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Top 5 Summer Tips: Life as a Summer Associate

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This practice note outlines five practical tips you can use as a summer associate to help you prepare for that fast approaching job that you landed last fall, hopefully at the law firm of your dreams. Now that the weather is finally getting warm, it's time to start thinking about it. No doubt the placement office at your law school has already warned you that life as a summer associate is not going to be all fun and games. But what is life as a summer associate all about? The following tips will help you know what to expect when you walk in the door, and what you should know ahead of time to make it a better experience.

1. Show up.

This doesn't sound like much, right? But what it really means is show up for everything that you can, on time, and with the attitude that you are invested in being there for your own development. Be there for the training sessions, participate in the social events, learn as much as you can, and meet as many people as you can. That's how you will get the most out of the summer program and frankly, that's what you're being paid to do.

2. Don't worry about your lack of substantive knowledge coming in the door.

This may be a blow to those of you who aced your first two years of law school, but once you are at the firm, no one cares about your grades anymore, and, unless you were hired because of a unique skillset, you aren't expected to have a background in particular practice

areas. However, you are going to be evaluated on your assignments (including observational, pro bono, and mock assignments), so you should take them seriously. You are more likely to land a permanent spot in the department of your choice if you do well on those evaluations. Check your writing, do your research carefully, ask thoughtful questions, and think for yourself. While you usually do not need substantive knowledge in specific practice areas before you start, take advantage of opportunities to learn about areas in which you are interested by asking to sit in on client calls, attending a group-specific training, or inviting someone to coffee to learn about their practice area. Simple things like attention to detail and showing your willingness to learn can take you much farther than you might think.

3. Have a good work ethic.

This one is tricky, because the accepted standards differ widely among law firms, practice areas, individuals, and generations. Hopefully during the interview process you got a sense of what you were in for at your law firm. Look around you, see what others are doing, and try to match their pace. Talk to other associates or to the recruiting team if you aren't sure how to balance the socializing vs. the assignments. You don't want to stand out as the one prospect who wasn't willing to take on work when everybody else was, and, on the flipside, you do not want to end the summer without attending events and meeting as many people as you can.

4. Expect lots of attention and wining and dining from your firm.

Most firms are very focused on making their summer program a success (those surveys do haunt us), so until the fall recruiting process takes over, the summer associates get the full attention of the recruiting committee. Usually this means that summer associates are assigned various levels of support to make sure the summer is going smoothly and no one is falling through the cracks (e.g., in terms of assignments, personality clashes with officemates, and other matters affecting office life). Sometimes summer associates think this means the recruiting staff is also meant to ensure their personal

happiness and day to day needs—but that's taking it a bit too far. Summer associates often joke about not gaining too much weight from all the summer breakfasts, lunches, and dinners offered to them. Free meals do come with the territory, but you can also expect the option of participating in activities that are more strenuous (charity runs, team sports, and the like). The main thing is to expect to have a lot of your free time taken up by your law firm over the summer one way or another. There will typically be a lot of both firm-scheduled social activities and informal socializing with your fellow associates, and you are absolutely encouraged to take part and enjoy that. Socializing is an important part of the summer, as it allows the firm to get to know you beyond your work product and gives you the chance to further explore where you fit in at the firm. Just don't lose sight of the fact that the firm is still deciding whether you are a good investment. If you want that permanent offer (especially in a coveted department), you don't want to become the summer associate that gets written up in a juicy story on Above the Law.

5. Expect substantive assignments and evaluation.

You should expect assignments appropriate for a junior associate. If you aren't getting real work or realistic mock assignments, not only is the law firm missing out on an opportunity to test how well you handle assignments, but you are missing out on the chance to learn about a particular practice and better yet, get some insight on the dynamics of a practice group. Every team has its own way of working together. Finding out how and where you will fit in when you come back as an associate should be part of the goal of being in the summer program. In addition, it should come as no surprise that to earn an offer, your work will be evaluated throughout the summer. Most firms will provide feedback during the course of the summer and give summer associates a chance to make corrections if need be. This is not something to stress about, though: The hardest part is getting hired as a summer associate in the first place.

Life as a summer associate should be fun, not scary. With a little idea of what to expect, every summer associate can enjoy the summer—and should end up with an offer in hand.



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Ms. Gallup is a leader of the team that was recently honored by LatinFinance for Syndicated Loan of the Year and Structured Financing of the Year, for their work on deals related to the New International Airport of Mexico City project, including the largest "green bond" offering in Latin America at the time. The project has been lauded by the publication for an innovative financing plan of bonds and loans that has "set new benchmarks for creativity and innovation in infrastructure financing." She was named a 2016 Dealmaker of the Year by The American Lawyer for her innovative work representing GE Capital as lender and agent in an approximately \$3 billion seller financing loan facility, one of the largest real estate financings ever in Latin America. She has also been recognized as among the top lawyers in Latin America by Latinvex and as a leading lawyer by IFLR1000. She has written extensively on the topics of Latin America capital markets and debt restructuring.

