

How to Get into Law School and Succeed as a Lawyer



A Practical Guide for Aspiring and Current Lawyers

Edited by John Papaspanos, Esq.

1. Introduction

Dear Readers,

This publication was authored by several lawyers practicing at law firms and a law professor – some of whom graduated from top law schools and have worked in Big Law – with the intent to share their knowledge and experience with the next generation of students who aspire to enter the legal profession. It also provides insights and advice to current legal practitioners. The information contained in this publication serves as an excellent starting point.

Arete means “excellence” in ancient Greek. It stands for the idea of fulfilling a purpose or function, of living up to your full potential. Whether you are a high school student thinking about potential careers, a college student deciding if and when to apply to law school, a law student eager for tips for success, or a parent wondering about the law school application process, we strongly believe this publication will serve as a useful resource. Our contributors provide general information derived from personal experience and we encourage readers to conduct further research on their own, seeking the most up-to-date information available.

Thank you for reading. We hope you find this publication helpful and we wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

We challenge you to adopt a spirit of *philotimo* to create conditions for the next generation to achieve even greater success than your own, in order to build a better society than the one you inherited.

Most sincerely on behalf of all the contributors,

John Papaspanos

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2. Should I Go to Law School?

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- **Step 1: Know Thyself.**
 - Do not apply to law schools because you're not sure what career you want to pursue after college. Borrowing from Stallone in *Rocky Balboa*, law school is not all sunshine and rainbows... it's a very tough place and law practice will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. *However*, if you honestly think that you have the mettle and potential to learn the analytical and interpersonal skills necessary to succeed and you're strongly motivated to endure through the process, you should engage in an informed decision as to whether law school is the right path for you.
 - Do you have the stamina and sustained curiosity without getting bored to read through large tracts of information and distill complexity? Do you like puzzles and to think of solutions to difficult problems? Are you a cool and logical thinker who is comfortable entertaining thoughts and arguments from alternative viewpoints with a healthy level of skepticism to know when someone is pulling the wool over your eyes? The foregoing questions are helpful to ask to determine whether you are a natural fit for making the massive investment of time and money that is attending law school. As such, you should not rush into the decision. Instead, access your network and discuss the day-to-day life of attorneys to see if their career and lifestyle is something that you wish to emulate. I suggest working as an intern during a summer at a law firm or district attorney's office and shadowing attorneys to the extent feasible. If not, try attending trials at a local court house to see if learning and practicing law is an activity you would enjoy. At this stage, it is difficult to know which exact area of the law you want to practice after law school and for this reason it is advisable to learn about different practice areas.
 - Last, for any of you whose parents own or run a diner, legal practice is very similar to the restaurant business. It is a service industry that requires discipline, efficiency, precision, timeliness, organization, excellent work product, impeccable customer service and strong work ethic to succeed. The law office is like a kitchen where every member of the team has distinct

and important role: from the junior associate who maintains the closing checklist for a deal, to the mid-level who is conducting the legal analysis and drafting the documentation, to the partner who is the chef overseeing the preparation and presentment of work product and legal advice that is easily digestible and highlights material points to extremely busy business people, who are paying top-dollar for excellence. And if the work product or service ever becomes lousy enough, then the clientele can abruptly stop coming to you and instead go to the competing diner across the street. Therefore, my advice is work at a restaurant at some point during your formative years – the training is invaluable for any career you elect to pursue.

- **Step 2: Understand the Risk/Reward Analysis.**
 - If you completed your soul-searching and decided that you think you have what it takes to become a lawyer, the second step is making an educated decision as to whether to attend law school. Becoming a lawyer is not the golden ticket to a life of riches and prestige like you see on some TV shows. You first need to examine your current situation and envision your future with *realistic and reasonable* assumptions and information to decide whether to start the journey of applying for law school at any given time. This involves an assessment of your finances and whether you have the ability to request financial assistance from family or obtain a scholarship to a law school. If your application is strong enough, many great schools can partially or even fully fund your studies – but it is a rare reward and you would need to conduct diligence to see if you have a decent shot based on your merits. If you’re less risk averse and/or believe you are bound for legal greatness, perhaps you want to take out loans to cover the costs of law school. This is a case-specific analysis and very important because countless law students apply – blindly thinking that all will fare favorably, but only to later despise looking at their law school diploma hanging on the wall.
 - Furthermore, those considering law school should also take into account the opportunity cost of attending law school – what would your income likely be doing something else during the three years of legal studies and thereafter as compared to your projected legal salary. One of my mentors once said that debt is a prison – and student debt represents *Alcatraz*. My recommendation is to estimate your hypothetical salary if you were to

graduate from your preferred law school, assuming you work in a practice area of your choice at a few law firms where you would like to practice. There are sites that provide such information that can help you make a ballpark estimate. Furthermore, I advise you determine the likelihood of you achieving this objective based on your application and prospects for success.

- Although it is very difficult to have an accurate forecast of your future at such early stage, the foregoing approach will force you to think through the issues and understand the risks and rewards of being a lawyer from a financial perspective. We have not discussed non-monetary considerations like the sense of doing good in the world and helping others as part of the calculus of whether to attend law school and become a lawyer. There is a myriad of opportunities in academia, the public sector and the non-profit sector to build fulfilling legal careers that will have meaningful impact on the community. The sense of purpose and euphoria from enacting positive change in the world cannot be quantified and should be taken into account in your considerations – especially in light of debt forgiveness programs that may be available after you devote a certain number of years in your relevant field. Last, collect advice and data points from every source in your decision making process but at the end of the day, you should plan your chartered course and each careful step so you can say... you did it your way à la Sinatra.

3. LSAT Preparation

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- **The LSAT is the single most important aspect of your application.**

Do not settle for a lower score than you are capable of. You can take the LSAT three times... Use all of them if necessary. If you don't, another applicant will. Regardless of what any school says (outside of Yale), your highest score is the only score that matters to admissions.

- **Common sources for LSAT prep:**

➤ *The Powerscore Logical Reasoning Bible*

➤ *Logic Games Bible*

(http://www.powerscore.com/lsat/content_publications.cfm)

These two books cover absolutely everything you need to know about the sections of the test that yield the most immediate improvements. There is no superfluous or outdated information.

- **Official LSAT Drill Prep Tests.**

These are copies of official tests that were actually administered.

(<https://os.lsac.org/Release/Shop/Publications.aspx>)

- For best results, take all four sections in a row to build endurance.
- Take them early in the morning to simulate actual testing conditions.
- Do the old ones first and work towards the newer ones.
- Can you notice the differences in content, question selection and games?

- **LSAT Prep Courses**

There are also a variety of courses available to help students improve their LSAT scores. Although these courses can be helpful, they can also be very expensive. The three most popular LSAT prep courses are:

- *Testmasters*
- *Powerscore*
- *Kaplan*
- *Blueprint* (In NYC, this is an extremely effective course.)

If you DO take a course...

- Do NOT rely solely on the course. Independent study is crucially important to your success on the LSAT.
- Use what you learn in class to help you improve, not as an excuse to avoid taking practice tests and reviewing your progress independently.

If you DO NOT take a course...

- Don't worry. Plenty of students have been very successful using nothing more than hard work and practice tests.

- Buy the *Powerscore Bibles* and as many officially sanctioned LSAT practice tests as possible.
- Track your progress and go over EVERY question you miss until you understand exactly why you didn't reach the correct answer.

4. Law School Advisor

Contributed by Harry Koulos

- **Consider Hiring a Law School Adviser.** It can be extremely helpful to have a professional guide you through each step of the law school application process: choosing the right schools to apply to, determining whether to retake the LSAT, brainstorming ideas for application essays, perfecting your resume and essays, and preparing for interviews. The adviser can also help you draft requests for scholarship money and effective update emails to schools that have waitlisted you. With a law school adviser's expertise, you will have excellent essays that you can pull from going forward, and you may be able to get into better schools and receive more scholarship money than you otherwise would have. Private advisers' services can be somewhat pricey, but keep in mind that it may be worth it if their services can help you secure significant scholarship packages. Possibly the most important thing a law school adviser provides, however, is peace of mind throughout what can be a stressful application process. Consider checking out <http://lawschooladvising.com/> and taking advantage of a free consultation.

5. Law School Selection

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- **The Cardinal Rule of Law School Admissions:** Only attend a school where you will be comfortable graduating. Assume you will not graduate at the top of your class and you will not transfer to a better school after 1L year.
- If you cannot get into a school where you will be comfortable graduating from median, think very seriously about your decision to attend law school

at all. There are PLENTY of lawyers, and PLENTY of other rewarding careers that don't require 3 years of stress and a six-figure debt.

- Also, be very skeptical of employment statistics provided by law schools. "Employed after graduation" does not mean "employed in a gainful career-track legal position after graduation."
- Median salary figures are bifurcated. Only the top students make the salaries that are advertised in admissions pamphlets. The rest make significantly lower wages – often too low to pay down the considerable debt of law school within a reasonable timeframe.
- Just being employed is not enough. Always find out how many graduates from your law school obtained gainful employment in any of the following:
 - **NLJ250 ("Big Law") Firms:** Market salary, strong exit-options, great formal legal training.
 - **Judicial Clerkships:** Excellent doctrinal legal training working for judges (at the federal or state levels).

6. Law School Tiers

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- There are several law school classifications.
 - T14. (Schools ranked 1-14)
 - Tier 1. (Schools ranked 1-50)
 - Tier 2. (Schools ranked 1-100)
- In general, aim to attend the highest tier you can get into. The top 10 T14 schools are the most prestigious. They afford their students the best job prospects, professional networks and career opportunities.
- Only significant scholarships and strong personal or regional preferences should deter you from choosing a higher-ranked tier over a lower-ranked tier.

Top Law School Specialties

- When applying to top schools, cater your application to their strengths:
 1. **Yale:** Academia (You MUST have two letters of recommendation from professors to qualify.)
 2. **Harvard:** Government and Business (Prior graduate study is STRONGLY favored, but high the numerical credentials will also allow you a great shot.)
 3. **Stanford:** Everything (Stanford is a complete black box. There is no accurate measure of their standards.)
 4. **Columbia:** Corporate Law
 5. **Chicago:** Law and Economics
 6. **NYU:** Public Interest
 7. **Penn:** Corporate Law & Interdisciplinary Studies (Show an interest in their reputation for corporate law placement, collegiality and cross-disciplinary legal study.)
 8. **Virginia:** Government (Either be an in-state candidate or show a strong, sincere interest in attending by applying with binding as Early Decision.)
 9. **Berkeley:** Public Interest
 10. **Duke:** Quality of Life, Non-Traditional Legal Careers
 11. **Michigan:** Midwest Placement (Great school historically, but currently struggles with placement.)
 12. **Northwestern:** Mature, Practical, Professional (If you do not have full-time work experience, you need not apply.)
 13. **Cornell:** Strong NY Placement; Small Class Size. (Like Yale, Harvard, Columbia and Penn, it's one of five Ivy League law schools.)
 14. **Georgetown:** Government

7. Law School Admission

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- **Law Schools Look for 3 Things in Prospective Students:**

- Numeric Credentials (LSAT and GPA)
- Diversity
- Employability upon Graduation

To get in, you can usually get away with the first two of these.

- **The interests of law firms are not necessarily aligned with the interest of law schools.** Most schools know this, and will show preference to applicants who:
 - Have high numeric credentials.
 - Have diverse geographic, academic and experiential backgrounds as well as personal characteristics that make them stand out.
 - Have exhibited strong professional performance.
- Getting one or two years of full-time professional experience under your belt before applying is also usually a good idea. It will give you time to save money, develop competencies that will distinguish you from your peers and help clarify whether law school is really the right path for you to pursue.
- Law school should be seen as an investment in your future. Like any investment, law school should be segmented into milestones.
- Do not continue if you do not reach the following milestones.
 - Develop skills that will make you an asset to a legal employer before you even enter law school.
 - Get into a school where you will be comfortable graduating at median.
 - Get a scholarship that makes graduating at median affordable.
 - Perform well enough after your first and second semester to justify two more years of law school.
 - Get a job offer at 2L OCI (on-campus interviews) or enough leads that a job will eventually be possible.
- **Words of Wisdom from a T14 Admissions Coordinator:**

“At the end of the day, law schools do not make people successful. Successful people enter law school, and eventually graduate from law school with a legal education. Law schools target successful applicants, put their ‘stamp’ on them while they are students, and hope that they continue to be successful, attributing that success to the law school they attended.”

8. Your Law School Application

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- Admissions committees love to “figure you out” by reading your application.
- Use your application to build a strong, cohesive narrative and an obvious persona. Build a unique archetype. (For example, “the intrepid entrepreneur looking to help startups” or “the ardent public interest activist who is determined to his his/her J.D. to help people in need” or “the brilliant Chemistry student who is going to become a brilliant patent litigation attorney someday” or “the pensive academic who is going to contribute to the school’s intellectual atmosphere.”)
- Obviously don’t blatantly state these things in your personal statement or resume, but do paint a clear picture that law schools can identify as your story as a testament to the school’s diversity and inclusiveness.
- Make sure your resume, personal statement and supplemental materials emphasize consistent themes and personal qualities.

Supplemental Materials for Law School Application

- **Why X Essays:** The “Why X” essay highlights exactly why you would like to attend a specific law school. These are essays are particularly helpful for students who are borderline, or well above a school’s numerical medians.
- **Letter of Continued Interest (LOCI):** If you haven’t heard back from a school within a reasonable timeframe and are waitlisted, a sincere, well-

written LOCI that highlights exactly why you'd be a great fit in the incoming class can significantly impact your application.

- **Explanatory Letters:** Explanatory letters typically provide context for low test scores or GPAs. (For example, if extenuating circumstances prevented you from performing to your highest potential during undergrad, consider explaining those circumstances to the admissions committee. ONLY submit an explanatory letter if you have a legitimate reason for underperformance.)

9. Survive 1L

Survive 1L: Part 1

Contributed by Alexander Guminski

- How do you survive 1L year? Let's start out by clarifying that NOTHING in law school matters more than your grades from 1L year. That sounds terrible, frightening and discouraging, but it's the truth.
- All the subjects you study during 1L year on the *Multistate Bar Examination (MBE)*, which every graduating law student must take. More importantly, law firms and other potential employers such as government agencies and corporations, typically do their recruiting (on-campus interviewing or OCI) in the fall semester.
- OCI takes place during the fall semester of your 2L year. This means the most black-and-white way to distinguish yourself among other candidates, who will also be applying for the same jobs you are, will be your 1L grades. Employers, particularly large law firms, typically want to hire attorneys they believe will stay overtime to complete their projects.
- The current market for attorneys is dismal. Lawyers work much later into their lives, which means there are fewer available positions for new graduates. Firms are not hiring *many* attorneys, they are hiring *more efficient* attorneys to keep their costs down.

- The students who will get the work done did well in 1L year, which takes a lot of work and time to do well. The few students who actually do well earn a spot in the top 10% of the class grade-wise, which earns you an invitation from the Dean of Students to join a legal writing journal called the *Law Review*.
- This is a great honor and benefit to you. It's a great addition to your resume, gains you the benefit of a better social status within the legal community, with plenty of opportunities to have your articles (or "notes" as we call them) published. To employers, this is considered one of the most reputable accomplishments of your law school career. It shows you can write meaningfully, and that someone else *thinks* you can write meaningfully, which will always be an ace in your sleeve.

DO's & DON'Ts

The following is a practical list "do's and don'ts" for 1L survival.

- **DO make friends as often and early as possible.** Law school is a competition; the more friends you have, the fewer people will hide study materials from you in the library or give you the wrong day's notes if you miss a class.
- **DO read the next day's materials the night before class.** To understand what is discussed in class you have to have some advanced exposure the information before you're caught off guard and thrown into a classroom discussion about complicated terms and concepts.
- **DO make time to enjoy yourself.** If you constantly are reading and writing you will burn out; PLEASE, go out and socialize, do yoga, or schedule time at the gym; these and other methods of stress relief and relaxation will pay off tenfold.
- **DO spend time at Career Services.** The team at Career Services is hired specifically to address your professional needs and interests and to point you in the right direction to accomplish your desired career goals. They are your friends. (Also, you pay for their services with your student fees... make use of them!)

- **DO get involved with legal associations and groups.** *Phi Alpha Delta*, various law societies and student organizations are a fantastic way to meet people and network in the legal community through relationship-building charitable work.
- **DO choose a specialization.** You only need to be a well-rounded attorney for the Bar Exam, not for your entire career. Choose a specialization that you know you will enjoy being immersed in every day.
- **DO stay positive.** Law school can be a high stress environment, but it doesn't have to be! Positive thinking helps net positive results and can reduce stress. Believe in yourself and the power of your dreams. There will undoubtedly be difficult days where you get cold called on and perhaps don't know the answer, or someone mistreats you. Staying positive and never losing sight of the bigger picture, which is accomplishing your goal, will never steer you wrong. Many people exude negativity in law school, and it is quite contagious. It is up to you to disregard it and stay focused and positive.
- **DO plan ahead.** Start thinking about the type of law you would like to practice. This way, when 2L year comes you can coordinate your schedule more effectively and take classes that apply to the type of law you plan on practicing.
- **DO study hard.** Know that all your hard work will pay off in the end. Stay confident and perseverant; one day you will be very thankful that you went through with your law school education.
- **DON'T be "that guy/girl".** If you answer every question in class, and never go out with classmates, then become a "teacher's pet," EVERYONE will notice and – whether you care about it or not –people who may one day be in a position to hire/fire you will remember these things.
- **DON'T take the same approach to law school as in undergrad.** You cannot learn an entire semester's worth of material the week before your final exam. Law school demands that you learn gradually and intensely, every... single... day.

- **DON'T worry.** Just breathe. Don't let yesterday affect tomorrow. Stay calm, be cool, collect your thoughts, and seize the day.
- **DON'T enter into an intimate relationship.** If you're already in one, tell the other person it will not work out. There is a strong reason for this recommendation. Please email for the full and proper disclosure.
- **DON'T procrastinate. Period.** What you didn't read tonight, someone else did. You are already behind.
- **DON'T work during 1L year.** It is a full-time job in itself. If you are working 20 hours a week, that's a weekly loss of 20 study hours. Since most of 2L and 3L courses build off concepts from 1L year, ANY time spent away from your 1L coursework diminishes the capacity to retain those concepts into 2L and 3L. It's just... not... worth it.
- **DON'T lose yourself in law school.** While it is important to do well and study hard, it is equally important to continue doing the things you love. Maintaining a healthy balance is crucial to your mental health. (As stated earlier, exercising is a great way to reduce stress. The healthier you are, the more motivated you will become.)

Survive 1L: Part 2

Contributed by Antigone Curis

- **Take good notes.** This is essential to doing well on exams. There is an immense amount of materials to review by the end of the semester. Gathering all your notes and staying organized is one of the most important things to do.
- **Pay attention in class.** Each case you learn about is significant in its own way. Learn how to sift through superfluous information and understand the major take away of each case you read.
- **Get outlines and resources.** Befriend 2L's and 3L's who took the same courses with the same professors you have! They will most likely have

beneficial outlines and resources to serve as guides. (Of course, it's probably wise to know whether that person scored well on their finals!) Be careful not to blindly rely on someone else's work.

- **Keep study guides and commercial outlines:** Study Guides can also be very helpful. (E.g., *Emanuel's, Examples & Explanations*, and *The Nutshell* series.) Study guides break down major principles and explain them through a clearer lens. Be warned, however, that your professor may be teaching the material in a different way. In these instances, don't be afraid to ask for clarification! Commercial Outlines can also be very helpful in categorizing aspects of the course, however they are very generalized and often do not capture significant detail and important hypotheticals your professor highlights.
- **Join study groups.** Depending what type of student you are, this may or may not work for you. If you study better on your own and find groups distracting, this may not be the best use of your study time. However, for those who find group learning effective this can be a great test prep strategy as it allows you to bounce ideas and findings off one another. Just make sure the group is being productive and using time efficiently.
- **Remember: practice makes perfect!** Most professors have old exams on reserve in the library. About a month before finals, make copies and familiarize yourself with the professor's exam format and the testing style, then try to take an exam. The more comfortable and prepared you feel, the better you will do!
- **Utilize all available resources:** Whether you realize it or not, your professors are a resource. Don't be reluctant to e-mail a professor for clarification. You are paying for an education, so get the most out of it! Most professors are receptive to questions. If they are willing to go over an exam question to offer feedback and comments that experience is invaluable.

10. OCI and Interviewing

OCI and Interviewing: Part 1

Contributed by Toula Leberis

- **When to expect OCI:**
 - Most law schools participate in an On Campus Interview (“OCI”) program from August through October. Employers visit law schools to interview for summer and entry-level associate positions.
 - OCI encompasses a wide variety of employers including large/small firms, government agencies and public interest groups.
- **When to participate in OCI:**
 - OCI targets rising 2L’s and 3L’s. Each school has different protocols for bidding to interview with employers, signing up for OCI, etc. - so make sure to touch base with Career Services for information on how to bid for employers.
- **Benefits of OCI:**
 - Participating in OCI is a great way to find a summer associate position, gain great legal experience and ultimately find a job after graduation. (Many firms offer associate positions to their summer associate interns.)
- **Resume Collect:**
 - Employers who do not participate in the OCI program might prefer to collect resumes through the school’s *Symplicity* page.

Interview Tips

Once you schedule your interviews it is important to make a good impression. Here are some ways to prepare:

- **Bring all necessary materials:**
 - Updated resume
 - Writing sample
 - Law School Transcripts (Official or Unofficial)
- **Dress in conservative business attire:**
 - Men: suit and tie
 - Women: dress slacks/skirt and a blazer
 - Appropriate Colors: blue, black, beige, grey
 - Accessories: neutral nail polish/make-up; modest jewelry.

- **Arrive 15 minutes early!**
 - If you've never been to the place where you are interviewing, take a few moments to map out your route.
- **Be prepared:**
 - Express an interest in the position.
 - Research the employer and the interviewer on *Symlicity Lexis*, *Westlaw*, *Martindale-Hubbell* and the firm's webpage.
 - Talk to upper level students who have worked for the employer to gain helpful insight.
 - Take advantage of mock interviews.
 - Be ready to share why you would be a good candidate; tie in previous work/extracurricular activities that would show you possess the skills to do the position.

OCI and Interviewing: Part 2

Contributed by Alexander Guminski

- **Law students and lawyers want to help you.** It's common in the legal community to want to help subordinates since we all know what it took to reach our current positions and understand what you're going through. No question is a "stupid question"! Feel free to reach out to members of the legal community for advice!
- **Mentors are everywhere.** In fact, someone might be mentoring you without your realizing it. Befriend upperclassmen, join one of the organizations, share ideas and anecdotal stories. Living vicariously through someone else's experiences is not as boring as it may seem and can offer you tons of opportunities for employment and long-term friendships.
- **Consult your faculty advisors.** You may be assigned one on your first day of classes. Befriend and talk to them! They will offer you a better and more substantial perspective than anyone in your circle. Take their classes and develop a connection with them so that they may one day write your job recommendations.

11. Non-OCI Options: 1L Summer Internships

Contributed by Antigone Curis

- **Preliminary Steps:**

- In late November/early December, you should have applied for a 1L summer internship. Picking an internship is the foundation of your legal career. You will build major relationships and networks with people who can teach you unique information that will be crucial to your intended career path.
- For this reason, you must first figure out what type of law interests you and apply to internships that are either on point or close to your area(s) of interest.
- Work with Career Services to help identify a list of viable options. Do not hesitate to apply to a few places of interest on your own as well.

- **Words of Wisdom for New Interns:**

- Be aware that this is the beginning of your reputation in your legal career. Dress and conduct yourself appropriately at all times to be taken seriously.
- Be confident but polite to everyone you meet.
- Be eager and willing to learn and pitch in as much as possible.
- Absorb all the information you can to acquire the skills you need to become a cutting-edge professional.
- If you're not early, you're late. Always be on time.
- Complete tasks on time as well.
- Ask questions about assignments to ensure you complete it correctly.
- Network with everyone you meet and try to make valuable, long-lasting connections.
- Observe how legal professionals conduct themselves.

- **Contributor's Anecdote: My 1L Summer Internship**

I have a strong interest and passion for criminal defense and have always felt that there is nothing more rewarding than defending someone's liberty and freedom. People are essentially relying on you to protect their most fundamental constitutional rights.

I knew I wanted to do criminal defense even before I went to law school. However, I wanted to try something new to gain more knowledge and insight into what I really wanted to do. In realizing this, I found that interning at the District Attorney's office -- seeing how the other side operated -- would be most beneficial to my training. By knowing how to build a case, I would know exactly how to break it down.

At the District Attorney's Office Investigations Bureau, I wrote motions, observed trials and transcribed wiretaps. This was a great experience as it helped me grow closer to the person and professional I am today. One of the most important things I learned at this internship was that there is nothing more valuable to a criminal defendant than a fair prosecutor. Regardless of where you intern, the goal is to grow and hone your skillset so you can ultimately advance in your career.

Don't hesitate to venture outside of exactly what you want to do, especially when it can help you understand your profession even more.

12. Internships During Law School

Contributed by Thalia Staikos

If you are not satisfied with the results of your OCIs, do the following:

- **Consider internships with small or mid-size firms during the school year.**
 - A small or mid-size firm gives you more opportunities to make yourself indispensable because there is not a surplus of employees doing the same job.
 - Making yourself indispensable during the school year when no other summer associates are present means that the firm will take note of your work.
 - You will have the chance to do more substantive work because of the size of the firm.
- **Seek out opportunities that make you more marketable in the field you actually would like to be in.**

- Since positions available during the school year are less competitive, the likelihood of finding one in your actual field of interest is higher. Use this opportunity to explore your specific interests.
 - Consider employers who will actually assign you substantive work. This will give you an edge of marketability above your classmates.
- **Be especially proactive about assignments during this time.**
 - It is likely that you will be the only intern or law clerk working for your employer during the school year. As such, the focus will be on you, so your eagerness to be assigned to cases and projects will be noted.
 - Show the employer that this internship is a priority. The final factor leading to my job offer was a motion I wrote for a case. My employer was aware that I was working on this assignment despite the fact that I was out of the office at a Moot Court competition and finals were merely two weeks away. After offering me a permanent job, the employer stated that it was this moment that stood out and led to the final decision to hire me.
- **Useful resources for finding school year internships:**
 - **Martindale (Legal Website)** allows you to search for employers and open positions by virtually any criteria that is important to you. You can narrow your geographic area, desired size of the employer, and fields of interest.
 - **Young lawyers division of your local bar association.** Many law schools pay for their students' membership to the local bar association, which often has a young lawyers division that hosts social networking events. Take the time to connect with other young lawyers who may know of opportunities available through their employers.
 - **Target alumni in your desired field.** Set up an appointment at Career Services for help conducting a search on alumni in your field. Be sure to have some criteria of what you are looking for in a school year internship. The more specific you are, the more helpful the representative can be in directing you to helpful alumni.
- **Contributor's Anecdote: Internships During 2L Year:**

- In addition to providing practical experience for your legal career, a 2L internship can be an alternate avenue to a job offer, outside the OCI pathway.
- As a 2L, I was disappointed with the OCI process. I was not afforded the opportunity to interview with many firms that I was interested in; employers who did offer me interviews did not have a strong focus on my desired practice areas. As such, I sought out opportunities off the beaten track during the school year that were very specific to my desired field. This ultimately led to a 3L job offer.

13. 2L Summer Associate

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- **Preparation**

- Conduct research regarding the various practice areas of the firm.
- Understand what type of matters each practice group focuses on and determine which practice groups handle matters that align with your interests.
- For litigation practice groups: Maximize your school's resources to learn how to use the legal search platforms provided by companies such as West Law, Lexis Nexis, and Bloomberg Law.
- For corporate practice groups: Familiarize yourself with the types of contracts and documents that you will be working on by accessing EDGAR database (e.g. searching for publicly available copies of purchase and sale agreements, loan agreements, etc.)
- Immerse yourself in reading materials to learn about contract drafting and contract law.
- *Practical Law* offers great explanations for contractual concepts and provides information on the major contractual provisions, including:
 - Their intended purpose
 - Various versions of specific provisions using different contractual language (e.g., contractual language that is favorable to one party's interests)
 - In-depth analysis about the implications of certain provisions and contractual language on the risk allocation among parties

- For more information, please visit: <http://us.practicallaw.com/>
 - *Drafting Contracts: How and Why Lawyers Do What They Do* by Tina L. Stark is an excellent resource that serves as an anatomy of a contract, providing explanations about each section of a written agreement and insights about specific contractual language and their meaning. The book includes many opportunities to engage in drafting exercises that can develop the practical skills needed to succeed as a transactional attorney.
 - For more information, a used version of the book can be purchased online at Amazon for less than \$20.
- **Knowing how to write communications to your supervising attorneys**
 - Achieving greater efficiency is one of the most important objectives that an associate should focus on. Time is a critical resource at a law firm, and knowing how to draft a proper memorandum to your supervising attorneys is an essential skill to develop.
 - Treat every e-mail as work product. Your e-mail communication reflects your professionalism and integrity. It forms your reputation. Read through every e-mail you send twice before sending it and ensure that you're sending it to the appropriate recipient.
 - There are variety of books and resources that can assist you in learning how to draft a proper "legal memo". It is extremely worthwhile to read them prior to your employment.
- **Assignment of projects**
 - Each firm may differ in the process it uses to assign associates assignments. It is important to know which assignment system is used by your firm.
 - Further, it is helpful to research the associates and partners in each practice area that you are interested in and to know what type of matters are handled by each attorney or practice group in the event that you are assigned to work for that individual or group.
 - When you are assigned to a project, it is important to send an e-mail to the supervising attorney to arrange a meeting to receive your assignment.

- Note that the goal is to minimize the time it takes for the supervising attorney to effectively convey the instructions for the assignment, but at the same time, do not leave the meeting with questions unanswered or issues regarding what exactly needs to be done because this will create inefficiencies in how you spend your time researching and completing the project.
 - Make sure that you understand precisely what is expected of you for each project. Always strive to be comprehensive, thorough, and supportive of the supervising attorney. The more you show enthusiasm and passion with respect to your work, the more you will learn and you will build greater trust with your supervising attorney.
 - Keep careful track of what tasks you complete for each project, not only for the purpose of documenting billable hours, but also to record a history of the work you contributed for the matter in case more work needs to be done in the future. This includes the meticulous naming of the different versions of each document that you work on, taking note of the context in which the document was edited (e.g., Version 3: [Supervising attorney]'s mark-up in response to the mark-up of Version 2 by counterparty's counsel).
- **Timeliness**
 - Always arrive to work earlier than your starting time. There are always minor tasks to complete before you engage in the major tasks of the day, such as looking through your e-mails, organizing your desk, preparing your to-do list, jotting down events on your calendar, etc.
 - **Always under-promise, but over-perform.**
 - Managing expectations is a difficult balancing act. The deadlines are set by attorneys and you should be very cautious in promising to complete a particular task by a certain time unless you are certain that you can deliver on that promise. Providing communications to the supervising attorney to modify any expectations is important for planning purposes. Trust and integrity are the foundation of an attorney's reputation and "making good on your promises" is of great importance.
 - **Organization**

- Multi-tasking: Prepare to weigh the demands of several projects at once, with the added time commitments for pro bono work.
 - Separate the matters you are working on by setting different piles and using clips and post it notes. Recording the history of your project is important for the task of efficiently re-visiting the project in the future. Such documentation can help you manage any future workloads with less time and effort.
 - An important task, as stated above, is to learn how to use the “redlining” software with high proficiency (i.e. the “redlining” software compares documents and identifies any differences in language). Properly label the documents with the appropriate version number and keep notes of the context in which each document was created. Keep track of the versions sent and received between the client and the counterparty.
 - Folders: Carefully organize the folders in which you save all your documents
- **Build rapport with the professional assistants, librarians, and paralegals**
 - These individuals have more practical knowledge regarding many issues that arise in your work. Forge professional relationships and kindly ask questions to the appropriate individuals in order to save time and effort in completing your projects.
- **Social interaction in the law firm and at social events with your colleagues**
 - Make sure to always smile, show good manners, and exhibit a positive attitude.
 - Always think twice before speaking. It is better to err on the side of caution in your selection of conversation topics, the content of your statements, and your tone and demeanor. The practice of law is a profession, and attorneys must uphold standards of professionalism.
 - Not to belabor the point, but always use caution in conversation. It is extremely important to be sensitive and strive to be politically correct while avoiding any controversial topics.

14. Networking and Mentorship

Contributed by Toulia Leberis

- Become a Member of Bar Associations in order to meet lawyers that could become mentors for you or offer you job opportunities. Some of these associations include:
 - Hellenic Bar Association
 - Local bar associations
 - For example, the Chicago Bar Association, Philadelphia Bar Association, etc.

- Attend any type of networking opportunities these organizations offer such as:
 - Lecture Series
 - Career Fairs
 - Open Houses
 - Annual Fundraising Balls

- While at these events make sure to speak to as many professionals as possible.
 - Always make sure to follow up and keep in touch with the mentors you meet at these events.
 - Ways of keeping in touch include:
 - Adding the mentor on LinkedIn
 - E-mailing with the mentor

- Update the mentors on your progress
 - Send them relevant legal news article to their field
 - Ask to meet for coffee to discuss career paths/opportunities

15. Legal Academia:

U.S. Graduate Programs (LL.M. & S.J.D.)

Contributed by Konstantinos Stylianou

- **Description of the programs:** On top of the main law degree (J.D.), most law schools in the United States offer a master's degree called LL.M. and some offer a doctorate degree called S.J.D. or J.S.D.
- **The LL.M.**
 - The LL.M. is a one year program mainly designed for students who got their primary legal education outside of the United States. Students who hold a J.D. may also wish to get an LL.M. either as a specialization degree, or because for some schools it is a prerequisite to advance to the S.J.D. (or because three years of law school were not enough). LL.M. students have the freedom to design their curriculum as they please, since most schools do not offer specialty LL.M. degrees. Some schools do, but specialty LL.M.s do not necessarily have a higher standing than a general LL.M. with very few exceptions (e.g. LL.M.s in Tax Law). Also, some schools offer a joint program, which consists of the LL.M. and a degree or certificate from another school, such as the business school (e.g. Penn's LL.M./Wharton Certificate program). The LL.M. gives students the right to participate to most of the law school's activities, but not all. For example, some law journals, moot courts and clinical courses are usually reserved for J.D. students with few exceptions.
- **The S.J.D.**
 - The S.J.D. degree is the terminal law degree and it's designed for scholars who want to teach or pursue a research career. Because law professors in the US are not required to have a doctorate (although it is becoming increasingly common), American law students do not feel the need to obtain an S.J.D.. As a result, the S.J.D. is also dominated by foreign students.
 - S.J.D. programs vary greatly by school. The minimum duration is three years, although the majority of students take more time. Most schools require candidates to take at least a year of classes and remain in residence during that time. From the second or third year students are expected to finalize their proposal and start writing. In terms of deliverables, schools usually offer the option of a thesis or three papers of publishable quality. This is to be co-decided between the student and his/her committee.
- **Your chances of being accepted. How to get in.**

- Much like the J.D., admission in the LL.M. and S.J.D. programs varies by school. Your chances of acceptance in the program depend on three factors, of which only one is in your hands: (a) the school's admission standards, (b) the size of the program, (c) your application. The school's standards is an obvious parameter; some schools are simply more demanding than others. As a rule of thumb the more highly ranked the school, the more selective it is. The size of the program is also important. Some schools have extremely small LL.M. and S.J.D. programs (such as Stanford and Yale), while others have very large programs (such as NYU and Georgetown). The bigger the class the higher your chances of getting in. There is nothing you can do about a school's selectivity, but you can tweak your application to match what schools are usually looking for. For a list of the main factors, please see below.
- **For the L.L.M.**
 - Grades: Your home law school's grades are important, but not terribly important (except maybe for the top three schools). Despite what most law schools say, only a handful of them require a degree with distinction and even those do not have a typical cut-off grade (at least not officially).
 - Job experience: Some related work experience is always good. Because it is difficult for law schools to assess the quality and reputation of your employer in your home country, they may sometimes care more about the *type* of job you had (judicial clerkship over being a lawyer) than your employer.
 - Recommendation letters: An enthusiastic recommendation letter can take you a long way. Choose your references wisely and ask them to personalize your recommendation letter, with details about how they know you, how long they've been working with you, what are your special qualities and competencies, and why they think you will be a good addition to the program.
 - Additional degrees: Other Master's or Doctoral degrees can help, but good grades on those degrees do not usually compensate for your grades in your main law degree.
 - Extracurriculars: American law schools place great emphasis on a person's well-rounded personality. Participation in moot courts, student organizations, journal boards, summer programs and other student activities can make your application shine.

- Publications: Because publishing in legal academia is considered hard in the United States, and because of the average age of candidates, schools don't necessarily expect you to have published. If you have it can help your application, but probably only if you have published in a well-known and ranked journal. Non-English and non-peer reviewed journals usually don't mean much to admission committees.
- **For the S.J.D.**
 - Admission in the S.J.D. program is very competitive and usually reserved only to those students who aspire to pursue a career in academia. Schools also seem to show a sort of favoritism toward students that have obtain their LL.M. or J.D. from that school. Some schools have an explicit requirement to that end. All the factors mentioned for the LL.M. still matter, but a couple more stand out:
 - Research proposal: Your research proposal is extremely important and can practically convey almost all the information the admission committee wants to see in a candidate. You can think of your proposal as a short paper of publishable quality. It must clearly state a hypothesis, a methodology and preliminary results, but it must not purport to hold all the answers to the research question you are setting out to answer. After all, that is the purpose of the S.J.D. program, to train you in how to find the “right” answer and how to be a good scholar.
 - Recommendations: Recommendations for the S.J.D. are slightly different than those for the LL.M. in that they must prove additional qualities of the candidate. Among those is his or her ability to analytically dissect and examine many novel areas of the law and of other disciplines (as most doctoral degrees are interdisciplinary), as well as his or her ability to commit to a long-term project and remain engaged and motivated.
 - Publications: Because the nature of the S.J.D. is to produce scholarship, previous examples of the candidate's work are a key part of the application. While candidates are not necessarily expected to have published their previous work, a writing sample is almost always required.
- **Bar certification eligibility.**

- With the exception of very few Bar Associations in the United States (most notably New York and California), the LL.M. does not give students the right to sit the bar exam. Even those jurisdictions that accept the LL.M. as an eligible law degree place have several other requirements and restrictions. That said a large percentage of LL.M. students decide to sit the New York (or California) bar exam, and many of them pass. Official statistics and requirements are published on the websites of the Bar Associations. The S.J.D. does not make a student eligible for the bar exam.
- **Career prospects or why do an LL.M. or S.J.D.**
 - Most American law schools advertise stellar career prospects for the J.D. students but are less vocal about their LL.M. or S.J.D. programs. It is therefore hard to know how these students fare. It seems to be widely accepted that LL.M. students are at a disadvantage compared to J.D. students, and securing a permanent job at an American law firm in their US offices is very rare. However, it is not uncommon for LL.M. and S.J.D. students to be hired by American law firms in one of their international offices. Prior work experience is almost a must if you are looking to be hired by an American law firm following your LL.M. or S.J.D.. Most major law schools participate at a career fair in January, which is designed to bring LL.M. and S.J.D. students in touch with representatives from American and other international law firms for an interview.
 - The academic market for S.J.D. students is not very promising in the US. Law schools hire entry level lecturers through an annual conference called the Association of American Law Schools conference. To be considered competitive a scholar must have at least a J.D. or and S.J.D. or another doctoral degree, a couple of publications and a major publication in the making, a clear and novel research agenda, and very strong recommendations. Many AALS candidates have already held a fellowship position at a law school before deciding to pursue a tenure track position. If your interest does not lie in the American legal market, then career prospects are brighter. American law schools are generally considered to be among the best in the world, and therefore a graduate degree from an American law school can be an impressive credential.

16. Junior Associate Experience

Contributed by Nicole D. Corey

- **Preparation**
 - Conduct research regarding the practice area of the firm that you will be joining.
 - For litigation practice groups: Refamiliarize yourself with legal search platforms provided by companies such as West Law and Lexis Nexis. Review the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and general discovery motions. As a junior attorney in litigation, you will spend a substantial amount of time in the discovery phase of litigation.
 - For corporate practice groups: Familiarize yourself with the types of contracts and documents that you will be working on by accessing EDGAR database (e.g. searching for publicly available copies of purchase and sale agreements, loan agreements, etc.).
 - Identify future colleagues and supervisors and conduct research on their backgrounds and type of work they handle.
 - Each law firm differs with respect to its organization structure. At some law firms, you will directly enter a specific practice group and you will be assigned work by the individuals in that practice group. While at other law firms, the organizational structure is an “open” system whereby you rotate through various practice groups or choose the type of legal assignments you wish to be assigned to.
 - In either situation, it is important to show your interest and engagement to the supervisors who will be assigning you work.
 - As a junior attorney, this might entail setting up meetings with colleagues who practice the type of law that you foresee yourself practicing.
 - Networking does not end by beginning at a law firm. If anything, it indispensable part of your early career.
- **Writing communications to your supervising attorneys**

- As a junior attorney, you will be asked to write substantive emails to your supervising attorneys. Time is a critical resource at a law firm, and knowing how to draft a proper memorandum to your supervising attorneys is an essential skill to develop.
- Treat every e-mail as work product. Your e-mail communication reflects your professionalism and integrity. It forms your reputation. Read through every e-mail you send twice before sending it and ensure that you're sending it to the appropriate recipient.
- **Assignment of projects**
 - When you are assigned to a project, the first step is to arrange a meeting with the supervising attorney to receive your assignment.
 - Prepare yourself for this meeting. Browse the documents in connection with the assignment on the internal system and obtain any information you can on the client. This will show the supervising attorney that you have prepared for the meeting.
 - Always bring a pen and notepad to the meeting, or any meeting with an attorney for that matter. Showing up to a meeting empty handed is a rookie mistake that can be avoided.
 - Make sure that you leave the meeting with no unanswered questions that will slow down the progress or efficiency of the assignment. While it is normal to be confused or overwhelmed initially, it is important that you understand precisely what is expected of you for each project.
 - Keep careful track of what tasks you complete for each project, not only for the purpose of documenting billable hours, but also to record a history of the work you contributed for the matter in case more work needs to be done in the future. This includes the meticulous naming of the different versions of each document that you work on.
 - Keep track of the questions that arise while working on the assignment that can be answered later. You will have a number of substantive questions about the legal assignment, but due to time constraints, they cannot always be answered at the time that the question arises. By taking note of these questions and creating a log of unanswered questions, you can arrange a meeting with the supervising attorney at a later time to answer your questions.
- **Timeliness**

- Always arrive to work earlier than your starting time. There are always minor tasks to complete before you engage in the major tasks of the day, such as looking through your e-mails, organizing your desk, preparing your to-do list, jotting down events on your calendar, etc.
- **Performance**
 - Managing expectations is one of the most difficult tasks you will be faced with as a junior attorney. You will be assigned to many projects at once, all moving at different speeds, and it is your responsibility to meet all deadlines and meet expectations.
 - Since the deadlines are set by your supervising attorneys, you should be very cautious in promising to complete a particular task by a certain time unless you are certain that you can deliver on that promise. Instead, it is advisable to communicate with the supervising attorney consistently and frequently throughout the project should any modifications need to be made. Clear communication is integral to a junior attorney's performance on initial assignments.
 - Always save your documents to the system and work within the system documents.
 - When you are attaching the document to an email, always send the system version and a local copy. If the supervising attorney is on his or her mobile device, he or she will be unable to open the system version.
 - Always attach a redline/blackline wherever necessary. The redline shows the supervising attorney the changes that were made to the document, as compared to the previous version, and it is an efficient way for him or her to review the specific changes that were made.
- **Organization**
 - Separate the matters you are working on by setting different piles and using clips and post-it notes. Recording the history of your project is important for the task of efficiently re-visiting the project in the future. Such documentation can help you manage any future workloads with less time and effort.
 - Folders: Carefully organize the folders in which you save all your documents

- **Build rapport with the resource department personnel at the law firm**
 - A law firm is set up like the government – there are number of branches and departments within each branch. A law firm performs optimally when the systems work together as one.
 - This requires that you familiarize with the professional assistants, librarians, paralegals, document service personnel and any other resource personnel at the law firm.
 - These individuals have more practical knowledge regarding many issues that arise in your work. Forge professional relationships and kindly ask questions to the appropriate individuals in order to save time and effort in completing your projects.

- **Feedback and review**
 - After each assignment, you might receive informal feedback from the supervising attorney. This feedback might come in the form of an email or it may be communicated to you in a meeting. Keep note of any feedback you receive and internalize the ways in which you can improve or correct the deficiencies in the next assignment. You will make many mistakes as a junior attorney, but it is how you respond to the constructive feedback that will set you apart from other junior attorneys.
 - In some law firms, you will undergo a mid-year review. This a formal review whereby each supervising attorney submits a review on your behalf. This is another opportunity to improve upon any missteps that have occurred up until this point. The mid-year review is a unique opportunity; it allows you to confirm best practices you have been applying and correct any deficiencies before the final review that occurs at the end of the fiscal year.

17. High-Level Advice for Junior Associates

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- **Scaling the Steep Learning Curve.** As a junior attorney, you might have times when you think to yourself, I utterly do not understand a particular

aspect of the transaction, or the purpose of this document or how to complete a certain work stream. I want to assure junior associates that these thoughts might arise, they are totally normal and expected and to please use them to your advantage. Understanding gaps in your knowledge and skills are critical to your success and usually once you encounter a certain concept or issue, you will probably remember it going forward and you will be much more effective and efficient in addressing it the next time. That's how you progress the learning curve and rise up through seniority. It is a necessary process; please don't allow it to throw off your confidence or resolve, but embrace it.

- **Know Your Role.** We all heard the book *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman. But I think another critical skill as a junior attorney is understanding when to think at a high-level and when to think on a granular-level and how to mentally shift back and forth between the two states of thinking. Thinking high-level involves understanding why the client wants to enter into a transaction, and the lofty, overarching question of why your law firm is being hired in the first place. It also includes the purpose of each of the transaction documents and deliverables. It also involves understanding the general transaction process and other stakeholders in the transaction and their respective interests and the main risk areas. Last, it entails understanding why e-mails are being sent and what is the reason for information being exchanged between the parties. As an attorney, we can't sit at the desk and be in this mental state all day. No work would ever get done. This type of things needs to be interspersed throughout the day while we also delve into granular-level thinking to focus on specific details that are necessary for drafting, analysis and advancing the transaction. To be successful, the granular-level thinking is necessary, especially in the early phase of our careers. But it is not sufficient as we progress up the ranks. To be successful as a mid-level attorney we need to constantly shift our mental states from a high-level to a granular-level mode of thinking and *vice versa* and continue to strengthen our high-level thinking skills in parallel with the development of our granular-level thinking skills, which ultimately leads to greater responsibility on the transaction team – for instance, to draft the commercial and legal issues lists and to mark up the main agreements.

- **Legal Industry is a Service Business.** The best analogy to the legal industry is the restaurant business. In the kitchen, you first start out working the breakfast shift, responsible for toasting the sliced bread; you butter the toast and need to cut it diagonally. You need to pay attention and master the granular-level skills and not inadvertently cut yourself, but also need to pay attention to the short order cooks and how they call the orders and how they prepare and cook the food. Slowly you move up to making pancakes and French toast and finally you're making the Western omelets. While you're making the toast, you also need to absorb the high-level picture and learn what the cooks and the wait staff are doing and their process, with an understanding that everyone's efforts must be coordinated to effectively and efficiently serve excellent work product to the customer, who rightfully has high standards and demands because they are paying top dollar for your services – and there's a competing restaurant across the street that they can easily go to next time they're hungry. As you can tell, the legal business is very similar to the restaurant business and a junior associate is challenged to the task of learning his or her craft while also learning what others on the team, especially their supervising attorneys, are doing on any given transaction because gradually the junior attorney will be assuming those roles and responsibilities as they progress in their careers.
- **Learning Self-Management.** Last, as was the case for law school, it is difficult to identify specific materials that should be read and/or studied to prepare for the early phases of your career (other than this *Arete Series*, of course). My advice is to not focus on learning substantive legal concepts and issues (although that would be very prudent to do to the extent practicable), but rather concentrate your efforts on preparing your mental attitude and behavior to thrive in a law firm environment. I highly recommend reading "Smarter Faster Better: The Transformative Power of Real Productivity", a NY Times Bestseller by Charles Duhigg and "On Managing Yourself" by the Harvard Business Review. The law firm experience is designed for a new associate to gradually understand and gain mastery of legal concepts and drafting skills over time, so the more efficient you are in building knowledge and developing skills, the greater the likelihood of advancement and achieving extraordinary results.

18. Final Words of Advice for Associates

Contributed by John Papaspanos

- **Developing a Commercial View and Voice.** One of the most important features of being a junior associate is alleviating the burden/stress of your supervising attorney. It is great training for when you become a senior attorney and will rely on the contributions of your subordinate attorneys and you will quickly come to realize that these skills are essential in how you provide counsel and information to your busy clients. Your supervising attorney and the client both have scarce time and attention, and the mark of a great junior attorney is understanding how to present issues precisely and succinctly and crafting a work product that is suitable for the intended reader. For example, a business person will want less legalese and direct, distilled and crystallized language in e-mails. An important skill is knowing when the e-mail that you are drafting is intended for internal purposes only or when it will ultimately be revised and sent to the client. You will come to distinguish the style, length and level of detail associated with both internal and external e-mails by reading your supervising attorneys' e-mails and you will be in a stronger position if you emulate those communications than if you take a monolithic approach in drafting e-mails for every context.
- **Removing the Training Wheels.** In the beginning stages of your career, it is advisable to lay out the important assumptions underlying your analysis or approach to ensure that you adequately understand concepts and you've undertaken the correct process to complete your work assignment – and to provide comfort to your supervising attorney of the same. As you progress the seniority ladder, your supervising attorney will trust you more given that you're learning the correct way to do things and there will be less of a need to confirm each assumption if both your supervising attorney and you are confident that you are correct. The balancing act of knowing how much detail to provide is based on a spectrum of issues whereby: simple and/or less important issues are on one end and complex and more important issues are on the other end. It is always better to err on the side of caution and be overinclusive with respect to information-sharing to your supervising attorney, but at a certain level of expertise you will be expected to be more independent and eventually “run with things” or even

“quarterback a deal” whereby you will manage many aspects of the transaction with supervision as necessary.

- **Document and Project Management.** As a first year, you will likely be managing the closing checklist. The best strategy is to find the “gold standard” of this document that is used in your group and adopt a methodical approach in drafting and updating the closing checklist as the deal progresses. E-mails and documents will be passed back and forth; provisions will be negotiated and evolve, and the junior attorney will need to stay abreast of developments and reflect them in the closing checklist. I suggest adding checkboxes for signature pages and a column in which you can insert the document ID number so multi-member deal teams can easily access any document. I would also recommend having a convention for naming documents and describing the draft versions on the system. Like a pilot in an airplane, having check lists and streamlined processes will make your life 100x easier and reduce your stress/anxiety significantly because it will free up bandwidth in your mind so you can focus on the more difficult aspects of the job.
- **Becoming a Good Apprentice.** I recommend regularly keeping your supervising attorneys reasonably informed of your whereabouts and planned vacations. Given the fast reaction speed that clients and partners expect, one of the key positive traits of a good junior associate is being reliable and responsive. Showing a strong work ethic and not shying from assignments, especially those that are more difficult and challenging, is also a very important characteristic that will bolster your reputation and will enhance your chances of having a partner assign you regular work flow. It will increase the probabilities that you will be selected to receive the high-stakes, important legal work that will improve your skills/knowledge, which is often the type of work flows that will accelerate your career. Remember, the more you know, the more likely you will be handling the complex legal work versus the less complex (but sometimes more mundane) tasks that will inevitably need to be delegated to someone else. Sometimes you will need to do all levels of legal work (from difficult to easy tasks), but the more you focus on the complex work, the faster you will advance your professional prospects. My advice is to seek out partners that are willing to assign difficult work to you and then take the time to explain the concepts and issues with you. That means they are investing in your

future and will be a source of guidance and assistance in achieving your work place goals. You will soon find your role in a law firm is essentially that of an apprentice, and an invaluable aspect of learning the craft is observing more experienced attorneys perform their work. The stronger your relationship with partners who are willing to take the time to explain concepts/issues, to keep you abreast about deal dynamics or the litigation case and to provide you feedback and facilitate your learning, the faster you will progress in your career. Last, like all human organizations, there will be politics involved and as a junior associate, we all started with a blank slate in terms of clout and had to build our reputation and earn the trust of our supervising attorneys. During the initial few years of your practice and beyond, senior associates and partners represent a valuable source of guidance for navigating the political waters and may provide protection against any potential negative professional outcomes. These same colleagues are critical later in your career; you will realize the mutual benefits that accrue from strong social relationships with your colleagues – even after you reach high levels of development, you’ll often seek out their feedback on complex legal issues or to think through difficult deal structure issues or litigation strategy. No attorney is an island at a law firm; everyone is a part of their respective practice group and often dependent on the expertise of their colleagues from other practice groups.

- **Chartering Your Own Course.** At the end of the day, you are the arbiter of your career and your future. No one is mapping out your future deal flow based on what type of work you like and who you want to work with. It is incumbent on you to understand the landscape in terms of the practice group you are in and identify the deals you want to be staffed on and foster the relationships with the partners that will be able to decide on such staffing. If you are not liking your situation at any time, you need to work fast to make changes and attempt to move into the area of the law where you want to develop. The later you decide that such a move is necessary, the more difficult it will be to re-train and you will lose seniority.
- **Parting Words.** Importantly, don’t forget to unplug and compartmentalize your mind. If all you do is focus on work and the never-ending to-do list, you will not allow yourself the time to relax and recharge. It will eventually cause you to burn out – which might happen over time if you do not correct course. The key is to know how to devote your attention on work but then

pivot away from your work when necessary to focus on yourself and to have fun, especially during the weekend. This will maintain a healthy state of physical and mental wellbeing. One of the best remedies to fend against some of more challenging/draining aspects of the practice of law is laughter. A strong sense of humor that is exhibited sparingly at appropriate times is a valuable currency amongst individuals who may be fatigued or stressed. It is a great way to connect with others and to network among colleagues – and it is only a positive factor when supervising attorneys consider which associates will be staffed on their next deal or matter. Last, the principles of the book *Give and Take* written by Wharton Professor Adam Grant are very helpful in understanding how a junior associate can contribute to the success of his or her law firm – in the case of both professional and social activities. Whether it's attending a law firm's social event or a CLE presentation, participating in pro bono work or serving on an associate committee, this type of engagement with your law firm builds your profile and shows to the firm's leadership your commitment. It is indeed an important way to enhance your opportunities for promotion in the law firm. But don't forget to maintain friends outside of work, because it's helpful to maintain a balanced perspective and personality, especially as you gradually engage in business development and other activities outside of legal circles. Last, enjoy the process; perceive legal work as a puzzle to be solved with a positive mindset and plenty of patience.

All the best to you in your endeavors – and to borrow an acronym familiar to pilots that stands for “ceiling and visibility unlimited”, the ideal weather conditions for a flight – “CAVU”.