



Episode 114: Networking 101

- Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today, we're talking about something everyone needs to think about, networking. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are, Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the Catapult Conference. Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave [a review](#) on iTunes. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form on LawSchoolToolbox.com](#), and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.
- Alison Monahan: Welcome back. Today, we're talking about a topic every law student needs to think about, networking. Whether you're an extrovert or an introvert, this episode is for you. Now, I know "networking" is a bad word for a lot of folks, and it might even cause some anxiety when you hear it. Some people, seeing a networking event on your calendar ... it can make you sigh loudly and start looking for excuses to get out of it. I mean, we've all had those days, when it takes a ton of motivation to get dressed up and go out to a networking event to meet new people, even when the couch and the DVR are calling your name. But in this current job market, legal networking is really important. So, we want to actually help you change your perspective on networking, right here. Networking isn't just about stuffy functions where everybody dresses up and wears suits and makes boring small talk. In fact, you don't even have to do it in person. And you shouldn't really have to decide to network. You shouldn't have to plan to network. Network's basically just living, and it should be part of your daily or weekly ritual in law school.
- Lee Burgess: Great, so now that we've got everyone's buy-in that this is important ... before we dive into the nitty gritty, let's talk a little bit about how networking really led to you and I starting even a law school toolbox.
- Alison Monahan: Right, because I mean I think that was at a point where both of us had just started something pretty new, we kind of weren't sure where it was necessarily going to lead us, and I know at least for me, I was basically talking to anybody who would talk to me ...
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: I mean really that was just to get out of the house. I was sitting alone in my kitchen, you know, literally working at my kitchen table, on my laptop, and at some point ... you know, you need to talk to other people.

Lee Burgess: It's true. It's good to get out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so I think, I mean, the way that we met, is we really met on Twitter. I think I had posted an article and you sent me something saying, "Hey you know, you might be interested in this article I wrote on the same topic," and I went and looked at your website and I was like, "Oh, this person seems, you know, pretty knowledgeable, pretty reasonable ... wouldn't mind meeting them."

And then it turned out that we actually lived, like, a few blocks from each other.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah ... and both loved coffee. So ...

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: We naturally then went for coffee, and the rest is history. But that leap of faith and that willingness to just send that direct message, or, you know, to share a link really led to us finding out that we had a ton in common about how our philosophies around what we were both doing, really meshed with each other.

Alison Monahan: Right, and people might hear this story and thing "Oh, well, you know, you just sent that one link, and it's all magic, and you just happened to hit it off." But, I mean I don't know about you, but I had a lot of coffee first dates.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You know, business dates. Like, I talked to a lot of people, for coffee. And some of those people, you know, are in the same space, and I'm still friendly with them, but it's not ... you know, I think part of the thing about networking is, rarely ... you know, it's sort of like dating. Rarely is that first swipe on Tinder going to be your lucky one ...

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Alison Monahan: I mean maybe it is, but you know ... it's the same thing. You've got to kiss a lot of frogs in the networking arena before you find your prince.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and we didn't decide to start The Law School Toolbox on our first coffee date. I think that's the ...

Alison Monahan: No, that was actually the second one.

Lee Burgess: It was the second ... we at least made it to lunch ...

Alison Monahan: Yeah ...

Lee Burgess: By the time we decided to start a business.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think it was actually at the end of lunch, to be technically correct. So, I mean this was kind of like getting married after a blind date.

Lee Burgess: A little bit.

Alison Monahan: And it worked out, but you know, I think you've got to put yourself into these positions, where if you never go on that first coffee date, or you never ... and I mean, let's face it. Most people on Twitter may or may not respond to your unsolicited link. I mean, people email me links all the time, and they might be amazing, but I'm probably not necessarily going to meet them right now, because that's just not feasible.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: But, you know, a lot of these are kind of low-impact ways that you can reach out to people.

Lee Burgess: And I think the great lesson here is to try and say "yes," you know, try and look for those opportunities to connect with people, because you don't know who's going to be meaningful. I mean, we joke this is a lot like dating, but I almost didn't go out with my husband on a first date ...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I love that story.

Lee Burgess: ... and that would have been a huge mistake. Clearly changed the trajectory of my life. But, you know, I actually had a moment where I'm like, "Ugh, I can make time for this." ... I had this philosophy at the time of like, trying to say "yes" to things. You know, when opportunities presented themselves, I tried to say "yes." And, I'm glad that I was in that head space, because I may not have said "yes" to going out with my husband, but I think networking or building your network, or just being open to meeting new people ... you kind of have to have this philosophy of just saying "yes." You know, if somebody reasonable ... who you think you might have something in common with ... one you chat on the phone, or you know, share some information, or if you're a local, have coffee ... you can spare that time, you just don't know what the outcome may be.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think sometimes people view this in a very transactional sort of way, I mean ... a little bit less for lawyers and law students, but certainly business people and business students have a real tendency to do this, where they immediately sort of evaluate "Does Lee possibly have anything that could be helpful to me?" ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: ... and if they don't immediately see like, "Oh, yes," then they don't want to talk to you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But, you know, I don't think that. I personally find that a pretty annoying approach to life, but if you've ever been at a party with a lot of MBA students, that's kind of how they ...

You know it literally ... you can see them kind of filtering through like, "Okay, does this person have anything to offer me?"

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: And if the answer is "no" they just walk off. And it might turn out, you know, if they dug a little deeper, they might have found out something else. I mean, a friend of mine has funny stories about ... he's a professor now, but he used to be a consultant at BCG, and he's like, "The reaction that I get if I tell them I'm a philosophy professor, versus, if I tell them 'Oh yes, you know, now I'm a professor, but I do business, blah blah blah, and I used to be a consultant at BCG'," he gets a totally different reaction, but he's the same person.

Lee Burgess: That's interesting.

Alison Monahan: So, I mean a part of that I guess is, you know, present yourself in a way that makes people want to talk to you, but ... I don't know, I find that level of transactional behavior, when people are thinking about networking just to be a little obnoxious, personally.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I think that you don't know enough to know if somebody has something to offer you. I mean, even if at first glance, you may not think that you have professional things in common, if you have personal things in common, somebody could still remember you when somebody approaches them for needing a lawyer, or with a job opportunity, or things like that.

I mean, we ... especially in the legal community ... we're always being asked for referrals, and do we know somebody here, or there, or who does something, or who works somewhere, and part of it is just, like, keeping in mind, you know, who is in our community that we can connect people with.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: And part of it's just meeting people. You just need to know who's out there.

Alison Monahan: It's meeting people, and it's also having those people be top-of-mind ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: ... And so, I think we'll probably talk about this in the course of this episode, but, you know, just having a one-off coffee meeting with someone is probably not going to be, you know, a lasting lifetime relationship.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: But, if you can keep in touch with that person ... and you know, networking is a two-way street. You've got to be thinking about, "What do I have to offer this person, why would they ever want to speak to me again?" And if it's something ... you know, one of the things that can be really valuable but also intimidating, is something like an informational interview.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: So, if I'm a law student, and I have an interest in a certain area of law ... you know, there may be people in my area that I'm interested in meeting, and learning from. And there are ways to go about doing this, that are actually very effective. I have a whole series on the Girl's Guide to Law School site that I wrote a long time ago, complete with scripts, and everything else, that you can use ... But after that first meeting, which can be great, you know, you need to be thinking about, "How can I stay top-of-mind for this person?" ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: ... so that maybe later they want to talk to me, or you know, help me. And so, it could be even something as simple as sending them an article that you've seen. I mean, that's something I just kind of do by nature all the time. I'm constantly sending people articles.

A friend of mine who has kids is like, "Why are you always reading all these articles about parenting?" I'm like, "I don't know, I just saw it and thought it had relevance to your three-year-old." She's like, "Yeah, it's really weird ... " she's like, "I get more articles from you about parenting tips, than like anyone who has kids."

Lee Burgess: Well, as a mom in your network, I appreciate those articles.

Alison Monahan: No, she's like "Yeah, they're always really interesting and like really on point, but like how do you even find this stuff?" I was like, "I don't know, I just see it, and I think like, 'Oh, this might be interesting, you know, seem to be relevant to your kid.' Like, 'I'll send it on over.'"

And you know, that's a great way, in a professional context, to keep yourself top-of-mind, and it's really easy. If you're reading this stuff anyway, or you know, you come across a law review article that relates to something you talked about in this informational interview, I can pretty much guarantee you, the person who works in this area would be really happy to get that.

Lee Burgess: Yep, I think that that's really true. And, you know, if you are the person who is kind of driving the relationship ... say it's like a more of a mentor-mentee networking relationship ... If you are the, let's say the mentee ... so the person who is a law student or a young lawyer, and you are looking to engage with the more senior person, I have one person in our network who is in law school ... and if she's listening to the podcast, she will know who she is ... who is excellent at following up for kind of, networking, and just keeping in touch, and suggesting a coffee date, or checking in and letting me know how her summer internship is going ... And it's not like she's needy or that she needs something, I find it really pleasant.

I'm like, "Oh, it's so nice to see her name in my inbox, and to hear how she's doing." And I enjoy having coffee, but I am super busy, and I am actually really bad at remembering to check in with other people sometimes, because life gets a little crazy, and so I appreciate, you know, her kind of staying on top of the relationship, and then I get the benefits of still getting the relationship, too.

And, it's not annoying, it's really nice. So ...

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: ... you know, remembering that, that there is a way to just kind of engage with someone and just be in their top-of-mind, keep them apprised of what's going on, say hello ... but don't worry that it's being oppressive ... most people will be like "Oh, that was so nice to hear from so-and-so, who sent me that link, I did find that interesting, maybe we should go have coffee."

Alison Monahan: Right, absolutely, and I think that's actually one really easy place where a lot of people kind of drop these relationships is, if you go out for coffee with someone, or they talk to you on the phone, or even if they give you advice in an email, one thing that makes a really enormous difference ... from the perspective of the person who is kind of helping you ... is to give them the outcome, you know?

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: So, sometimes someone will write to me, and they'll say, you know they'll ask me a question about something, and I'll write them back, because why not? You know it take a few minutes, maybe I can help them. And then sometimes it's a year later and they write and they say, "Hey, know, I really appreciated your advice on this, I just wanted to let you know, this was the outcome," you know. Say, for example, I transferred schools, and I'm much happier in my new school, and I really appreciate the advice you gave me about how to do that. That's great. You know if I ever hear from that person again, I'm super happy to talk to them, because I know that they actually took action, they implemented my advice, and then they care enough to follow back up and let me know what happened.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. It's so true. I mean, it's just thoughtful. It's just being a thoughtful person, you know? You oftentimes do these types of relationships with, you know, your friends or family, even people you don't see very often, and in your professional world, you can build similar relationships just say like "Oh, you popped into my head, I'm going to like, send you a note, I'm going to follow up and let you know how this went," you know. It's all just like good warm fuzzy stuff.

Alison Monahan: Right, I mean basically networking is really building your community.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: And, you know your community may have really close ties, and then these looser ties. And ironically, they found that people with these looser ties ... so it's not just, you know, your immediate family, or your significant other, or your really close friends ... but if you have a broad network, that actually enables you to more easily find a job, for example, if you need it, because these loose ties are people who are more likely to have information you don't already have.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: You know, I mean you and I probably have a lot of the same information about what's going on in the world, you know. You and your husband, you know, have similar ideas about what's going on, you have similar people you talk to, but, if you think about someone that maybe is a professional contact that we're friendly with, that we don't talk to all the time, they may have a totally different idea of what's ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: ... going on in the world. And so that's really what helps people ultimately get these jobs.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Yeah, I think that that's really interesting. So now that hopefully folks have bought into the importance of this. Why don't we dig into some of the nitty gritty about, kind of, "What is networking, and how do you do it?"

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: So, as we've kind of discussed, networking is the act of just connecting with people, and it's an opportunity to build your community. And I think it's important to think of it as a community, and not just as a professional network, because having that broad definition of community means that these connections can serve you in a lot of different ways.

Oftentimes now—Oh, go ahead.

Alison Monahan: No, I was just going to say, I think community is really the key, because sometimes people get ... again, like really focused on, "I have to just meet lawyers. Got to meet lawyers, got to meet lawyers." It's like, well, who hires lawyers?

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: Other people.

Lee Burgess: Right. Yep.

Alison Monahan: Maybe some of those people could be helpful, maybe they know other people who could be helpful.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah, and I think the other thing to think about, is oftentimes through networking, you're just connecting with people who you have things in common with. It's just like making new friends ... So, like, Alison and I were talking about when we met ... I mean, we were both writing about similar stuff, so I was sure we had something in common. Turned out we had a lot more in common than just writing about similar things. But, that was enough to have something to talk about, so you knew we could go to coffee, and we'd have something to talk about.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly, and I think ... that's also a key, is it could just be one small thing. You know you really only have to find one piece to connect around, at least initially.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And so, I think that's something that can be intimidating, if someone's at an event or something, and you think like, "Oh, I've got to like find the perfect person to talk to." Well, I'll tell you what my strategy was, when I was at like, networking lawyer events when I didn't ... or really any kind of networking event when I didn't know people, I would just stand by the food ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Because you know what? If you're standing by the food, you have something to talk about.

Lee Burgess: It's true.

Alison Monahan: Because, someone who comes up and they're like, looking like maybe they want to talk to someone but they don't know how to get it started, you can like, "Hey, have you tried this particular brioche?" Or whatever, you know?

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: It's amazing, like, give it a shot.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And then suddenly, you've got something in common you can talk about.

Lee Burgess: Yep, I think that's a really, really good point. And I think when you think about meeting new people and networking, the breadth of relationships that can be valuable is so, so expansive, that it's important to just keep in mind that ... sure, somebody you meet might become a mentor, sure somebody might become a potential client, sure somebody might become a potential referral, but you just don't know. Just be open to this huge network, you know, and different times of your life, different people will become more meaningful to you, you know? Even, if you think about friendships, like you probably have friendships that come in and out of your life when you have more things in common about what's going on, or when you need something that somebody is in a position to help you with ... and as you build kind of this professional community, I think it's just important to keep in mind that you just don't know what these relationships are, but a variety of relationships will serve you at some point.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think that's particularly key if you're in law school ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: ... because, you know you're in law school, and it all kind of seems like fun and games, and you go out to Bar Review Night with these people, and you hang out with them, and you go to, you know, the law school prom, or whatever it is. But ultimately, these are the people who will be your professional contacts. And it's amazing, if you sit and look five or ten years down the road, what people will end up doing.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's true. Invariably, someone from my law school class just announced they're running for congress ...

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Lee Burgess: ... somewhere in the Midwest. Yeah, so you never know.

Alison Monahan: No, you know, I mean I have tons of people who worked in the White House, and government, and like all different kinds of things. Would I have necessarily predicted like, "Oh, that person who end up doing that?" No.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: So, you know, it can't be like, "Oh, I'm going to try to be friends with this person, because I know that they're going to end up doing x, y, or z," that's not really

the way it works. But, I mean I think ... and part of this is really about your reputation in law school ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: ... another one of those dirty words, but I think, you know, being a person who's generally personable, likable, not a jerk ... these can actually pay off a lot, in the long run.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, because, in fact yesterday I had an email chain from a girlfriend from law school, to kind of a group of us who were friends, looking for a lawyer, and she's back east, but it was a lawyer that you'd need to be, like a local lawyer, and we're still her network of people ... who she reaches out to, to try and find a referral, you know ...

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.

Lee Burgess: ... so of course, I'm going to be like, "Oh, well here are the people we use in our business," or "Here's someone else I know who does this sort of work," or "What price point are you looking for, I have different options for different price points." I mean, this is how the real-world works. You want to have those relationships ongoing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely, and I think lawyers, as you say, are just constantly ... you will be that person that everyone in your life comes to for a referral ...

Lee Burgess: Oh yeah.

Alison Monahan: ... and so, you know, that also is something you need to start building up. Who are the people that I trust? Who are the people that I would choose not to refer business to, you know?

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Monahan: Those are equally valid sides ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: ... sides of the same coin.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's always good to have ... everybody should have a family law lawyer they can refer somebody to, I think employment ... everybody needs an employment lawyer they can refer somebody to. In the bay area, real estate lawyers ...

Alison Monahan: Real estate. Immigration.

Lee Burgess: Immigration ...

Alison Monahan: Criminal ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah, oh yeah, criminal defense, like DUIs and stuff like that ... you always want to have somebody who can fix a DUI for somebody else, so it is pretty funny, but you start to have kind of a list of your go-to people. You know, employment, plaintiff side, employment, defense side ... and it's nice, because I know that my list of people, I feel really good about, and so, if you email me for a lawyer, I can be like for a lawyer I can be like, "Yeah, I either went to law school this person or I know them professionally, and they have a great reputation, like I think you're safe contacting this person, I believe they say. And that's important to know, and I and it's important for me to keep up with their career so I know what kind of work they're doing and make sure that they could still be those referrals for me.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. And I think what you're describing is something that anyone who's in the legal field should aim to be, which is that trusted resource.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You know, for obviously the type of work that you're doing, but also for other people to come to you and say, "Who do you trust?" "Who should I talk to?"

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Because, you know, and for me I didn't go to law school at a local school in the bay area so people know that oh, you're in San Francisco, and they ask me for referrals, but usually the first thing I do is I email you.

Lee Burgess: Right!

Alison Monahan: "Hey Lee, do you have a family lawyer in Alameda that you could recommend?"

Lee Burgess: Right. And then oftentimes I'll say, "No, but I can ask my family law friend who practices in this part of the Bay Area for her list because she's going to have someone ...

Alison Monahan: Right ...

Lee Burgess: ... in Alameda, I mean, that's how this works and ...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I get random stuff ... "Hey, my friend's boyfriend just got detained by immigration in a specific area of Arizona." I mean, that seems kind of random. Do I personally know someone who can deal with that? No, but I'm literally one degree connected, from probably two or three people who do know the answer to that.

Lee Burgess: Exactly, exactly and it's that chain of connection, that chain of ... I don't know what the best word is ... but that you have some faith, that who you're going to find through that chain of personal relationships is going to be legitimate, and serve your connection well.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and many of those people I may have met personally once or twice, but even those one or two times, it makes me feel like they're a real person, I followed their work I know what they do, I trust their judgment. That's the kind of reputation you want to be developing in law school, and also as a lawyer.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright, well that sounds great, but how do we actually do this?

Lee Burgess: Well, unfortunately, you do probably want to try and go physically to some events, but I don't think they have to be like, strictly networking events, it's likely your school, or the legal community in the city that you're going to school in will have networking events. Sometimes folks can find these really intimidating, or boring, or frustrating, but, I think ...

Alison Monahan: They all can be.

Lee Burgess: And they can be. And they definitely can be, but I think it's important to also open your mind a little bit to on a broader group of events, including nonprofit events, or conferences, or other gathering places where you're like going to meet people that you have something in common with.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. I mean, I think conferences are an amazing place to meet people, because everyone is there, you are all stuck together, you have apparently some interest in the same topics, you know, there usually are ways that people are designed to be put together, like whether it's a social, you know, evening event, or even just between, after a panel, you can linger in the hallway and be like, "Oh, what did you think about that," you know, "What did you think about that thing this person said," like, "I thought that was really interesting. Great way to meet people.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: Even something like a meetup, and it doesn't have to be specifically legally related ... again like, you just never know who you are going to meet. For example, I go to a Spanish-language meetup and so there are English speakers, and Spanish speakers, and people who want to work on their Spanish ... and that's a pretty broad and diverse group of people, actually.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: You know, so if you are a student who has language skills, or you want to develop them, that can actually be a really interesting, and kind of fun thing to do to get out of the sort of bubble of law school and, "Oh well I just went to the ABA like you know event in my town or whatever." That's great, but there are lots of other things you can do too.

Lee Burgess: Right. And if you live in a more metropolitan area, there seems like there are always nonprofit events going on. and oftentimes you know if you have friends ... especially those who are already in their professional worlds ... you might get invited to be at someone's table, you know. Like, law firms or companies oftentimes buy tables at these events and you might get invited to sit at the at the table, and you might think, "Why do I want to go to this nonprofit breakfast?" If it's a nonprofit that's a mission that you care about, you should go, because you might meet ten other people who also think that cause is something that's important and you might have something in common with them, and you have no idea where those connections may lead. So, you just got to say yes and go, if you can.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I feel like, as a student particularly, your default option should be to say "yes" to any opportunity that presents itself ...

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: Because that's why you're in school. You're not just in school to go to the library and study the law, you're in school to expand your horizons. And even though it might not feel like it, you actually have the time to do a lot of these things.

Lee Burgess: Yep, I think that that's very true, you just have to decide you're going to spend the time doing it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. Well, a lot of people don't want to go to events? You're like, "Oh my God, this is like the worst thing ever, I'm like such an introvert, I can't talk to people, I don't want stand by the food table and talk about whether the shrimp is really good," like ...

Lee Burgess: Well, lucky ...

Alison Monahan: ... I just can't do it."

Lee Burgess: Lucky for that group of people, we are in the age of the Internet, and it is possible to network via the Internet/

Alison Monahan: Yes.

Lee Burgess: As we mentioned, we met, initially, via social media and I think there's a lot of interactivity still going on in social media with Twitter, or LinkedIn, Facebook blogging, Instagram, a lot of different platforms.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. I mean I think probably a little less interactive than maybe it was, a few years ago, but I think ... certain platforms kind of come in and out of favor as well ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: Right now, with the political world being in such turmoil, Twitter has become newly relevant, I think, you know ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: ... There was a time, for a year or so, when it was just a bunch of bots kind of sending links to each other and retweeting them. But, now it's real people. So, there's, for example, hashtag ... I'll have to look it up ... I think it's called Appellate Twitter.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: It's actually really active, and it's a group of appellate lawyers.

Lee Burgess: Interesting.

Alison Monahan: And you know they are very active, I think they're very open to taking questions from students, or you can just kind of linger on their hashtag and read ... These people, a lot of them are pretty prominent ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: ... you know, and they're just out having a discussion on Twitter about what they do.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that is.

Alison Monahan: Which is ...

Lee Burgess: I hadn't heard about that ...

Alison Monahan: Amazing.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's super amazing.

Alison Monahan: You might not kill as much time on Twitter as I do at night, but ...

Lee Burgess: I also think that Facebook has taken on a little bit of a new networking life, with the emergence of Facebook groups

Alison Monahan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lee Burgess: ... that have become pretty popular. And that is something that I recently have started to recognize, can be pretty powerful. My first foray into Facebook groups was actually when I was a breastfeeding mom. I had a friend tell me about Facebook groups for breastfeeding moms, that I joined thinking like, "This is so weird, why would I want to join this like, closed group with 2000 other moms who are breastfeeding," but then I found out that this resource of helpful mamas was the best breastfeeding, pumping, like advice out there. And women would drop a question, and within minutes you have all these women telling them how to solve the problem. It was unbelievably supportive. And ... when that phase of my life was over, then there ... are some mom groups that are on, on Facebook as well. One is a lawyer mom group, it's become very popular. We were even in like, Us Weekly ...

Alison Monahan: Oh, wow.

Lee Burgess: ... because everybody's obsessed with this Lands' End dress.

Alison Monahan: Oh, the dress.

Lee Burgess: The dress, #thedress. And so, there was like 8000 women in that group as well, and it's a very interactive group ... People are posting all sorts of things professional, and personal, and parenting, and life-related and you're getting these really amazing responses from the hive. Including ... people anonymously very specific questions about professional decisions coming up, and then you get feedback from like 100 women, who are giving you job advice. It's actually pretty amazing, this electronic community, and real relationships are coming out of that group. Now, in certain different metropolitan areas, the moms are locally creating meetups, they're creating subgroups where they're doing more local groups of moms. I have a friend who's a veterinarian ... there are similar networking groups for physicians and veterinarians and things like that, and I think that Facebook now is becoming a new forum for interacting in this kind of group platform, where you can network in a way that ... I think a lot of us weren't using Facebook in the past.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think the key there is it's a more private group ...

Lee Burgess: Right, where you have to be admitted.

Alison Monahan: I know that we're both in a variety of groups and there definitely are conversations happening, that would not be happening in public.

Lee Burgess: No!

Alison Monahan: I think that's kind of a key ... if you're using this sort of online persona you've got to be a little bit careful about what you're putting out there, and who you're networking with, and what you're saying, and is this going to come back to haunt you, and all that's totally valid. And I think taking these off of the more

public networks and into a more private setting can be really powerful, because I think there is a lot that people have to offer, and they're willing to offer ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: They're just not necessarily willing to have a conversation, you know, on a public Facebook page at this point.

Lee Burgess: Right, but I will say that if you are new to Facebook groups, or you end up joining some, most administrators who administer those groups, will also post anonymous questions to the group. And if you are at all squeamish about putting something out there, or you have a legitimate question that you would like feedback from this group about, you should feel comfortable trying to do some of it anonymously, because you're still going to get the benefit, but maybe that information isn't going to be tied to you on the internet, for eternity, either so ... something to think about.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, or I mean I certainly know a lot of people who, even though technically I think it's against Facebook's rules, like they don't necessarily go by their full real name on Facebook.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative), right.

Alison Monahan: And you can probably get away with that, if it's something that you feel a little bit ... Or, you know, people will open up a second account, that is a less public account ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: ... you know, that kind of thing. There are a lot of things you can do ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But it's definitely worth looking around, and kind of seeing what's out there, I mean, I'm on a mailing list, for example, called The Tech Lady Mafia. And, the stuff that comes through there is amazing. I mean, that's actually just a mailing list on Google Groups, but again, you know, you can find this stuff all over the place.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: And there are a lot of really strong communities that are formed that may be running a little bit under the radar.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And I think it's kind of amazing, and you know women are ... it's not just women ... a lot of these groups seem to be women. I'm sure there are men groups out there, I'm not saying that men don't create great groups where they

can be supportive as well, but especially it seems like women in this type of platform ... either through mailing lists or through Facebook groups or things like that, are really looking to connect in this way. Partly because people are really busy, and it's a way to interact with a larger pool of people without necessarily having to put in face time.

Alison Monahan: Right, and again, it's these loose ties.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: You know, the people who are asking questions, or sharing advice on this Tech Lady Mafia group ... I would never in a thousand years have met most of these people.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: I don't know them personally, but if I post something, I'm probably going to get responses, and if I respond to something, you know, I'm sure I can take that conversation offline and probably ... we can build that relationship.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: And so ... again, you have got to have a lot of stuff coming in, that you then sort of filter into what becomes your stronger relationships, or even your more personal relationships. But if you don't have that input, you don't have anything to work with.

Lee Burgess: Right. And, the nice thing about having these more diverse groups of people that you're interacting with on social media, or through mailing lists, is when you are doing things like job hunting, you can put out feelers to a really diverse group of people that you never know. You just never know. We've done some amazing recruitment using social media platforms, and have connected with people that we would never have connected with. In fact, I posted something on ... We were doing some recruiting, and I posted something on a Facebook group that somebody picked up and put on a military spouses board ...

Alison Monahan: Group

Lee Burgess: ... or mailing list, or group, or something like that, because it was a remote position. And I got flooded with all of these incredible resumes from all of these military spouses, which was a network I had no idea I even knew how to tap into.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: And it was all just through the other connection. So, there is a lot ... it's going back to what we were talking about earlier, about "just say 'yes'," like, just try to

go to stuff. Just throw things out there to the universe because you don't know what's going to stick.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, another one I've heard about that's really interesting, is private Slack groups.

Lee Burgess: Wow.

Alison Monahan: So, I know there are certain groups of lawyers, where you can join ... and again, it's basically like having a private Facebook group.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: These are people who are having conversation, and you can jump in and out of it, but you would never have met them otherwise.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So, I think, you know, networking doesn't have to be just, "Oh, I'm going to out to this Bar Association fundraiser." You can use these online tools to make it more convenient for you ... and frankly probably more powerful than just the 20 people that you might meet that night.

Lee Burgess: It's very true. It's very true.

Alison Monahan: With that being said ... go ahead.

Lee Burgess: I was just going to say, my law mama Facebook group was helping me find the best non-toxic mosquito repellent for my son.

Alison Monahan: Nice.

Lee Burgess: You just never know, when you tap into the hive, and it was a very like "lawyer mom" response, because then, some of the moms were linking to studies where they're like, "Well, the University of Florida has done quite a few studies on this," and I'm like, I love it, because no other group of moms would have been sending me links to research ...

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: ... than a group of lawyer moms, you know?

Alison Monahan: You always know that you're a lawyer as I found myself saying in a normal conversation with a non-lawyer personal contact earlier, she's like, "Well, I mean there's a lot of research that shows ..."

Lee Burgess: I know, exactly.

Alison Monahan: And you just get this look of like, "Are you joking?" But, hey, it's what we do. We research.

Lee Burgess: I know, and it made me so happy. I was like, "Oh, I'll click on that link and read that article, that's perfect thank you."

Alison Monahan: Yes. So, let's move totally to the other end of the spectrum. I mean the online networking is just, you never know who you're going to meet, anything can come through your door. But I think it's also useful to think about really specific connections ...

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: ... that you want to develop and you want to cultivate, and I talked about this earlier but one of those ... which I think is very powerful ... is the [informational interview](#).

Lee Burgess: Yes, I think that that is true, and we will link to your excellent series ...

Alison Monahan: Thanks.

Lee Burgess: ... on informational ... no problem. But I think this idea of having kind of a template for how to reach out to people is really powerful. A lot of folks feel awkward about reaching out to folks that they don't have a deep connection with, to ask for help, or ask to learn more, but most people are really open to this. They like helping other people.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely and you know, your ask can be, "Hey, I'd love to take you to coffee," and they might say "No, but I can have a phone call or email." You know, people are busy, it's nothing personal, but a lot of people ... I mean, who doesn't want to leave the office for 20 or 30 minutes to have coffee?

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Or tea, or ice cream. Or, you could take a walk, you know. There's got to be something ... everybody's got to get out of the office at some point, during the day.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and people like helping other people, so, you know, try it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it can't just be like, "Hi, I'm Lee Burgess, I'd like to have coffee with you."

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: That's not going to work. But, you know, it could be, "Hi, I'm Lee Burgess, I'm a third-year at whatever law school I'm at, and I'm really interested in the area of law that you practice, and I would love the opportunity to talk to you for 15 or

20 minutes about x, y, and z, if you have some time for coffee or ice cream, let me know."

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: "Here's a link to my calendar where you can schedule an appointment."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Oh, and that's really great. Let's talk about [Calendly](#), which is something we use.

Alison Monahan: Let's talk about it.

Lee Burgess: Because we love Calendly. Calendly if you're listening, we love you. For so many things.

Alison Monahan: We're not even being paid for this.

Lee Burgess: No, we're not. It's like Trello, we just like heart them so much, we have to talk about them in circa notebooks. Calendly is a tool we got introduced to, two years ago, maybe? Something like that?

Alison Monahan: Something like that, yeah.

Lee Burgess: ... Which is an online scheduling tool that is free. So, there are, like you can pay for versions that give you a lot of customized options, but for free, you can basically get a unique link that will sync to your Google Calendar ... I think it now syncs with iCalendar ... it's got like, a lot of different options. But, you can just email somebody that, and basically say ... in your settings ... what blocks of time you could meet with somebody, and they could just click on that link, and schedule a time with you, and it will populate ... give them an option to populate their calendar ... and there's no back and forth about setting up meetings. It is unbelievable.

Alison Monahan: Right. It's life-changing.

Lee Burgess: Life-changing.

Alison Monahan: You can give them the option for a 30-minute meeting, for a 15-minute meeting, for a 60-minute meeting, whatever it is ... and it just avoids the back and forth, back and forth, of like "Oh, how about Tuesday at 3 ..."

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: "No, I can't do 3, how about 4?" "Oh, 4 doesn't work for me. How about 4 ..." That's maddening. No one wants to deal with it. You just send them the link, you're like, "Oh, that's so great that you're willing to have coffee with me. Here are the times I'm available. Does anything in there work for you?"

Lee Burgess: Right. Yeah. And I think from a networking perspective, any lawyer's going to be like, "Wow, this person's got it together."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, they're going to be impressed.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: They're going to wish ... they're going to be like, "What is that calendar thing you used?"

Lee Burgess: Yes!

Alison Monahan: How many people have we had ask, like "What is that scheduling thing, that seemed really useful." Yeah, it's really useful.

Lee Burgess: It is so true, and it's a great tool you can even use with your friends, like trying to set up a study group and stuff like that. I mean, the back and forth about scheduling times, and then having people populate their calendars incorrectly ... it's just kind of a mess. So, I think it is great, the more you can use technology tools to make it easier to set up times to meet with people, but also remove the chance that you might get the time wrong and accidentally stand somebody up.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, which is definitely not a good ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah, don't want to do that.

Alison Monahan: Not a good start to your networking relationship.

Lee Burgess: Nope. So, please don't do that.

Alison Monahan: You want to think about how you can make it easy for people to do what you'd like them to do?

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: And one of the easiest things to do, is just send them that link.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, 100 percent. So, Calendly ... we'll link to it in the show notes, but we think it's a really good option for making it easy to schedule a time with somebody.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. All right, well, before we wrap up, I know you wanted to talk a little bit about volunteering and being on a board ...

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: ... as a networking option.

Lee Burgess: Absolutely. So, I think volunteering is a really underrated way to network, and gain professional skills. And when I was not too far out of law school, I started volunteering with a Bay Area nonprofit called Girl Ventures, and then it led to me joining the board, then it led to me becoming president of the board, and it was such a meaningful experience for me, not just because I care a lot about programming that helps foster self-esteem and leadership skills in adolescent girls, but it was also an opportunity to freely network and meet some incredible women ... to learn that from incredible men and women to gain leadership skills that I wouldn't have gotten to afford to help manage teams ... it was just really incredible. And a lot of the folks that I've met through that work, and became really great contacts in a lot of different contexts.

And I think that if you're passionate about something, whether it be politics, or things going on in your community, or even on the national stage, that getting involved allows you to meet people where you have a common mission and I can be very powerful. So, if you are looking for something to do outside of law school to mix it up, I think volunteering at an organization is a great idea. I have friends that actually got married after meeting at a food bank, and I saw they're now taking their son to the food bank too. I love it, now it's a whole family thing. I have other friends who like to do team and trainings, because that's another way to meet a whole new group of people, and develop friendships and conduct that way.

whatever floats your boat, get out and try and engage with folks. and you can also give back to the community, which makes you feel good, so it's like a win-win.

Alison Monahan: Right, and it gives you something to put on your resume.

Lee Burgess: Yeah that's true too!

Alison Monahan: Which is never a bad thing

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: If a go into a job interview, and someone's like, "Oh, tell me more about your work at the San Francisco Food Bank ..." They're going to like you for that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Exactly, because actually, law firms want people who are engaged in their community. That's how you meet clients, and it makes them look good. To have their attorneys doing positive things for the community.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. It's a win-win all around.

Alright, so before we totally wrap up, what are our top networking mistakes that people really need to avoid?

Lee Burgess: Okay, don't forget to follow up with people. They're not going to remember to follow up with you, so, like we said, it can just be a link to an interesting article, it can be a follow-up letting them know how helpful their advice was, how much you enjoyed coffee, whatever it might be ... just follow-up. It takes two seconds. It's email, you're on your phone all day. I have tracking software now on my phone that lets me know how many hours a day I'm on my phone ... oh my gosh you have time! You have time.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, seriously. Another thing I think people sometimes are reluctant to do is, make the ask.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: I know one thing we've talked about before is sometimes ... one of the most useful questions you can ask at the end of an informational interview ... and I think this was in the political episode where you interviewed a politician, and she said she did this to become a politician ... is really, "Who do you think I should talk to next, who do you think I should follow up with?" And then, basically, "Can you introduce me to that person?"

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: And, I think that, or even, "Do you mind if I send my resume to you," or whatever it is ... I mean you can't be too pushy, it's always a fine balance, and you don't want to have an informational interview that you then try to make a hard sell about hiring you ... that's not the point ... but not asking for anything, just kind of lets the whole thing drop.

Lee Burgess: Yep. I think that's true. And as we said, people like to help you, so if you say, "This is what I'm looking for." It's a lot easier to help them. So, this makes me think of a conversation I had on the podcast a while back with the mayor of the city of Sonoma, and she was talking about building her network, and that she would go have coffee dates with people from town, and then her ask was always, "Could you introduce me to three or five more people?" Like, "Who you think I should go have coffee with next?" And then they would give her a list of people that she should contact, and then she would take those people and go have coffee dates, and say, "Who else do you think I should contact?" And I thought that was such a powerful, methodical way to network. That was quite simple.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: That was like such a simple ask.

Alison Monahan: But it's basically going to grow your network exponentially ...

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: ... if you actually follow up.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so I thought that was really ... a great way to think about the ask. So, if you're trying to meet IP lawyers, who are, you know, solo practitioners practicing in small firms, you meet someone in IP, then you can say, "I would love to meet solo practitioners, or boutique ... or practitioners in boutique law firms that are doing IP law, do you know anyone I could meet?" And the person's probably going to say, "Yeah, I've got a few friends from law school who do that, I'll connect you."

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: And then, it's so easy, and then they get to feel like they helped you, which is great too.

Alison Monahan: Well, and in your intro email, you then get to say, "Oh, I got your name from Lee Burgess..."

Lee Burgess: Right!

Alison Monahan: ...and of course that person is going to be like, "Oh, I know Lee ..."

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Monahan: "...yeah, I'll do a favor for Lee."

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: "I'll meet with this person."

Lee Burgess: Yep, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright, we're totally out of time, but let's just touch on one thing. The absolute worst possible thing you can do when you're networking ... never, ever, ever do this ... do not stand people up. These people are doing you a favor ...

Lee Burgess: Yes.

Alison Monahan: ... do not stand them up.

Lee Burgess: Nope. If at all possible. So, don't schedule a networking meeting, or outing when you think you might get caught in traffic, give yourself a buffer, don't be late, don't email at the last minute to say you're not coming ... Like, be respectful of other people's time, because they will remember that they got stood up.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: That's what they're going to remember. They're not going to remember anything about the next conversation you have, they're just going to remember that they were annoyed that you wasted their time.

Alison Monahan: Most likely there's not going to be a next conversation ...

Lee Burgess: Oh, fair point!

Alison Monahan: ... but, you know, if they did meet with you and had coffee, they're not going to still remember that, five years later, but they probably will remember the person who didn't show up ...

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Alison Monahan: ... And left them sitting alone at Starbucks ...

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: ... when they were busy. So, just don't do that.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Very easy not to do that, so please don't do it.

Alright, and with that, we are now fully out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave [a review and rating on iTunes](#). We'd really appreciate it. And be sure to [subscribe](#), so you don't miss anything. We usually release episodes on Mondays. If you have any questions or comments, we love hearing from you, so please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com, or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our [website contact form at lawschooltoolbox.com](#).

Thanks for listening, happy networking, and we'll talk to soon.

Resources:

- [How to Conduct Great Informational Interviews](#)
- [Calendly](#)
- [Career Dicta: Networking Strategies for a New World](#)
- [Online Legal Networking: LinkedIn](#)
- [Online Legal Networking: Twitter](#)
- [Online Legal Networking: Facebook](#)