

# Nebraska

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## Young Lawyers Section

### Do Prospective Clients Consider You an Expert?

by Christopher Peterson  
Peterson Law Firm, PC, LLO



As attorneys, and certainly as younger attorneys seeking to build a book of business, we need to ask ourselves this all-too-important question: Do prospective clients consider us an expert in our practice area(s)? We all know the answer to the similarly-phrased question of whether we believe ourselves to be experts. But the former question centers on our clients' perception of us and our ability to handle their vitally important, and often complicated, legal matters. What information are we providing our clients with which to calm their fears, demonstrate our expertise and justify our fees?

There are several steps we can take to provide the right information to our clients, helping them perceive us as experts in our chosen area of practice:

1. Get involved in professional groups and organizations related to your practice area. For example, the National Association of Trial Attorneys, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, or a section of the bar association related to your practice area. Use these groups to your advantage and emphasize your involvement in them with clients and on social media.
2. Try to get published. Books and law review articles are great, but if you're not ready to go that route, try blogging about your practice area to demonstrate expertise or contact the NSBA about submitting an article to *The Nebraska Lawyer*.
3. Give speeches/presentations on your practice area and highlight those experiences in your attorney bio.
4. Revise your client intake process. The initial consultation is often your first interaction with clients. Try memorizing your pitch to clients, thus avoiding the "ums" and awkward silences as you decide what to say. The goal of this consultation is to exude confidence and passion about your practice area.
5. Create a professional presence for your practice. Make sure you have a professional website, active social media profiles, professional business cards, and an email address tied to your website domain name (ditch your "@gmail.com" account).

*Welcome to the May/June Edition of the Young Lawyers' Section Page. I'm your Editor, Patrick McNamara. It is beautiful outside, and it can be tough to stay cooped up in your offices all day. One way I try to get some fresh air is to make a few of my phone calls each day while taking a walk. It's a great way to break up the day and clear your mind.*

*We always welcome contributions from young lawyers in the community. Please feel free to contact me at [PMcNamara@OmahaLawGroup.com](mailto:PMcNamara@OmahaLawGroup.com) if you are interested in contributing.*

As younger lawyers, we don't have the benefit of 40 years of experience to prove to our clients our expertise in our practice area. Fortunately, we can demonstrate our expertise in many other ways, putting our clients at ease and allowing them to trust us with some of their most important matters.

*Christopher Peterson received his JD/MBA from the University of Nebraska and is the owner of Peterson Law Firm P.C., L.L.O. He focuses his practice on business, estate planning, litigation, and bankruptcy.*

### Advocacy for the Young Lawyer

by Angela Lennon  
Koenig|Dunne Divorce Law, PC, LLO



We all know how important pro bono work is in our profession. As our Rules of Professional Conduct tell us, every lawyer should aspire to render legal services to those who, because of their financial position, are unable to secure access to the justice system.

As an associate at Koenig|Dunne Divorce Law, divorce is all I do. However, I was recently given a unique opportunity to witness true advocacy that went above and beyond the "aspiration to perform pro bono work" when my firm partnered with the ACLU to file the marriage equality action and represent the plaintiffs in federal court.

Witnessing this level of advocacy, I was inspired to consider how my colleagues can be of service to our community in a meaningful way if they are employed at firms that do not necessarily support traditional pro bono work, or for those attorneys who are not litigators.

First, I would encourage you to find your passion. What inspired you to go to law school in the first place? Is there a certain aspect of justice that tugs at your heartstrings? If you start with the intention to serve your passion, your advocacy will be much more meaningful than simply performing a pro bono task to clear your guilty conscience.

As attorneys, we are uniquely positioned for advocacy. Even if your partners discourage you from taking pro bono cases at this point in your career, or if you feel like you are still getting

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your feet wet in this profession, there are many ways to be an advocate beyond the traditional pro bono case.

- Lobby: Call, email or visit your legislator
- Act as a policy advisor to a non-profit organization
- Speak at a public hearing, whether before the judiciary committee or the city council
- Serve on a board of an organization
- Participate in a leadership role within a state or local bar organization

You don't need permission to perform these acts and this type of advocacy doesn't cost you anything. As a young lawyer, I encourage you to leverage the power of your J.D. and use your position in our community to make an impact (and satisfy those pro bono expectations while you're at it).

*Angela Lennon is an associate attorney at Koenig|Dunne Divorce Law. She is a member of the Nebraska Academy of Collaborative Professionals, regularly contributing to their blog. Angela is also a board member of the Nebraska Women's Bar Association, formerly serving as president. She was a contributor to Divorce in Nebraska: The Legal Process, Your Rights, and What to Expect, published in 2013. You can find more information about Angela's practice and contact her at [www.nebraskadivorce.com](http://www.nebraskadivorce.com).*

## Ode to the Legal Pad

by Patrick McNamara

McNamara Law Firm, PC, LLO

Thank you to whoever invented the legal pad. While I love my Retina iPad, iPhone with super-fast LTE connectivity, and 5mm thin 27" iMac, arguably none of them have had such an impact on my productivity as the lowly legal pad. I



suspect there are not many readers of this magazine who would disagree with me.

Possibly the greatest attribute of the legal pad over modern technology is that you're free to write anywhere on the page. I'll come right out and say it - I <3 the left margin of the legal pad. I love that there's a set space on the side of the page where you can add notes to your notes. And if I want to draw an arrow from one spot on the page to another, who's going to stop me? Try doing that while taking notes in Microsoft Word. Each morning I write a "to do" list on a legal pad. Being able to physically cross off completed tasks throughout the day is a great feeling.

Legal pads are cheap too! A twelve pack of legal pads is cheaper than a twelve pack of cheap beer. I keep a pad in each of my clients' files which I use anytime I meet the client in person or speak with them or opposing counsel on the phone.

One setting in particular where a legal pad excels over advanced technology is the client meeting. Taking notes on a legal pad is infinitely more personal than typing away on a laptop. The laptop creates both a physical and psychological barrier between you and the client. Without being able to see what you're typing, the client may be less willing to divulge important details that could help in your representation. Contrast that with the legal pad, where a client may notice you writing down important details, giving him or her confidence that you are paying attention to and care about his or her issues.

The beautiful simplicity of the legal pad makes it a tool that every attorney should take advantage of. I'll leave the question of the best color legal pad for another day (hint: the answer is white).

*Patrick McNamara is the Principal Attorney at McNamara Law Firm, PC, LLO. Patrick's practice centers on representation of individuals and small businesses in the areas of business formation, litigation and wills, trusts and estates.*

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