

BCLBE Law Firm Hot Topic: Peter Werner, Cooley By Yao-Cheng Yang, LL.M. Candidate 2017 | November 2, 2016

On October 24, 2016, [Peter Werner](#), partner at Cooley LLP, spoke about what it's like to practice in Silicon Valley. It was not a serious speech or boring esoteric lecture which might make you sleepy, but was instead an interesting, easy to understand, and profound sharing of his experiences as a lawyer.

Practicing law in Silicon Valley and counseling entrepreneurs is not only a fascinating job but also a time-consuming work. As a veteran attorney, Mr. Werner told everyone that the most important thing for lawyers in Silicon Valley is networking. This might seem strange at first to prospective lawyers in the public. Why is networking so important? Isn't it the easiest thing to do? Why is providing a high quality work product or working hard not the most important thing?

In the ecosystem of Silicon Valley, the way entrepreneurs find lawyers, just as with any other of their advisors, is by referral from those whom they already know. To get into that limited group and enhance relationships with present and potential clients, lawyers have to make an effort to network. Of course, good legal service is important too, but it is normally not everything. Conversely, realizing the business context (e.g., keeping up with news about your clients' markets, reading their press releases, visiting their website), having a visible presence, and networking (e.g., having coffee with perspective clients), are three additional material tasks necessary for success.

However, as junior associates, how can one maximize their usefulness to their firm in this capacity? Primarily, this means that junior associates have to pick up the numerous phones and to be the communicating bridge between clients and the more senior attorneys or even partners. In the meantime, giving proper and prompt answers without mistake is also expected. Ultimately, a successful junior associate will need to embrace technology, be concise and accurate in their answers to client inquiries, and do their homework to understand the market context of their clients' needs and desires. A junior associate must always keep in mind that client businesses don't operate in a vacuum but instead in a dynamic and fast-paced market—in other words, they need to be familiar with the business side of things too, not just the legal side.

The content provided by Mr. Werner truly was useful advice for future junior attorneys as well as great insight into the actual day-by-day life of a legal practitioner in Silicon Valley.