

Which way do you go?

As we read the scores of applications for our annual New Leaders of the Law honors, and edited the yearbook-style biographies of the 60 winners, we noticed the wide variety of legal practices represented. Workers' comp law, family law, insurance defense. Municipal corporate counsel, assistant attorney general, solo and small practice.

Clearly, the career arcs of top young lawyers have changed in recent years, reflecting the seismic shifts in the legal industry. It's no longer assumed that every top talent is going to head to a big firm. Or, judging from a handful of our honorees, even if they do join a major firm early on, it's no guarantee they're going to stay there. Clearly, more new lawyers are taking more time to weigh their options rather than rushing down the traditionally traveled path.

Allow us to offer our annual explanations and caveats: Lawyers chosen had to be under 40 years old as of Sept. 1, 2014. Only those who had applications submitted on their behalf were eligible. Litigation success and partnership promotions were factors in our choices, but so were pro bono work, bar association leadership, community service endeavors and achievements in non-litigation-oriented practice areas. In creating the "Nomination Excerpt" for each entry, we often combined multiple endorsements. Both there, and in the bullet points, we tried to highlight what set that person apart from the crowd and not simply list a series of legal victories.

As always, the most agonizing part of the project was determining which applicants weren't going to make the cut. All were impressive. All had traveled interesting paths. And, it's safe to say, many will appear on these pages in future years.

Paul Sussman
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