workflow. For example, there are partners I work with that I know like to start their mornings very early.

Julie Werner: Don't you have a call with retired judge and who used to call you at-

Markiana Julceus: Yeah.

Julie Werner: ... 7:00 in the morning or something?

Markiana Julceus: In those cases, I have something that I'm getting to a partner that likes to start their work day at 6:00 in the morning, I'm going to make sure that whatever it is that I'm sending them, if I've told them I'm going to get them something on Tuesday, I'm going to try and get it to them Tuesday early in the morning because I know that's when they work as opposed to there are some partners I know that routinely stay up till 2:00 in the morning. Those folks, I don't feel bad getting them something at 10:00 PM because I know that's when they're going to have time to look at it. So, I think about people's workflows and work styles sometimes in how I'm delivering work. I think that's really where it comes into play nowadays.

Lauren Russel: When you work with people for the first time, and I guess that's more common for junior associates, it's a big firm, there's a lot of different people to work with, how do you think is the best way to go about figuring that out?

Markiana Julceus: Ask other people. I'm always inclined to ask others, but I suppose you could also just ask the partner that you're working with, or the senior associate.

Julie Werner: Yeah, but I probably would start-

Markiana Julceus: With others.

Julie Werner: With others. Just the reality is... so it doesn't seem so direct.

Markiana Julceus: Yeah.

Julie Werner: Not to say you can't, but-

Markiana Julceus: Yeah, theoretically you could, but I can't say that I ever have.

Julie Werner: Tell us from your perspective, I guess I would say, what feedback do you have for us?

Lauren Russel: I guess one of the biggest challenges of this job, because you're not necessarily fully trained on how to be an attorney, and this is my first job, so you're learning substantive legal matters, but I think there's so much of the push and pull socially and learning how to navigate that is challenging, and I think you don't feel like you can necessarily ask the people you're working with, "Are you a morning person? When do you look at things?" and a lot of it is ad hoc figuring it out as you go.

Julie Werner: But that seems fair. I think you could tell because you know when you're receiving their emails, for example, and so you can tell from that alone, right?

Lauren Russel: Yeah. I think for me, I'm just one of those people that likes to know what I'm going into, and I think sometimes that can be really challenging, especially because it's hard when we've been given advice like you have to beat your boss but people come in at completely different times. So, it's hard to navigate what the new normal is when, what almost everyone else who's come up above us came up during a different time, so finding that balance.

Jessica Stewart: I think it's a mix of generational differences and a post-COVID world that everyone's trying to navigate. But I do think it's nice and reassuring when you see more senior people leaving to take care of their kids and eat dinner with their kids and put them to bed and then log back on. It almost makes it seem like that's doable, where maybe it wasn't as doable 30 years ago.

Julie Werner: Yeah. That's definitely true. I almost feel like that's the expectation, and especially with the men, I would say, you see a lot more of that with the men I'm sure over the years than we used to, and I think that's all great progress. Obviously, we have more male lawyers taking parental leave, and I think that's a really good message, and certainly at this firm, I feel like that's been in place for quite some time and continues to increase. So, all of those I think are good messages for people to see.

Jessica Stewart: Thanks for joining us today for another episode of the Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk. We hope you enjoyed this episode, and we'll see you next time.

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