

Member Spotlight - Mindy Morton



Name: Mindy Morton
Job / Title: Partner
Company: Procopio LLP
Industry: Legal

Description of me:

I'm a trial attorney by day and I am also active in the community. At work, my practice focuses on internet and intellectual property litigation. I am honored to litigate cutting-edge cases at the intersection of technology and free speech issues. I also handle trade secrets, patent, trademark and other intellectual property cases.

I'm motivated by my work, but also by my community service. I'm an active member of the Santa Clara Bar Association—I served as its president in 2012—and previously served as the Board Chair for Schola Cantorum, a nonprofit community chorus. I love singing! I've sung with Schola Cantorum since 2001, and I also sing with other attorneys in Off the Record, an a cappella group I founded. I am the co-director of the Lyric Theatre Victorian Carolers as well (yes, we do sing in bonnets and big skirts).

Helping women advance in their careers is a passion of mine. I founded a stiletto networking group for women attorneys. I've really enjoyed my engagement with the CLUB, as its first Programming Director and Director of Community and now my board role as the VP of Operations.

When I'm not building professional or vocal communities, I volunteer with the alumni organizations for UC Berkeley and Yale and cheer on the Cal Golden Bears.

Q: What needs to happen to get more women in leadership roles?

Mindy: First, companies need to focus on eliminating the effects of unconscious biases and create an inclusive culture. Second, we need to sponsor promising women on the path to leadership and make sure they have the skills to succeed. Third, women need to focus on finding an authentic way to increase their power and influence.

Q: What is one piece of advice about navigating your career that you wish you knew earlier?

Mindy: Keep in touch with everyone! Seriously, they don't teach business development in law school, but they should. You can be an amazing attorney, but it isn't enough. If you have your own clients, you add value and you have more control over your schedule. Relationships are crucial in any career—technical expertise is not enough.

Q: What role has mentorship played in your career?

Mindy: Without a doubt, I wouldn't be where I am today if people had not taken an interest in me and my career. All of my mentors have been men! A few months after I started practicing law in New York, one of the senior partners at my firm sat down with me after I wrote my first reply brief. He spent over an hour explaining to me the differences between an opposition brief and a reply brief. 20 years later, I still talk about that moment and I am still grateful. I learned the correct way to write a reply brief, but more importantly, I learned the importance of teaching and mentoring, and the effect that an hour of time can have. Later in my career, Jay Fowler coached me through my first deposition, my first preliminary injunction hearing, and my first jury trial. He gave me the space to make mistakes and then to learn from them. Because of his mentoring and encouragement, I won my first jury trial and appeal, and I ran successfully for the Santa Clara County Bar Association Board of Trustees. Thanks to him, I am also now the proud owner of a pair of season tickets for the San Jose Sharks.

Q: How have you grown your professional network?

Mindy: I joined the CLUB and started a stiletto network of outside and inside counsel within the CLUB a few years ago. I also grow my network through singing. I think the best way to approach networking is to find something you are passionate about. You don't have to golf to be a good networker—you just have to share an authentic interest in something. People will respond to your passion.

Q: What is your best advice for others?

Mindy: Don't be afraid to fail. We don't learn from our successes, we learn from our failures. If you haven't failed, you haven't stretched yourself enough. Dream big, and if it doesn't work, pick yourself up and try again.

Q: How has your leadership style changed and why?

Mindy: When I was younger, I talked a lot. I thought leadership meant knowing the right thing to do and then persuading others that I was right. I'm still extroverted, but I now know that listening is so much more important. Having the best ideas doesn't make you a good leader. True leadership is encouraging and empowering a group to come together to find a solution.

Q: What does leadership mean to you?

Mindy: Leadership is leading by example and by doing rather than by saying. Not being afraid to speak up about things but at the same time making sure that people around the table have the chance to have their voices heard. Knowing when to speak and when to listen. Empathy is critical, as is ensuring others around the table feel that you have heard them. I took some non-defensive communication classes years ago, and practicing active listening has helped me become a better leader and a better lawyer.

Q: What are ways that you have balanced career, personal, and other interests?

Mindy: I think it is impossible to achieve a true balance—there are always competing interests and the time you give to each is never equal. I am the proud mom of a one year old daughter, Aerin, and I do my best to spend time with her each morning and evening. I'm also a litigation partner with two upcoming trials. It's never easy to fit everything in. Different parts of your life will take priority at different times. Before Aerin was born, I focused on business development and growing my networks and I was able to attend a lot of evening events. These days, most nights I am home singing "The Wheels on The Bus" to my daughter. Now, I am much more selective about business development and I think I am more efficient. I don't practice "random acts of networking" anymore, but instead I carefully select events that I think will be the most valuable for me. I try not to schedule multiple evenings in a row. I also make sure to set aside time for choir rehearsal every week, because personal time is crucial. I want my daughter to grow up knowing she can be whoever she wants to be, and that means setting an example for her by achieving my goals.

Q: Tell us something about yourself that is a fun fact.

Mindy: Singing is a large part of my life, and one of my longtime idols is Sting. A few years ago, I was lucky enough to attend a sound check before one of his concerts, and I actually sang "Englishman in New York" on stage with him.

Q: What do you like to do to unwind?

Mindy: Cheer on the California Golden Bears and the San Jose Sharks. I also have a song lyric for every occasion.

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