Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have lawyer, strategist, entrepreneur, and board director Candice Cook Simmons here with us to talk about the evolving legal industry and how to position yourself for success. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together, we're the co-creators of the Law School Toolbox, the Bar Exam Toolbox, and the career-related website CareerDicta. I also run The Girl's Guide to Law School. If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the contact form on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we would love to hear from you. And you can check out the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast if the bar exam is on your radar. And with that, let's get started.

Welcome, Candice.

Candice Cook Simmons: Thank you so much for having me.

Alison Monahan: Oh, it's my pleasure. Well, to start us off, can you just give our listeners some information about your background and your work, so that they have some context here?

Candice Cook Simmons: Absolutely. Well, hello to your amazing listeners. I remember what it was like to be a law school student, so it's exciting to be with my people. I started as a corporate litigator. So I'll give the weave, and I'll try and keep it succinct. I started as a corporate litigator. I went from corporate litigation to transactional. I represented talent and corporations at the intersection of media, technology, business, and entertainment. I then moved over to a chief strategy officer role and worked at the intersection of film, television, immersive experiences for a company called RadicalMedia. So, "Hamilton", "Summer of Soul", "The Fog of War", "What Happened, Miss Simone?" And then I transitioned to be chief strategy officer of a different media company that also lives at the intersection of film, television, immersive experiences called Candarah Media. And there, it's really a studio that is centering the business, the entertainment, and the brand strategy around both talent and content for the years and the age that we're living in now.

Alison Monahan: That sounds awesome. And if people want to learn more about you or reach out, how can they do that?

Candice Cook Simmons: You can find me on my website or the company's website. So, www.CandiceCook.com is my personal website. And then to reach me

personally on social, you can go to Instagram – @candicesc1of1 is Instagram. And LinkedIn. My X goes from private to public in a weave, but you can find me there – @candicesc1of1 as well. And so, you're welcome to join me there. I'm not as consistent there, but Instagram is definitely where we can come together and really can see what's going on in real time.

Alison Monahan: Awesome. Well, we will link to all of that in the show notes and people can check it out. Obviously, you have had a pretty varied career. It's pretty unusual to go from litigation to corporate, among other things. But tell me about some of the changes that you are seeing in the legal industry at the moment.

Candice Cook Simmons: The legal industry is like the Titanic, and it lulls people into this feeling of sitting and listening to the orchestra while the violins are playing, and never before have we seen it in as... I don't want to say "critical" because that sounds so dangerous and terrifying, but it's an evolution. And I think if we are not recognizing the evolution, we are risking destroying ourselves and our professional trajectory. And so, one of the biggest changes that I'm seeing in the outside world is the adoption at record speeds of technology internally, inside of legal organizations. And depending on who you're speaking with, the recognition of what that's going to do to not just the job market, but the way we integrate and work and learn and train is exponentially different than what it's been historically. And so, not recognizing that difference, not recognizing that challenge, and not coming up with a plan and a strategy for it is one of the most dangerous things we can do as professionals who are already in the industry, and also as professionals who are purporting to guide new lawyers who are going to be working in the industry. And so, it's really about not adapting, the lack of adaption, and the lack of adaption in real time. And there's also a level of hubris because there's this idea that it's not going to change that much. It won't change how we're hiring. Big secret that's not a secret – it already is. It's already changing, and we can see that. We can see it on Wall Street – not having to have as many analysts because you can actually use technology to do the job that analysts used to do. So it's not, "Oh, we won't need any." You won't need as many. And that affects what hiring looks like. That affects what the trajectory in terms of lockstep looks like. It changes competition, it changes how you're differentiating yourself. So, the biggest issue is that we're not being honest and forthcoming collectively about how these changes are going to affect us. And then the second thing is, knowing that it's going to change, giving everyone the tools that they need to still do well regardless. Because it's not, you can't have an amazing career, you're not going to do all the things you set out to do. Of course you can. But the road to get there is going to look very different than it did for any of your professors, any of the people that you'll be working for. And quite frankly, it's going to be very different than it was for your parents and one

generation above. This is a new playing field, and prepping for today/tomorrow is just different, fundamentally, than it ever has been before.

Alison Monahan: I think that's so important, and we're going to dive into some of that in a bit. But I do think that idea of we are in kind of a new world here. And the advice of someone who even graduated five years ago may not be relevant. Well, talk to me a little too about changes in the media and entertainment industry, because I know you're pretty deeply embedded there.

Candice Cook Simmons: Yeah. And I think we can use what's happening in entertainment as almost this framework and the scaffolding of, if it's happening here – again, this sense of hubris – why do we think it's not going to affect practitioners in the legal industry, who are the people who are pinning and doing these deals? So it's not that we don't know they're happening; we're arguing and negotiating and fundamentally giving proactive ideas around it. Why can't we do this here? So, an example in media and entertainment – again, rocket speed. It used to be – and I laugh about this now – that something as simple as a flyer for marketing – in college, people who are in fraternities, sororities, or any organization where you're letting them know about a party, etcetera – it was a big deal to get these flyers out. When I look at the flyers that we sent out that we thought we were one step away from being poached to be a CMO somewhere – they look ridiculous compared to the same types of flyers that I'm seeing college students do now on Canva. Their flyers look amazing. It's incredibly impressive. Alright, well, if a layperson, amazing, great, wonderful, brilliant, young college students are able to create sophisticated looking marketing tools, what does that say for an entire industry of individuals who built their entire companies on creating that type of work? It's a stark difference, and we're seeing that in media across the board, and we're seeing that in business decisions. We talk about ChatGPT and what that means for content in terms of writing, but it's also in terms of text-to-video, and what that means in terms of the jobs behind the scenes, what that means for union jobs and individuals who create that type of design. Now, there are pluses and minuses. None of this is completely bad or horrific. In fact, it's not bad. It's just what is. It's a weird dynamic because it can't be framed in terms of, these are positives or negatives. All of these things can be tools for good if we strategize and plan for it and center really humanity and workforce and knowing a rising tide lifts all boats. None of us are well-served with an entire industry out of work. That's not good for anyone. It's not good for a tax base, it's not good for morale of your society. We don't win in that system. But we also have to recognize that there will be a fundamental shift. There will be new types of skills that have to be adopted. And in media and entertainment, that's across the board. There was going to be a tremendous infusion of capital by Tyler Perry to create a new studio. And he's done so much in Georgia as a state, in terms of media and entertainment. But this was going to be yet

another fundamentally significant media and entertainment investment, and he decided not to do it. Why? Because he got a preview of what was happening in terms of technology for set design and production, and realized the studio that he was making would probably be obsolete in three years. It just was not a smart business decision from his purview. There are other companies who are not making that very specific shift. There are studios that are being built by Netflix in New Jersey. However, we haven't seen those blueprints. And there's a difference between a studio that's going to have a very significant technology hub, where individuals are going to be able to create but they'll be doing it on a monitor versus on a soundstage. And those are the types of calculations that we see the industry having to make. Not even having to; they're making in real time. And so, it's not set design is going to change. I think a sophisticated artist with an eye and an aesthetic is critically important. We may know how we like to put things together and we know it when we see it, but we may not be able to design it from scratch. That wisdom and ability to know what tools and what they should be saying to generate the response that makes the most sense, is a skill. You'll still need those skills. We are just now changing how many people can practice and perfect what that looks like fundamentally. And we're seeing that in arts and entertainment. We saw that with the Met Gala, where Katy Perry's mother was even fooled by the AI picture of her in her dress. And what that looks like in terms of fashion and fashion design and ideation. Again, these aren't bad things that are changing within the industry; they just are. And so, what and how we use them can dictate whether or not it's a positive or a negative. But all of those things play out with legal ramifications. What are you using to feed those models? Are we losing brain trust, in the sense of laziness, of not having to learn certain things because can do a very quick fallback, and how do we prevent that? Because there is money to be made in people being able to actually make very quick decisions because they intuitively know it. That's actually a skill. And so, the people who are able to balance both knowing how to properly research and execute, which I think technology is fantastic for. It's weird, because for too long, too many companies and corporations who were servicing law students and legal professionals had us using their antiquated formulations for research. Why were students still having to use Boolean? It made zero sense. That's not how we talk. You were getting random, inaccurate, inconsistent, poorly designed responses. It's actually exciting to have narrative, the way we speak translations, be able to generate responses that make sense and are appropriate hits. That's a win for everyone. We still need lawyers to be able to do that. So, whether they're practicing in arts and entertainment, whether it's medicine, all of these things can be incredibly beneficial. But again, there is the servicing of utilizing the tools that we have intuitively, from training and wisdom and experience and time and work ethic. And then also making sure that we're feeding models things that are accurate, because it doesn't help nonsense in, nonsense out. So it's really playing a role in having the balance of

those two. And we're seeing that in entertainment. We're seeing that in television and film and immersive experiences. And it will be a fascinating shift, when 10 years from now, we really will have an entire generation who only knows what that looks like, and that adaptation and what comes next from there when you are still learning. Ten years is still youthful in your career trajectory. It's enough to be of substance and significant, but it's a lot if the industry just shifts on you and totally changes and has this level of evolution. And so, it's an exciting time in every industry. Media is no exclusion, but we can see how high the stakes are just by virtue of the fact that the shift in technology is what was one of the key points in the most recent strikes. And how important are these conversations? I don't know how important is a year off from work, because the negotiations needed to take that long. It's table stakes in a lot of ways, and that's where we are.

Alison Monahan: Wow, that is all so interesting. It reminds me a couple of months ago, I talked with the founders of Paxton AI, and they were not lawyers, and they said one of the things they were most surprised about is that they were, I think, at a bar at a conference or something, and it came up that their tool could basically replace Boolean searches, and they said that's literally been one of their most popular features, which is just mind-blowing. Why has no one done this before?

Candice Cook Simmons: It's mind-blowing, and it also goes to how people can be set apart. Disrupting the legal industry from a research perspective and becoming the beloved tool used by lawyers is a winning strategy. And the idea that things are so siloed that that very simple shift in terms of how we were aiding in researchers being able to do what they needed to do is beyond comprehension when you saw people going to Google searches and people going to any other form of research tool and research development uses narrative, being able to put it in and then the algorithm properly disseminating appropriate responses. All of that to say, Boolean searches were the low-hanging fruit of shifting, and that is why synergies between lawyers and technology and what makes individuals differentiators is so critically important, because having a think tank, someone at the table to actually bring that up and then someone executing on it, is the difference between pure disruption and all of us adapting, because that's a winning accessibility piece, and not having fundamentally a flawed product in the market for far too long. And now, quite frankly, they'll be playing catch-up. Everyone who didn't do it will be playing catch-up, and they shouldn't have to be, because you were actually ahead of the game with the opportunity to constantly be the disruptor. And the lesson there is, no one wants to be found asleep at the wheel.

Alison Monahan: And that's what we're hearing. We have had a number of people on the podcast recently talking about AI and its potential impact on legal work and legal hiring.

And that is one of the things they've said, is that inside of these institutions, the concern is, we may be left behind. It's not, "What is this going to do? Should we be on board with it?" It's, "How can we get on board quickly?" What are your thoughts around all of this?

Candice Cook Simmons: In any industry, it's adapt or die. These are not options. I think any individual or company that's pretending this is some level of a choice is fooling themselves. This is not a choice. It is not, "Are we going to do it or are we not?" It's, "How are we going to do it effectively and be the best at our strategy?" And not constantly put ourselves in a position of playing catch-up. And the problem with too many industries – law is one of them, entertainment is actually one of them as well – everyone is waiting to see what someone else is going to do. And at a certain point, your own career and your own organization should be the North Star, not the constant, "Oh, let's follow and do what they're doing. What's everyone else in the marketplace doing? How do we mimic that and then just try and up it an inch?" Well, are you an incremental inch winner, or are you the winner? Are you the standard holder? And the goal is to consistently be the one making the standard, not the one trying to keep up with the standard. And so, in terms of technology policies and work policies surrounding technology... And now it's AI, but in five years it'll be something else, because we've all been working with AI all this time. Generative AI is not new; it's just being adapted and changed and evolving and put out to market in new ways that are making people say, "Oh, wait, I can use it in a different way. I've only been using it to finish my sentences on emails." Now, there are all of these new fundamentally tailored ways and companies that are coming in to service us. How can we include that in the work that we were already doing? Not so that we're lazy, but so that we're efficient and we're effective. And in the legal community, that's going to show up in a few ways. One way specifically is, Boolean searches are one thing that were antiquated and needed to be changed in the system. So is how we track the efficiency and the effectiveness of most attorneys. So, when you're paid, essentially your hours are cut and the winner is the person, in essence, who took the longest. That is a broken and bizarre and weird model. You have to bill a certain number of hours. It stands to reason that you're not utilizing your most effective tools to do that because you're not incentivized to be thorough, great, smart, efficient. You are incentivized to be thorough, great, smart, and mindful of your time, and that is however you're going to categorize that. So it's not you need to be a snail – certainly people are not going to allow you to spend 20 hours on a letter, but there are problems with a model that does not exact, "Let's just be efficient and not have that be a substandard form of how we're executing our work, but rather a way that we can build in other professional avenues of development within those time blocks that may not be billing." And AI is changing that. I hate to use it, it sounds so cliche, like AI is changing. I'll say technology as a whole. Technology as a whole is changing what

that looks like, because for one, now we have fundamentally shifted what contract negotiation can look like, because there are now companies that are coming in and throwing... Your templates and your boilerplates have just gotten smarter, and so that's fantastic. Alright, that means that the back and forth that's still going to be necessary. So this doesn't wipe out lawyers, but you do not need as many as you needed before at certain levels, by virtue of how you can utilize technology in a really smart way, which is something we have to all consider because competition is now going to be established by things that go beyond just drafting a great contract. The playing field will be a little bit more even, in terms of what that original drafting looks like, because these models are being fed with the best in class of these products. So, issue spotting is critically important and we all need to be able to do it. But we will also have changed the playing field of how and what issues are able to be identified. And you may not need to be able to do it. One would hope that you would be, just from the level of excellence, because you don't want to be dependent on technology. But the bottom line is the thing that made everyone a superstar, being able to be a great writer – still critically important; a great thinker, a great issue spotter – still thoroughly important, but now evened out amongst individuals who may not have been as great a writer or as great an issue spotter. They now will have access to tools that up their ability. So it's not you get to dumb yourself down; it's just technology is going to make it so that they're able to come up too. So, what makes you the star and what makes you extra special in a framework of scaffolding – that has started to shift based off of what's accessible. It's going to be really important to think about things. Not we all get to be lazy; it's just what made us amazing has shifted. And it's still valued and it's still important, but now if you've got three extra hours because technology has provided that, what are law firms going to do to gauge your bonus structure, to gauge how many billables you need to complete to be considered an effective and strong counselor within their organizations. Those modes of success are going to require revisiting, and those layers of excellence are going to demand that certain skills that may be considered soft skills be valued in a different way, because it's not just, can you execute the contact and can you draft the contract? At a certain point, can you bring in the clients that matter to begin with? And can you holistically be a value-add in ways that you weren't called to do before? You really should be able to do it, because this balance of access, which is great – big scheme. It will be fantastic everyone's skill level to be upped, because yeah, it's a crutch, but at a certain point, so was a computer at one point in time. It's a tool that can be used to make everyone better, but now the people who are going to be the best, you still want to be the best. It's just, what does that look like? What is the best in a world where what used to be the driver shifted? And the value will always be in strong analytical thinking, the value will always be in being able to use history as a predictor, and then new revelations as a tool for guiding, and then having your knowledge base

intuitively. So, you can see what technology is supporting, and then argue for and against it with your own brilliance. And those are the things that are different, but those aren't necessarily measured in time. So, how that gets leveled in a world where billables are still part of the determining factor within the ecosystem of private practice is something that people are going to have to consider and look at and design around. And that's going to take a new level of design thinking that lawyers as a trade are not necessarily always the best equipped to do for forward thinking.

Alison Monahan: Totally agree. Don't get me started on the insanity of the billable hour. I read *The 4-Hour Workweek* – it was life-changing.

Candice Cook Simmons: Oh my gosh, that book still resonates in incredible ways, and I remember telling someone – and mind you, managing partner at a law firm here – I remember telling someone about it – they'd never read the book – and their response was, "Oh yes, but I really believe in a strong work ethic." The book is not debating strong work ethic. The book assumes that we're going to be working off of an idea of a strong work ethic. It's having an entrepreneurial mindset in whatever industry you're in, and executing it in a really smart way. So, retraining people not to just work hard, but to also work smart. And I think that's what's missing within the ecosystem. And this evolution of technology, or the quick evolution of new technology being incorporated into what we're doing is just going to change things. It is already, it is changing things. And now it's just who grabs holds and who tragically gets left behind.

Alison Monahan: Well, before we wrap up, I do want to talk to you about that, because I feel like some of the stuff we've said might sound a little terrifying if I'm a law student listening to this. But let's focus before we wrap up on how can people actually position themselves to be successful in this new world? What are people looking for? How can I be competitive if I'm applying for jobs?

Candice Cook Simmons: I have to say I do not envy anyone who is applying for jobs right now, because I don't think the people who are hiring know what to look for in this moment. They are stuck straddling several worlds and trying to figure it out themselves. And so there's a part of me that wants to say, it's not on you to figure it out alone. You are diving into an industry that is plate tectonics. It's really shifting in real time. And your job is to do the best you can balancing it with the information that you have in this moment. And it's going to change. And so the first thing is, get comfortable with discomfort. There is this idea that safety lies around the corner and if you make one move in this direction or in this direction, it makes you safe. And there is no such thing as safe. It doesn't exist. And it's so hard to hear because you can think, "No, no, no, if I chose to be a doctor, I would definitely be safe." Well, ask someone who had a specific

practice area and HMOs came in and it changed the way the healthcare... Or not HMOs. My brain is clearly on real estate because I'm looking at interest rates. So again, being a realtor and going into real estate – traditionally relatively safe. People are buying, spring, summer, great time selling, going up. Not with inflation doing what it's doing. It changes what safety looks like. Individuals who went into certain practice areas and then insurance companies decided those practice areas were way too expensive, they were no longer going to pay for those insurance policies to happen. It happened across the board, including people who are oncologists working with children with cancer. That's a very traumatic shift in an industry when you've done your fellowship, you've done all of the work, and that's about as safe as it gets. Individuals who were in the healthcare space and focused on exercise, wellness, and nutrition as a form of people changing their bodies and coming together, you weren't anticipating Mounjaro. You weren't predicting Wegovy in those senses. Safe is a time period, but it is not a constant. There is a period where you can rest and breathe, and the structures of all the things are going to be working in your favor. And then something will change. Geopolitically, it can change; climate-wise, it can change; geographically, it can change. In Texas, laws happened that shifted attorneys who were doing certain types of malpractice or malfeasance. And so it was capped if you lost your leg, for instance, at a workplace disaster. And I haven't paid attention to this in a while, but it used to be it was capped at $250,000. That's what you were going to get. Well, personal injury attorneys had made millions upon millions being able to advocate for a variety of problems that were elicited from corporations, etcetera. Well, that cap changed everything. Those used to be really safe jobs as lawyers. I say all that to say, safety is a constraint that will only serve as a detriment long term when you are planning your entire career to only use that as your North Star, because it is a false North Star. It is okay to want to make strategic, logical, well-reasoned choices that are mature and are guided by being honest with yourself about your level of risk aversion. I don't think that's a false narrative when that's what you're doing – you're assessing what your tolerance is. That's not just seeking safety. That's psychological safety, which I think is great and critically important. But a job as a safer choice solely can be a false sense of security that you don't want to be lulled into. So, certainly there are better strategic choices, but they should not be false sense of security choices. So that's the first thing. The second thing is being really honest about what you want out of your whole life. We spend so much time saying, "What do you want to be?" And really the question is, "Who do you want to be?" How do you want to be able to show up in this world? And how does that align with what your professional options are? And you can take everything into consideration. I don't think there's a such thing as a vapid life choice if it's true to who you are. If you are thinking, "I need to know I have this much in the bank. I need to know that I can travel this much. I need to know I can take care of my parents" – there's no harm in saying that. And if in fact, that

means there's this imbalance between that career trajectory and other things that maybe you don't value in the same way – then being honest with yourself – not with society as a whole in the world, but being honest with yourself is the first note in being able to create the musical that will be your life, but it has to come from a place of honesty because that will guide so much. And then appreciating that it really is about balance. It won't always be in perfect balance, and life is imperfect. Life is going to life. It will be disruptive and hard. And the goal is to be really honest about trajectories not looking like this but looking like this. They ebb, they flow, which is again, why you must get comfortable with the evolution of change, or with evolution/change. You really have to make that part of the status quo. Every bit of advice where people are trying and attempting to model it after 20 or 10 years ago is well-intentioned, but not representative of where we are right now. Ten years ago, if you asked someone what they thought about digital marketing, or whether we'd be walking around with computers in our pocket and doing all the things in that way, people in technology would say, "Well, of course we were. Of course, we saw this, the writing was on the wall." The vision did not live within everyone in society. Grandmothers were not talking on FaceTime with their grandchildren in that way, but that's where we are. And so, predicting what you want in 20 years is a great thing to do if that makes you happy and feel content, but appreciating that the world itself may look fundamentally different in 20 years, and this vision that you've set forth may not exist in that same way, in that dynamic. And so, at your core, what do you want to contribute? What do you want to do? How can you lean into your best talents, your strongest strengths, and monetize that? Because living in a checked box world that doesn't feed where you shine will always leave you playing catch-up and not able to lean into yourself. And that's the only thing that's safe, is leaning into where you shine and how you can do your best work within that dynamic. Also appreciating that companies, organizations have their needs as well. And so, being authentic and honest about your shining strengths allows you to go towards the places that will value your value-add, and see your value-add and benefit and know that they can monetize from it. And that's where this energy comes in. That's what sets you apart. Chasing what sounds or feels good because it's what everyone else is doing can serve you in a short term. So I'm not going to say absolutely don't do it, because again, you want to be fed and have your lights on and all those things. So if that gets you to a certain point – fine, but know that the marathon as opposed to the sprint version requires really honing into your strengths and how you can be of value to the organizations who are going to be seeking the holes in what they're missing. And for younger – and law students are all ages, so I appreciate – for younger practitioners, not necessarily younger human beings, but for younger practitioners, where your value is that you've been utilizing so many of these tools every single day as a practice. And so, your dexterity with it, and you're vernacular with it, and your willingness to also talk

on mediums that people who have been practicing for 30 years may not feel comfortable doing, is a value. They may not have liked it 20 years ago – in fact, people would have banned it and said, "Absolutely not." Now, someone who can come in and drive and generate that conversation in certain organizations is a huge value-add. And so, it's not being afraid of those things, but it's appreciating where you can position yourself authentically, still doing all the things that matter, whether it's law review, moot court, clinics. All great, but then it's not just that. It's all the other things that make you, that people can tap into. That is the positioning that not only is a nice to have, it's going to be a must-have in this world. And it will not only be a beneficial asset within the U.S. market, but as the world is more global and we see these walls breaking down in terms of where and how people are working remotely, nomadically expanding – that's a value in any demographic, in any geographic region where you're going, because you're bringing that sentiment to the organization, and it's one that's desperately needed.

Alison Monahan: That in itself is probably an entire other podcast discussion. I totally agree with you though. I think so many things are shifting, and being just accepting of that fact alone is probably going to set people apart, rather than being rigid and trying to stay in these pathways that maybe worked 10 or 20 years ago, but are definitely not going to be working five years from now. Well, before we wrap up, I did want to get your ideas on... People hate networking, but I like to think of it more as building community. And how can people do that when maybe they don't fit the stereotypical idea of what a lawyer looks like or acts like?

Candice Cook Simmons: There is a lid – my husband says this, or he used to say it all the time when I was trying to set people up – there's a lid for every pot, right? So, your people are out there. There are a million different types of attorneys. I have friends who are zealous advocates of reviewing every Supreme Court transcript, and they could talk about it for hours, and I think that's lovely. I can talk about it for maybe an hour, but I think hours is just a stretch for me. But that's not true for them. They can sit and talk about the constitutional arguments hours. And when I say hours, I really do mean hours. And I am fascinated and love it. Your people are out there. The biggest networking faux pas I see lawyers make over and over again is they're only networking with other lawyers, and I just don't understand it. It's just bizarre. And what's crazy is that firms will encourage this and they want you to be at 90 million legal events. And so my short answer is, go where the fish are. Why are you going where all the fishing poles are? Who is that serving? It's so bizarre. But again, this is why the evolution of firms and client retention and being able to be great at client development and all of those things are skills that make you stand out and that make you special, because there's a saying, "Common sense is not that common." You network authentically. You join communities where it's authentic, where you are being

able to be of value to the community, and also where you can learn and see what other people are doing. Because the biggest issue, again, is the silo. And so, if you are not comfortable going to... I went to Vanderbilt for law school, and we have what was called Blackacre, and you would go and drink, but hang out and do all of those things. And it was fantastic. Even our introverts were there, because Vanderbilt really is a wonderful community of people sort of spending time together. It's not a vapid group of people. It really is a lovely group of people. If you're an introvert, or if you feel like maybe this group, wherever you are – law school, outside of law school – isn't necessarily your group, the first question is to ask why? So just get an understanding of what is making you uncomfortable. Sometimes it's gut – that's okay. Intuitively, if you feel, "This is not a safe space for me, this is not where I'm supposed to be" – that's okay, listen to that. But also make sure it's not just fear. So, intuitive gut reaction – smart. Fear-driven response that's more psychological in terms of not wanting to be uncomfortable, which is a human response, but one of those responses we need to push through, right? And so balancing, which is it, why don't I want to be there? And if you're not going to be at this particular event – okay, but where will you be? In absence of this, what are you replacing it with, and why? And it can't just be the people you've known for 20 years. Being outside of your comfort zone. If you are a family law practitioner, then maybe the people that you want to hang out with are people who are working within the family law space and seeing what are their pain points, how can you be beneficial there, what are the groups, where are they going, where do they go to lunch, what elite-esque types of events does their organization support? You need to be there hearing about what they're talking about. That may be where their coffee breaks or all of those things. That may be where you want to be from a networking perspective. And then also going to conferences, I think, is a fantastic way of authentically networking. And the crazy thing is you don't have to be out there, you don't need to be the panelist. Conferences, everyone is there with their badge, everyone is there semi as a fish out of water. Even if you're alone for the entire time, if you're doing a certain circuit, you start to see some of the same people, not at every conference, but at a lot of them. And suddenly it's a familiar face. You don't know who the face is, maybe you don't know each other's name, but you get to know those people. That's a great place. And you look at the conferences that will be interesting to you, the ones that are within your price realm, the ones hopefully that have young professional rates so that you're not robbing Peter to pay Paul. Do what makes sense and what's feasible. But also, there are exponential returns on investment for investing in your own network outside of the network that wherever you work tries to create for you. That's not yours. It's almost like the insurance policies they provide. Thanks, but as soon as you're not there, it's not your insurance anymore. You have your own insurance policy and you have your own community. And that's really important, because the most valuable lesson after

years of practicing – and both practicing and not practicing, just working in this world – is that your title will change, where you work will change. The days of our all having pensions have changed. The days of staying for X amount of years and getting a watch and retiring at the same organization is very rare. You are the value-add, not the organization. Tying yourself, your value, your worth, your community strictly to an organization, is a death sentence. It's a death sentence of your emotional well-being, it's a death sentence of what will really fortify you in the future. And it's never going to be that. It's never going to be the job. That's not it. You're going and being whoever you are. Even if you have to put your organization's name there, that's fine. People want to have some point of reference and familiarity. But knowing that you're going to build your own ecosystem, not just to go and be a part of an organization. And so, you go to the conferences, you go to the panels that feed your knowledge base, that feed your interest, and that also fortify you in very different ways that you can bring back to your organization and say, "Did we know that they're doing XYZ?" That's the biggest networking rule I have, is that don't make it about your job title, make it about you, and that in turn means don't make it about other people's job titles, make it about them. Be willing to go somewhere. If you're not going to one group, what are you substituting it with? You need to meet new people at least each month. And then there's a brilliant partner at Paul, Weiss. And I remember years ago, he actually said, "No one will know how great you are if you're just sitting at a computer." So, this idea that if you just hone in and do the work 24/7, everyone's going to think you're amazing and you're going to get all your flowers – no one's going to think you're amazing and you're not going to get all of your flowers. The gratitude circle in the legal profession does not work that way. Yes, sit and do your work, but also then get up and go and meet other people who were just sitting and doing their work and who were finding a way to balance, because just doing the work incredibly well with a level of excellence is not enough. And knowing that's the baseline of what's expected, and not the goal, will hopefully motivate you to get up. Do what you're supposed to, don't be the one who's just out and about and never doing their work, but balancing it. And balancing it not because you want other people to be like, "We're so glad you were out there", but because you should be out there. And people should get to know you, and you're a valuable asset in and of yourself. And the more you're able to cultivate that in an authentic way over time, the more you will be able to reap later. And that cycle of your professional journey is never going to go away. It's always going to be important. And so, do it. Basically, yes, you must network, but also you're not networking to get something; you're networking to give something, and your presence is important.

Alison Monahan: Well, Candice, this has been amazing, totally thought-provoking. Any final thoughts you'd like to share before we wrap up here?

Candice Cook Simmons: I think time... I think if there's one thing that we reflect on is, we think we've got all this time, and we don't. You know, in Hamilton, there's an entire song about he's writing and he's working like he's running out of time. I don't think we have to walk around scared, but I do think that we have to be really motivated to do the things that we feel called to do in the moment, because time is ticking. Things change, life happens. We've got these incredible skills and abilities, and use them and be really thoughtful in how you use them and how you spend your time, because you don't get that time back. And invest it wisely.

Alison Monahan: Well, tomorrow is my birthday, so definitely thinking about time. So, that's very on-point.

Candice Cook Simmons: Happy birthday! This is great. We're the birthday crew. I'm there to celebrate.

Alison Monahan: Nice. Well, remind us again how people can find out more about you.

Candice Cook Simmons: Amazing. www.CandiceCook.com. Instagram @candicesc1of1. And on X @candicesc1of1.

Alison Monahan: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for joining us.

Candice Cook Simmons: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: Oh, my pleasure. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee 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, and we'll talk soon!

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Candice Cook Simmons
LinkedIn: Candice Cook Simmons
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Podcast Episode 430: The Paxton AI Founders Talk About Their AI Legal Assistant
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