

ABOVE THE BAR

MEET SIX LAWYERS COMMITTED TO THEIR CLIENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

What makes a great attorney? Someone who understands a client's needs and strives to meet them. A person who can handle multiple cases at one time and give each of them the attention it deserves. An individual who steps outside of the workplace to donate time and talents to benefit the community. You'll find such traits in these outstanding lawyers.

SUSAN PETERSEN

Petersen & Ibold

BY LYNNE MEYER

In his New York Times best-selling book *The Tipping Point*, author Malcolm Gladwell identifies connectors as one of three types of people who can make things happen. Gladwell says connectors are "hubs" that have wide professional and social circles.

Susan Petersen is most definitely a connector, and her list of honors proves it. She was recently named to the Million Dollar Advocates Forum, considered one of the most prestigious groups of trial lawyers in the United States. She is president of the Ohio Women's Bar Association (OWBA), and she was selected as one of Ohio Super Lawyers' Rising Stars.

Petersen credits connecting with others as the key to her success. "To start, you have to be good at what you do. That's the foundation," she says. "However, in law, I strongly believe that connections define the level of your success."

Petersen doesn't advertise or solicit business. The reason she doesn't



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advertise, she points out, is that most people don't look in the phone book when they need a lawyer. "They ask people they know and trust for their recommendation or referral. For that reason, my reputation and my connections are critical," she says.

Petersen first learned the importance of networking during her previous career in television news. "I knew that good connections got you good stories. Connections helped you get your foot in the door. You had to know people, and people had to know your name."

Petersen believes everyone is a connection. "I have fostered [them] throughout my life – from my news career, family and friends, college and law school acquaintances." She adds neighbors, moms from her children's school and her hair stylist to the list. "Everyone knows someone, and you never know who is going to put you in touch with whom."

Petersen feels law remains a male-dominated field. She says the number of female partners, compared with male partners, is relatively low, and the number of female trial attorneys is even lower. She acknowledges that professional bonds with male attorneys are essential and thinks networking is extremely important for female lawyers.

She believes the face of law is changing somewhat with women making up half of law school graduates these days.

Petersen is using her position as president of the OWBA to help to foster relationships among female lawyers in Ohio. "I am working diligently to help my female colleagues realize and understand how integral connections are to one's success," she says.

Petersen gives back to the community through OWBA. "We have a scholarship fund and several other events to benefit worthwhile causes," she says. She'll also be raising money and lacing up her tennis shoes to participate in the Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure. Chances are good she'll be making connections with everyone she meets while she walks.

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