

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE'S MENTORING MOMENTS

Episode 04: Candi Taggart and Ana Crawford

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Intro: This is Molly Crabtree and welcome to Porter Wright's Women's Leadership Initiative's Mentoring Moments. I'm excited to share this interview between two of our Cincinnati partners, Candi Taggart and Ana Crawford. From the beginning you can hear the pride and Candi's voice as she introduces Ana. The two women discuss their relationship and the important role being a mentor to others has played in Candi's career.

Candi: Hello, this is Candi Taggart. And I am sitting with Ana Crawford in her big partner office here in Cincinnati, looking out her window up towards the hills of Clifton, Ohio, where the University of Cincinnati is located. So Ana became a partner this year, which I'm very, very, very pleased about. And her office looks amazing. So we have a good sight for our conversation today.

Ana: But we're really here to talk about Candi. He's been practicing law for how many years now.

Candi: I think it's 45. My 45th law school reunion is this year. So, which doesn't seem possible.

Ana: No. Well, I've been practicing law for 10 years. So that's seems impossible, either.

Candi: It really doesn't. And Ana and I started out in different offices. Ana was up in our Dayton office originally, and I've been down here in Cincinnati, since I got to Porter Wright, which is now like 17 years ago, which doesn't seem possible, either that it was that long ago. But we worked together on some projects before we actually became mentor and mentee. We were trying to figure out when we actually became formal mentor and mentee,

Ana: I think about five years ago.

Candi: Yeah, I think it was, too. But before that, we were kind of informally together on a was in litigation in Dayton. And I'm, of course in litigation here. And so there were some projects that we started on, actually about 10 years ago, almost.

Ana: Right, we looked back and to try and track it. And it was December of 2023.

Candi: No, 2013.

Ana: Right.

Candi: So we started on a project, a big case that we worked on together. And amazingly, that case is still in existence with some of the other parties in it. We were fortunate we got our client out relatively quickly. But still, probably five or six years we were in that case. Right compared to some of the other parties who are still there. That was was quick. But we have a lot of stories and just comical moments from that litigation that we will probably keep remembering for a long time.

Ana: Right. But I think one of the biggest things I learned from you in dealing with that case, in particular, we had a difficult opposing counsel. And I really learned in those scenarios, how to channel my professional side. And even if you're being, they tried to drag you down into the mud, to try and remember, anything you say could be attach to a court filing. So especially if anything in writing, make sure you are a little cooler headed when you put together your response and make sure you keep it professional and how you want your reputation reflected.

Candi: Absolutely. And Ana does that so well. There there were times in that lawsuit the plaintiff's attorney was just I mean crazy and vilifying us and our client, and it was difficult to keep that professional pose and maintain your calmness. That is one strength that Ana has, that I have benefited from working with her. Because Ana is - she is very calm when things happen that are unexpected or not what you wanted. She has the ability to stay very calm. And that has helped me because I get a little more worked up about things. My personality is a little more outgoing and latching on to something and going forward with it. So it's been good that Ana and I have been together as mentor and mentee because I have been able to like take some breaths and try to say, Okay, I'm going to I'm going to act like Ana does in this situation. So we definitely had those moments.

Ana: And those were certainly challenging cases. But our opposing counsel doesn't practice law anymore.

Candi: No, he doesn't. So we came out on the on the best end of that always considered. So one thing we have in common, of course, is that we both have families, and both of us have two sons. So Ana's sons, our little guys now. I had my little guys, my oldest son is now 40 years old. So I can't say little guys anymore. But we have been able to talk about balancing career and family. Which is hard. I mean, there's, there is no easy way around it, there are ways you can get support from family and your employer that are helpful. So we have been able to talk through some of those issues.

Ana: Yeah, and I really appreciate Candi, that when I talk to you about those issues, I feel like you're not just telling me what's best for my career, but also giving me advice on what's best for me. Rather than what might be best for the firm or what might, you know, launch my career. And so I really appreciate that. We recently had a conversation the other day about an opportunity I had, and I was glad to be able to call you and talk through it with you without thinking you're trying to pressure me either way.

Candi: Yeah, I'm glad you feel able to do that. And I'll always try to be, you know, very honest, and want you to take into consideration your role as a mom and a wife, along with your role, as you know, and an outstanding lawyer. So I'm glad that we can talk about those things.

Ana: Well, Candi, you've been a mentor to lots of different people in the community. And often I run into so many people who sing your praises. And I feel very fortunate to have had you as a mentor for as long as I have. What do you think is the most rewarding aspect of being a mentor?

Candi: I do like being a mentor, even now I've cut back on my practice of law. But I still want to stay engaged here in the office because I love mentoring Ana and some of our other litigation associates here. I was involved in the Supreme Court's mentoring program, a formal program for probably 10 years or so. And I still do see some of my former mentees who now have grown up into big time lawyers, and I'll see them at a bar association function or in a in a case and it's always fun to to reminisce about when they were, I call them "baby lawyers," just passing the bar. And so I do I do enjoy mentoring, I think it's, it's a time when I can give back. I've been fortunate to have a good career and have a lot of good things happen in my former firm, and here at Porter Wright. I like giving back I like helping younger lawyers learn how to get their balance in the courtroom, and how to handle difficult situations that might come up in a deposition or hearing or things of that nature. So I really liked that role as a mentor. I didn't have a woman mentor. I was the first woman lawyer in my firm when I came out of law school. And I was the first woman partner there. So my mentors were men, which was great. I had great mentors. I had great trial attorneys who took me under their wing and helped me get on my feet. So I'm really happy to help younger people do that now and I'm glad I'm can do it with Ana woman-to-woman and I've also been a mentor for lots of male associates too. And I enjoy that as well.

Ana: Right. So a lot of things must have changed over the course of your career.

Candi: Oh, yes.

Ana: What for women in the law?

Candi: Oh, yeah.

Ana: What do you think it's been the biggest change?

Candi: I think the biggest change? Was there just more women trial attorneys out there now. And we're not looked upon with a little bit of suspicion or someone not understanding why we took on these roles. I think law school admissions are, I think tipping the scales. I think there are more women in law school now and more women, I think are wanting to be trial attorneys. And I think that's made a big difference in how we as women are viewed when we're in the courtroom.

Ana: Is there anything that you see that hasn't changed with respect to women in the law?

Candi: Well, I think one thing that hasn't changed is I think that it's still very important for us to remember that we are balancing and I don't know I know men are much more involved in raising families now than they were 45 years ago. But I think one thing that hasn't changed for women's I think still, we're still the principal parent involved when the child is sick, or there's an event that comes up or planning family events and things like that. I don't know that that's ever going to change. Maybe it shouldn't change, we do it really well. So maybe that's why we keep doing it. But that's one thing I haven't seen change is kind of that, that situation where we're torn in a couple of different directions sometimes.

So let me ask Ana, because Ana is at the point now where she is going to be a mentor to people she already is, to some extent, to some of the younger people in our Cincinnati office. But what advice would you give to your mentees, Ana, when you are a mentor?

Ana: I think it's important to find your style, especially in litigation, there's a lot of different ways to do things. But the best attorneys are the ones who are authentic to who they are. And that

you might be able to do something that a lawyer who you've learned from, who has a completely different style and personality can't do. And you need to figure out what you do, and do it the best way.

Candi: I think that's just great advice. I mean, that will that will help younger associates a lot. And I'm really happy that Ana is here in our Cincinnati office. We've got some great younger people on our litigation team. And I think they're going to be doing really good things in the coming years. So I'm looking forward to that.

Ana: Yeah. Well, it's good talking to you too. Candi,

Candi: We get to see each other. We see each other in the office. I'm not in as much as I used to be, but we go to events together. We have a family connection that just came up we just realized outside of the office, so that's made it fun, too. So it's really been a pleasure to be Ana's mentor. I'm very proud of what she's accomplished. And she is on the right track to do some really great things.

Ana: Thanks, Candi. I really have enjoyed being your mentee. Thanks Ana.

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