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Paradigm™

Rapid rise

Developing Partners Section
finds its footing in short order

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Developing Partners Section finds its footing in short order

By Brian Cox

You're no longer a young lawyer, but you don't yet have the experience of a managing partner.

Instead, you're somewhere in that "messy" middle ground of your career where you're taking on new challenges within your firm such as business development, supervision, mentorship, and management responsibilities. A lot is being thrown at you that you didn't learn about in law school.

So, it's likely you have questions and might find a support network of peers valuable.

The Primerus Developing Partners Section (DPS) is here to help.

At its outset in early 2023, the DPS set an ambitious but measured goal: Create meaningful, impactful, and valuable content for attorneys in the middle stage of their careers.

The intent behind the section's formation was to bridge the gap between Primerus' Young Lawyers Section and its Managing Partners Section by offering substantive programming resources and networking opportunities to attorneys from senior associates to junior and mid-level partners.

To achieve that objective, the section committed to organizing four educational events and four networking events annually.

Two years later, the section can proudly consider that objective met. In a short span of time, the DPS has offered its members a wide range of practical, actionable strategies for law practice management. Its [substantive programs](#) have explored topics such as digital and AI fluency; attracting and recruiting good talent; the art of delegation across the generational divide;



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litigation funding; how to build a book of business; key leadership skills for partners; maximizing profitability; and business development.

The networking events, which are typically on Zoom but also include happy hours at Primerus conferences, are popular, well attended, and dynamic.

“We started with a ‘bang’ thanks to a very strong executive committee,” says Ryan Billings, chair of the section and a partner at the Milwaukee-based law firm of Kohner, Mann & Kailas, S.C. “We’ve accomplished the goals we initially set out to achieve. The question is, what’s the next chapter? What’s the next level up for us?” In answering the question of how to evolve, the section’s leadership is cautious about flooding attorneys with too much content, especially given the terrific demands on their time. The DPS executive committee feels it is currently in “the sweet spot” with the right amount

of content but is aware it needs to continue curating relevant content for attorneys in order to increase involvement and participation.

While participation in the section is easy and the time commitment is minimal, the benefits can be significant, according to Jerome “Jerry” Weitzel, a partner at Kozacky Weitzel McGrath, P.C. in Chicago, who has served on the DPS Executive Committee since the section was created.

“If you participate in all eight of the events, people see you every month and a half and that’s enough to be top of mind,” says Weitzel. “If you’re in the stage of your career when you’re developing your practice and have at your disposal an organization with nearly 150 firms that could potentially send you business, you should take advantage of meeting people at those firms.”

Attorneys who have hit the “middle band” of their career know how to practice law, understand the substantive area of law they practice, and know the nuts and bolts of running their practice. But they are now taking on challenges that are “law adjacent,” according to Billings. They are transitioning into different roles that involve book building, business development, supervision, and firm management.

Questions are certain to arise that might be more comfortably discussed with peers outside of the law firm – such as how best to deal with a mid-level associate who has mishandled a project or how to navigate the delicate issue of a senior partner whose abilities have started to decline.

“Some questions you can ask the people in your firm,” says Billings, “but sometimes you might want to have those conversations with someone who has no role in evaluating you or working with you

going forward – someone who’s a free sounding board that has no economic ties to you.”

In addition to Billings and Weitzel, the DPS Executive Committee is made up of Iker Dieguez (Cacheaux Cavazos & Newton), Melissa Demorest LeDuc (Demorest Law Firm, PLLC), and Daniel Pierron (Widerman Malek, P.L.).

The section’s networking events are designed to offer attendees access to years of experience and hard-earned wisdom.

Another aim is to promote cross-generational collaboration and comprehensive representation across

all levels of practice. The DPS Executive Committee makes a concerted effort to involve representatives from the Young Lawyers Section and the Managing Partners Section in events with the intent of providing a range of perspectives.

“You put people from different groups in the same room and ask them to talk about something they all care about and it’s amazing the results you see,” says Billings. An additional reason that the Developing Partners Section was formed was to address succession issues when well-known Primerus lawyers who have been mainstay members of the organization since the beginning start to retire. The section hopes to get out in front of that transition by getting the next

generation of Primerus lawyers interested, involved, and invested.

DPS offers the opportunity for members to forge deep relationships with peers of a similar age that can last the length of an attorney’s career.

“We really want to create a venue and a forum where we can connect with people who are close to our own age and start forming relationships that can last for the next couple of decades,” says Billings. 

[For more information on upcoming events, visit the Developing Partners Section of our Practice Groups page at Primerus.com](#)



Mission statement drives Developing Partners Section

The Developing Partners Section is dedicated to two purposes: (1) creating program content and networking opportunities for Primerus lawyers in the “middle band” of their careers (e.g., from senior associate to junior/mid-level partner); and (2) promoting cross-generational collaboration and

comprehensive representation across all age and practice levels.

It serves as a place to learn and grow for lawyers who are taking on new challenges such as business development, mentoring, and management responsibilities within their firms. The section aspires to facilitate the successful transition of lawyers from

young to seasoned attorneys within their firms and within Primerus, and to ensure the long-term success of Primerus as an active and effective source of referrals by encouraging participation at all levels and providing opportunities to develop leadership skills and visibility within Primerus for the next generation of managing partners.

