

## **What to Expect When You Arrive at the Law Firm**

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- ❖ You will likely be assigned a Mentor upon arrival
  - Mentor usually responsible for giving you 1<sup>st</sup> assignment and possibly finding future work
  - Use this person extensively, ask the questions hard to ask anyone else (copiers/fax, secretarial help, lunch)
  - Remember to take this person out to lunch to pick his/her brain on the inner workings/dynamics of the firm
  - May or may not have orientation that covers these and the following topics
  
- ❖ Be prepared!
  - Always have pen and paper available, as people will assign you work over the phone, as they pass your office, in the copy room, etc—and especially when called into someone's office
  - Ask many many questions! Do not leave someone's office w/o completely understanding the project—don't waste time b/c you do not know exactly what the partner wants before you start
  
- ❖ Legal Research
  - Enquire as to where and how you are able and expected to do legal research – Is most research done online? Does the firm have a librarian and extensive library collection? Or do associates go to a local law library?
  - Always ask what resources you should use for a particular assignment (paper vs. electronic)—partner may have some very specific resources in mind—Remember that books/treatises are very important resources for beginning your research!
  - Very important to know if are *allowed* to use Lexis/WL, as now it cost lots to use and there may not be \$ for it in quote from client
  - Use the law firm librarian for help with finding resources and/or, if appropriate, Lexis/WL—Ask your Mentor!
  - Work product is usually not as extensive and formal as that expected of you in legal practice—may be more of a quick and dirty memo with analysis or an oral report instead of creating written record
  
- ❖ Billing
  - Never leave someone's office or end a conversation w/o first finding out how much time you can spend on a project
  - Ensure that you understand the billing structure of that particular firm—many are different—Ask your Mentor!
  - Ensure that you understand what is expected of you as a summer associate—it will be much different usually than what is expected of a 1<sup>st</sup> yr. Associate—Ask your Mentor!

- Bill very conscientiously—many times how you handle billing is taken into account re: hiring decisions
- Be efficient, but never cut your own hours—they want to know you spent 40 hrs on an assignment and did a good job (even if it should have taken you 20!)
- Billing practices vary from person to person—some prefer to keep a running record at all times during the day (usually have to bill in 6 min increments) with a pad of paper or chart. Firms may have required billing sheets to fill out weekly. Very important to keep track of hours in some way, as you will likely lose hours otherwise. Secretarial help responsible for transferring your hours into the computer billing system.
- Reference to *The Effective Associate Training and Development Program*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., American Bar Association (2005), p. 157 (Appendix E).

❖ Follow-up

- Make sure that you solicit comments on your work—preferably written, but may be oral
- Let partners know you have enjoyed working with them on an assignment and ask for more work (if appropriate to your firm's summer program structure)

❖ Get work from as many different partners/principals as possible & Workload

- More people that see your work the better
- Get to know partners by working for them—they need to know your name and face before they will vote to hire you
- If offered a job later, you will have a better idea about the firm
- Workload varies from person to person and is something that you learn as you go—will probably be asked to juggle more than one assignment at a time, and want to have work waiting to pick-up when you finish an assignment, but hard practice/art to learn. Ask your Mentor for help when encountered with too many assignments at once/feeling overwhelmed

❖ Conduct

- Be on your best behavior—remember that your conduct at social events is being watched!
- Take part in firm-sponsored events for summer associates
- Remember to treat secretarial, paralegal and other staff with the utmost respect and care—these people can make or break you and others will watch to see how you handle this responsibility
- Work well with other summer associates—they may be your future fellow associates and partners
- Dress code—check with firm before arriving; business casual has become the norm, especially in the summer

\*\*Most importantly – you are interviewing/checking them out just as much as they are viewing you – it goes both ways! Remember to have fun and enjoy this time!