

If I knew then what I know now, I would have ...

Martini: Developed my network earlier. I feel fortunate that my career has followed the trajectory it has. I would not change anything with regard to the training and mentorship I received along the way, particularly during my formative years. However, I do wish I had pushed myself out of my introverted comfort zone a bit more when I was a junior lawyer to more robustly develop my network.

As they say, your network is your net worth, particularly when you are in private practice.

Susler: Not only listened to my father's advice but actually followed it. That starts with getting a broader education rather than limiting my focus to what I (naively) thought was all I needed to become a plaintiff's personal injury attorney. Along with that advice, I would have listened to my gut in college and law school and followed up on a nascent interest in business. But I ignored that inner voice because it wasn't related to personal injury. I could not have imagined then that 12 years into my career I would become an in-house business lawyer. And that I would love it far more than I ever liked practicing personal injury litigation.

Martini: Even though it has been a long time since I was in college studying manufacturing and safety engineering, I still look back on those days fondly. I wish I finished my masters and gotten my PhD in industrial engineering when I had the opportunity. If nothing else, it is a body of knowledge that applies to many different careers and businesses, including operations management.

Susler: Taken time off between college and law school. I was focused on being a lawyer and law school was the last remaining roadblock, a necessary evil to get through in order to start practicing law. At that time, school was just a game to me. I believe if I took a year or two off, I would have gotten much more out of law school. I would have been able to be more focused on learning. Maybe I would have learned at an earlier age to listen to my gut about what is best for me.

Martini: When I was younger, I would hear from people older and wiser about how valuable time is, and how it is often what is in the



EXPERTISE WE WISH WE HAD SOONER

Networking and time management top the list

By **CHRISTINA L. MARTINI** and **DAVID G. SUSLER**

shortest supply. As I grow, I find time passes more quickly than ever and it is what I run out of most often. Carefully and consistently planning your days to align with what is most important to you, even on the weekends, is the best way to maximize this precious commodity.

Susler: Been more active in bar associations from the outset of my career. Not until I went in-house did I get involved in the Association of Corporate Counsel. The people I have met, friends I have made and the leadership skills I have gained from being involved in the ACC are invaluable.

Martini: Try and find a way to strike a better balance. With focus, determination and a structure to your day, you can achieve balance. You just need to be willing to create and find joy during the day, in both the big as well as the little moments. They will recharge and rejuvenate you. Focus on what makes your heart sing. There's no need to follow what others do.

Susler: Lessons learned: (1) Always listen to your inner voice, your gut. (2) All of the choices I made led me to where I am today, 35 years into my career and still enjoying it. I have the type of practice I always wanted, even

though it looks different than when I started. I do interesting work; I learn constantly; I make a difference for my clients, and I get to make a difference for others with the DEI work I have done for the past 20 years. I have made good friends and had an opportunity to be a leader in the in-house bar in Chicago.

Last but certainly not least, because of the path I actually did take, I met my wife at one of the law firms I worked at. So, there are a number of things I maybe would have done differently if I knew then what I know now, but knowing what I know now I would not change a thing. [CL](#)

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