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AWARD RECIPIENTS

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COVER STORY

# SFNet's 40 Under 40 Profiles

MEET THE FUTURE LEADERS OF YOUR INDUSTRY!

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Network



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**J**ustin Wood is a partner at Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders LLP, where he represents lenders and borrowers in all aspects of financing transactions, including structuring, documenting, negotiating, amending and working out term and revolving credit facilities, asset-based loans, recurring revenue lines of credit, and acquisition financing. Justin's clients include public and privately-held companies across a range of industries, money-center and regional banks, private equity sponsors, and direct lenders. He also serves as a professional development partner for Troutman Pepper's Finance and Restructuring practice group and is a member of the firm's Associate Development Committee. In the community, Justin is a member of the board of directors of Communities in Schools of North Carolina and an active member of his local SFNet Chapter. Previously, Justin served on the board of directors of Refugee Family Services and New American Pathways, both in Atlanta, and completed a three-year term as a member of the Vanderbilt Alumni Association board of directors. Justin lives in Raleigh, North Carolina with his wife, Kelly, and their two daughters, Cannady and Wells.

**What is the best professional advice you have been given and how have you implemented it?**

One of my law professors, Randall Thomas, advised our securities law class to build a client base early to be in control of our careers. This advice inspired me to focus as much time and energy as I could muster on networking and business development activities early in my career. As a very junior associate, I joined great industry organizations such as ACG and SFNet (then CFA), served in leadership roles with my local alumni chapter, took contacts to MLB and NBA games as often as I could land the firm's tickets, and scheduled as many coffee and lunch meetings as I could. These efforts taught me about the industry and business of each of the people I met, forced me to better define and articulate my practice as well as the capabilities of my colleagues, and resulted in numerous longtime client and referral relationships, as well as great friendships. Along the way, I realized how much the "people" aspect of being a lawyer drives me – meeting interesting, inspiring people and learning about their business, industry, background, family, and interests. I doubled down on these activities regularly as I progressed through the associate ranks. The more I did, the more support and encouragement I received from partners and colleagues. These efforts raised my profile and reputation within the firm as an entrepreneurial associate, and ultimately paved a path to partnership for me. While it takes years to cultivate a strong network and client base (and I am still working hard at this constantly moving target), it is never too early for a young professional to get out there and the journey can be as rewarding as the destination.

**How do you define a good leader?**

A good leader has a servant's heart – approaching leadership as

servicing their team and being a good steward of the institution they lead. This means someone who regularly asks questions such as "how can I help?" and "what do you need?" They lead by example, rolling up their sleeves, volunteering for tough tasks, and putting in the work needed to execute on strategic objectives.

**What advice do you normally give to the junior talent you mentor?**

Invest in yourself by building your network, both inside and outside our organization. Internally, focus on building meaningful relationships by getting to know colleagues personally and professionally. When given an opportunity to work with someone new, knock it out of the park – it is a chance to cultivate a new passionate supporter to your corner and a steady source of new opportunities. Externally, get out of the office (or these days, away from billable work at home) and engage with organizations such as SFNet. Get involved in your community or within your broader industry, which will lead to forming new relationships and growing existing ones. Focus more on the reps than the results, as these activities can take years to bear fruit. It is never too early to start.

**How would you encourage young professionals to become more involved in their community or volunteer? How have these activities outside of work helped shape your professional life?**

Follow your passion. Community engagement can be very personally and professionally rewarding – you will meet inspiring people from different walks of life and hone your skills by working alongside a diverse group of professionals. If you are passionate about the mission of the organization, your investment of time and energy will be more worthwhile and you will serve with greater energy and engagement.

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**Justin Wood** and all  
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