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YOUNG LAWYER SPOTLIGHT: RIANA DURRETT

A dedicated industry advocate and native Nevadan, attorney Riana Durrett joined the government affairs team of the Nevada Dispensary Association in February of 2015. In her current role as the association's Executive Director, she is responsible for coordinating the NDA's legislative and policy agendas as well as researching and responding to various issues that affect medical marijuana dispensaries in Nevada and performing crucial community outreach.



A natural leader and a driven attorney licensed in both Nevada and California, Durrett's commitment to the regulation and growth of the medical marijuana industry cannot be understated. As NDA Executive Director, she enjoys the opportunity to facilitate cooperative efforts among NDA members who have invested considerable time and resources into the burgeoning medical marijuana industry in Nevada. In keeping with her dedication to regulating the marijuana industry in Nevada for patients as well as business people, Durrett organized the Nevada Marijuana Council's efforts to work with Senator Farley and

Senator Segerblom on identifying changes that need to be made in the 2017 legislative session to ensure the stability and integrity of Nevada's marijuana industry.

In addition to her duties as NDA Executive Director, Durrett serves as "of counsel" to Connor & Connor, PLLC, a firm that specializes in cannabis law and regulatory compliance. Durrett also gives
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FINDING THE EXCITEMENT IN DISCOVERY

Maidson Zornes-Vela, Esq., Associate with Kemp, Jones & Coulthard, LLC

Discovery. The dreaded "D" word for many litigators. At some point, any new associate faced with a mind-numbing discovery assignment has likely stopped and asked themselves: (a) what shall I do for my next career because this is not what I signed up for when I decided to become an attorney? and (b) wait, what is the point of this?

When wallowing in the lonely and seemingly pointless abyss that can accompany some discovery assignments gladly tasked to the "new kid," it may help to remember that there is a point to discovery, and to focus on its purpose, which more than just obtaining a bunch of mostly irrelevant documents. Discovery provides an opportunity to gain

access to the information that will help tell your client's story and to show why your client should win. Discovery also provides a great opportunity to look for weaknesses in the other side's case – or to find weaknesses in your own case and to plan accordingly.

Although reviewing tens of thousands of documents can seem tedious, keep in mind as you are scrolling through never-ending .pdf's that most cases are built on the documents. While testimony is certainly important, very few cases are won on testimony alone. Often the documents are the foundation upon which many cases are built. You also never know when you will make an exciting discovery (pun intended) in the form of a "smoking gun" document that makes your case – or breaks
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25 TIPS FOR THE NEW LAWYER

This is not going to be easy. But you knew that well before you passed the bar (Congratulations, by the way!). There are a lot of lessons you will need to learn the hard way. Still. It would be nice, wouldn't it, to have a slight edge when starting out as a new lawyer? Perhaps an older, savvier friend to fill you in on subtler codes of conduct or to introduce you to the court clerk. Someone to grab you by the elbow and steer you away from trouble and toward better decisions. Or even a cranky old guy to "teach you a thing or two." We think so, too. So consider this list of tips and truths your friendly kick to the shins under the conference table and, in some cases, a not-so-subtle kick in the pants. We compiled "25 Tips for the New Lawyer" to help you get out of the blocks with the best start possible. Whether you're backed up by an army of support staff and senior partners or braving it solo, soak up some of this sound advice and see if it doesn't help the hard lessons come a little easier. (Psssst. You'll find more than just 25 great tips here—there are also 50+ links to some of Attorney at Work's most popular posts.) - Merrilyn Astin Tarlton

1. There are people around you who know more than you do. **Let them help you.** Contrary to your every instinct, you do not have to know the answer to everything. Besides, nobody likes a smarty pants.
2. As a general rule, the ability an individual has to screw everything up for you is in direct inverse relationship to their pay grade. So keep your staff happy.
3. Your client is always right. (Most of the time, that is).
4. The answer should never be "No, you can't!" Try "Yes, let's figure out how you can."
5. **Return calls promptly.** Really.
6. You are going to have to pay your dues. It may seem the work is beneath you. You may not enjoy it. Others may take credit for it. But to get to the really juicy stuff, you're going to have to carry someone else's brief bag.
7. Try, in everything you do, to teach as well as tell.
8. Before beginning the work, **ask your client or supervisor what success will look like.** Don't just guess. You'll probably be wrong.
9. You are responsible for getting all the facts. Even if people don't want to give them to you.
10. While your client or colleague is in your law office, you are the host. Act like one.
11. **Under-promise and over-deliver.** Never the other way around.
12. Always be just a little bit early for an appointment. If you must be late, call ahead to warn them. It shows that you think they are important. Everyone likes to feel important.
13. It's much easier to look at the big picture first and figure out the little pieces than it is to fiddle with the little pieces and then try to make a decent big picture out of them.
14. **There's a difference between "telling" someone something and "communicating" it.** In the first case, it left your lips. In the second, it left your lips, entered their mind and was understood. You are responsible for the entire cycle.
15. While people around you may be worried about their hourly rate in relationship to other lawyers in your firm, your client is worried about it in the relationship to the value of the work has to them. Try to think like your client. Always.
16. Maintain your instrument. **It is at least as important to rest and renew as it is to work hard and do "important stuff".** In fact, if you neglect vacations you will soon lose the capacity to do the important stuff.
17. Sometimes the best answer is the one someone else thought of. Acknowledge that and give them credit. The long-term payoff will far surpass the momentary glory of feeling like you were the smartest. Bright people will come back to work with you again.
18. Your supervisors, mentor or senior partner isn't your mother or your professor. She or he won't take responsibility for your personal or professional development. That's your job.
19. **When you complete a matter or a task, ask for feedback.** Be clear that you're not looking for flattery—you want to know how to improve next time.
20. It's time to clean up your act online. Potential clients know how to use Google just like you. So do employers, colleagues, reporters and everyone else. Make sure you look (mostly) professional or you'll be your own worst enemy.
21. Offer to help.
22. Other people are busy, too. Value and guard their time as well as your own.
23. Take notes. It help you remember, and it shows people that you believe what they are saying is important enough to write down. (Look them in the eye once in a while, too.)
24. **Say please and thank you.**
25. Remember that clients don't always want a lawyer. Sometimes they just need someone to listen to them.

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Riana Durrett, Exec. Director for NDA & Of Counsel to Connor & Connor

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back to the Nevada legal community by working on pro bono legal cases and pro bono workshops with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT RIANA

Employer / job title:

NDA and "of counsel" to Connor & Connor, PLLC, a firm that specializes in cannabis law and regulatory compliance.

Years as a lawyer / in Nevada:

2008-Present

Family:

Husband, attorney at Juvenile Public Defender's Office, State Assemblyman, James Ohrenschall. Two kids, Ren (4 yo) and Luka (2 yo).

What made you decide to go into the field of law you practice in?

I joined my husband in Carson City for the legislative session, I picked up a contract to lobby for Nevada Dispensary Association and have been interested in the topic ever since then.

How long have you been in the field?

Since February 2015.

What do you love about what you do?

I have enjoyed working with the entrepreneurs and investors who have been successful in their own fields as attorneys, doctors, bankers, etc. who then took a leap into an entirely new industry.

From a legal perspective, working in a new area of law results in the need to frequently change the law as the State and industry learn how to navigate the new industry. I have been able to work with legislators and State regulators to ensure new NRS and Administra-

tive Codes best serve Nevada's needs regarding the industry, the public, and the patients.

The fact that it is a new area of law means it's still developing, which is engaging.

What has been the most challenging part about what you do?

The most challenging part has been juggling the advocacy work for NDA with the legal work I do with Connor & Connor, PLLC, but my work with NDA helps me to be a better attorney representing the industry and my work as an attorney helps me better advocate for my clients' needs.

What has been the most exciting part about what you do?

The most exciting part of working with the Nevada Dispensary Association has been the opportunity to be at the forefront of the changes in medical marijuana law and to work with many already established Nevadans in a group effort to protect their substantial investment of time and resources.

It is has also been exciting to be a part of the movement to address the United State's ineffective prohibition of marijuana. I myself have gone from being horrified at the idea of legalizing drugs to realizing that marijuana is commonly used in United States already and should no longer take up valuable law enforcement resources.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Spending time with my family, traveling with my family, and the occasional get together with good friends and concerts.

What is the best advice you've ever ?

Fake it until you make it. I didn't know the first thing about marijuana when I started lobbying on the issue, but with some hard work and tenacity, I am now running an organization that works to address the industry's concerns and working with an office that does outstanding work on marijuana issues.

Discovery: Getting Something Out of It

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the other side's. Even if you are not fortunate enough to find the "smoking gun" document that earns you praise from the partners and goodwill from the client, there is still always a good chance that you will find at least one or two documents that prove to be helpful to your case.

Before starting any document review project, it also helps to think about and make a list of the issues in the case, which will likely require you to review the facts. Doing this will remind you that you are reviewing documents until your vision blurs to help your client and may give document review a sense of purpose. Knowing what you are looking for also provides context, and will also help you more efficiently review the documents. It is also important to keep in mind that document review means more than just reading the documents. It means that you should be analyzing the documents and looking for anything that explains or supports your client's case. If nothing else, think of document review as an opportunity to play detective and to snoop around in the other side's files. It is always refreshing to come across email chains that have absolutely nothing to do with the case, but nonetheless provide a few minutes of solid entertainment.

Written discovery can also feel mundane, especially when you know that you are unlikely to receive meaningful responses. Based on some advice I received, when drafting written discovery, rather than simply regurgitating definitions and requests you copy and pasted, in

addition to tailoring your definitions and requests to help prove or defend your case, think about the (almost inevitable) objections the other side will raise, and then try to draft your requests to preempt those objections. After all, if you end up having to file a motion to compel, it will help if you have already thought about why your request is legitimate. This also forces you to actively think about the written discovery you are drafting, and may ease some of the tediousness that can accompany this task. More importantly, properly crafted requests will (at least in theory) lead to more useful responses than responses to general, blanket requests.

Although it is highly unlikely that any of you will ever truly love every minute of a document review project, or will be thrilled at the thought of drafting written discovery requests, keeping the overall objectives of discovery in mind, and actively attacking seemingly mindless discovery tasks may help you fully utilize the discovery process and perhaps even learn to appreciate it. At the very least, it will help get you through even the most yawn-inspiring task. And, if all else fails, at least you can find excitement in the fact that discovery assignments help your billables.



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CONGRATULATIONS, NEW YOUNG LAWYERS!

The Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Nevada would like to congratulate the newest members to the State Bar of Nevada! We welcome you to the profession and to the Section. For more information on how to get involved, please contact one your representatives.

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Want More Information about the Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Nevada?

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Its YOUR State Bar and it is YOUR Young Lawyers Section! Join Us!

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