

Women in the Law: Marianne Trost /s The Women Lawyer’s Coach

By Kay Cooper
AWLA Newsletter Committee

“Helping women lawyers succeed, in whatever way they define success, that is what I have been put on this planet to do.”

With that conviction, Marianne Trost started what may be Arizona’s only business consulting practice specifically for women attorneys. She is committed to women defining and achieving the practice they desire. She is also a genius at helping women looking for change to make that transition – in their client base, practice area, work environment, or balance with personal life. (See her website at www.thewomenlawyerscoach.com.)

For almost 20 years, she has worked with literally thousands of attorneys. She knows women face hurdles in the legal industry that our male colleagues do not. She also appreciates the unique skills women have and can use to enhance their law practice.

“We have all heard it before, and it’s true. Business development is about relationships with clients, potential clients, referral sources and the public. As women, I believe we have the advantage in this de-



partment. Without oversimplifying, I think we are excellent communicators. We find reasons to stay in touch. We are good listeners. We care deeply about our relationships and naturally invest time in them. We typically have good intuition. We connect with people on multiple levels. And we are not afraid to ask how we can improve our service to others. Apply those skills to business development, provide quality legal work, and you have a lasting winning formula.”

How does Marianne help women attorneys tap those talents? By offering one-on-one instruction and support to:

- Teach women how to ask for business
- Develop strategies to start or expand one’s client base
- Set career goals and achieve them
- Teach women how to state their accomplishments
- Assess non-billable business development activi-

Inside Perspectives

May 2008

Missing Witness Author Interview	4
Justice Ryan addresses grads	6
Dean White Day declared	7
Demarchi Honored	9
Law Debate at ASU	10
30th Anniversary Gala (Again!)	12-14
Secrets of Success	15
Women’s China Symposium	16
Phoenix Law’s First Grad	17
Board of Governors	18-19

Continued on page 2

**Women in the Law: Marianne Trost,
Continued from Page 1**

ties such as speaking, writing, and volunteering

- Clarify professional and personal interests
- ♦ Advance an existing law career or make a transition

Marianne has been involved in every aspect of associate and partner professional life. "I was dead set on being a lawyer since I was a child... until I was a legal assistant working on asbestosis litigation. I was 23 and withdrew my applications to law school." She became the Director of Client Relations and Attorney/Client Fee Arbitration for the San Francisco Bar Association. From there, she accepted an offer from Thelen, a large SF firm (350 attorneys, 10 offices nationwide) where she developed one of the first in-house associate training programs, which was later used as a model across the country, and oversaw the firm's marketing development, recruiting, mentoring, and associate training. She also implemented the first women lawyer networking training program in SF sponsored by the Bar Association in the mid-1980's.

"I think one of the things that makes me unique when coaching women is that 'I've seen it all.' I've worked in large law firms, small law firms, for a sole practitioner, for the Bar Association, and in the courts. Many times I have been the only woman in the room during management discussions on everything from hiring, retention, diversity, client relations, mentoring, partnership track, hours/workload, you name it."

After relocating to Arizona and the birth of her daughter, Marianne taught women coming out of domestic violence, homelessness, and substance abuse through the Arizona Women Education and Employment program. She eventually joined Jennings, Strouss & Salmon as their Director of Business Development, an opportunity that "really educated me on the Arizona legal community." In 2007, she started her consulting practice, planning to spend the second half of her career serving as a resource to women specifically. "I am honored that AWLA would interview me and allow me to get the word out that women often have untapped business development abilities that they can use to their advantage."

During this interview, Marianne's answers to several questions revealed her philosophy and enthusiasm for her work:

What is the best career advice you've re-

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**Women in the Law: Marianne Trost,
Continued from Page 2**

ceived?

“When in doubt, leave it out.” That goes for writing and talking. Honor those first instincts.

What is the best piece of advice you can give?

Follow your dreams. Dare to do and to be. Anything is possible. Ask yourself, “What is the worst thing that could happen?” If you can handle that possibility, then go for it.

Are you concerned that limiting your clients to women will make it hard to make a living?

No. When I picked “The Women Lawyers Coach” as my business name, I knew it would cut me off from a huge segment of the market i.e. the male lawyer segment and firms that are not comfortable hiring a consultant for their women attorneys and not for their male attorneys. But, it also describes exactly who I am and what I do. My goal is to inspire, encourage, guide and support women lawyers to achieve their professional and non-professional goals.

Tell us something about you personally.

I met my husband 26 years ago. It was love at first sight. We met abroad and didn’t even speak the same language at the time. We’ve been together ever since and have a nine-year-old daughter, Grace. My favorite things are being a mom, traveling, looking at the stars, and seeing women achieve their full potential, however they define that.

When you work with women attorneys, what do you look and/or listen for to know how you can benefit them in their practice?

The first thing I listen for and try to discern is whether she *really* wants to grow her existing practice. If I can hear a client’s desire, whatever it is, then I know she and I can find a way to help her achieve her goals.

The other thing I look for is what makes her unique and what makes her resonate. I believe in staying true to those qualities. I ask her what she likes about her practice, what she doesn’t like, which types of business development activities she enjoys most, what matters to her and what doesn’t matter. That way we can start with the best and get rid of the rest.

What are the 2 or 3 suggestions you have for women attorneys who want to better define their practice and be successful in it?

The way to best develop a practice is unique to each person. It should be built upon one’s strengths and talents, and it should take into consideration one’s other interests, life factors, and even time constraints.

As for defining your practice: Identify the area(s) of law you are really passionate about, the type of clients you enjoy, and the extent to which you want to practice law and balance other interests. Then set out to create a vision that works for you.

Believe in your ability to create the practice you want. Set realistic goals. Surround yourself with the support you need to achieve those goals. It doesn’t matter whether you are in a law firm, the public sector, solo, in-house or somewhere in between. If you know what you want and you carve out a roadmap with goals to get there (and you stick to them), you will arrive.

As for becoming successful in your practice: Do quality work and nurture your relationships. Use your communication and relationships skills to your advantage. State your accomplishments when given the chance and create opportunities to state them if you are not given the chance. Don’t assume your clients and prospective clients know you want their business. Connect with them as people, tell them why you enjoy (or would enjoy) working with them, and make sure they know you want their business. Stay in touch. ▼

Marianne Trost can be reached at marianne@thewomenlawyerscoach.com, 15665 E. Golden Eagle Blvd., Fountain Hills, AZ 85268, 480.225.9367.

**AWLA 2008 Mother Lawyer Breakfasts
June 13, September 26, and November 21.**

Breakfasts are 7:15am-8:30am at the Arizona Club, Chase Building at 201 North Central, 37th Floor, downtown Phoenix. The R.S.V.P. form can be found at: http://www.awla-maricopa.org/AWLA_assets.asp (AWLA Mother’s Group).

Please send your check at least two weeks prior to the breakfast you plan to attend. The concept behind the breakfasts is to provide a venue to discuss ideas and tips on how to balance the demands of motherhood against the demands of being a lawyer.

In the past, have discussed topics such as work commitments of partners, associates, big/small firm and solo attorneys, time commitments of motherhood, personal time, the day to day realities of being a lawyer, alternate legal careers, opinions about children’s schools, daycare/babysitting arrangements for children, career development and marketing ideas. For additional information, please contact **Phoebe Moffatt** at 602-268-4700 or phoebe.moffatt@azbar.org.