



## **Top 10 Secrets of Success from a Hiring Partner**

by Dana M. Seshens, Davis Polk  
& Wardwell LLP

This practice note outlines 10 practical tips you can use as a summer associate to help you make a good impression and get the most out of your summer. By the time you have finished your second year of law school, you undoubtedly are comfortable in an academic setting, but working at a law firm is likely a new and different experience. A law firm will take you outside of your comfort zone and challenge you in numerous ways. The following tips hopefully will help you handle your new position with ease and confidence.

## 1. Jump right in.

Get involved early and often by trying as many different kinds of assignments and attending as many different activities as your workload and schedule will allow. The summer is a great opportunity to figure out what practice area may be the one for you after your law school graduation.

## 2. Be a team player.

Demonstrate your ability to work as part of a team and treat everyone appropriately and with respect, regardless of their role or position. The work and hours can and will be challenging at times, but you will learn more and enjoy your experience more when you are working seamlessly as part of a team.

## 3. Be prepared.

When you receive a work assignment, see what you can learn about the matter or transaction before meeting with the partner or associate on the team. When you are asked to present on or explain the work you have done, prepare in advance what you would like to say and the points you would like to convey. And always be prepared to take notes when called to a meeting.

## 4. Communication is key.

One of the most critical keys to success for any summer associate is clear and effective communication. Whether you need more time to complete an assignment, have questions about the work you have been asked to do, or need to coordinate with team members or the client to ensure that a deadline is met, be sure to communicate to others what you are (and are not) doing and what needs to be done by when. But follow the next tip when you do.

## 5. Be mindful of e-mail, texts, and social media.

Remember that you are now a representative of your firm, which means that what you say in e-mail, text, or on social media will reflect not only on you as an individual, but also on the firm of which you are now a part. Pause before writing e-mails, texts, or posts and re-read them for content before sending or posting. If you would not

be comfortable with what you have written being shared with others or being published online, think about making some revisions or not sending the communication at all.

## 6. Professionalism matters.

As a summer associate you should carry yourself as the professional that you are. That means ensuring that you respond to e-mails and calls in a timely and appropriate manner, presenting yourself in a professional way, and being thoughtful about your interactions with others both within and outside the firm. Also, be mindful of too much screen time while in meetings, firm events, or the like. Check your phone only as needed while otherwise engaged in firm business.

## 7. Speak up.

Even though you have only two years of law school under your belt, you have a lot to contribute to your teams and your firm. Do not be afraid to share your views, offer suggestions, or ask questions. You can and will add value from day one.

## 8. Attend social events.

As much as the summer is about the work that you will do, you should also take advantage of the social events offered as part of your summer program. They are a great way to get to know the city in which you are working, as well as your summer classmates and lawyers at the firm.

## 9. Take advantage of mentorship opportunities.

Although you are only working as a summer associate for a few months, there is still plenty of time to identify and seek out mentors and sponsors to help guide you while at the firm for the summer and beyond.

## 10. Relax.

The prospect of starting your job as a summer associate may seem daunting, but you should try to relax and enjoy the experience. You typically will only be a summer associate once, so make the most of it.



**Davis Polk**

**Dana M. Seshens**  
**Partner and Co-Hiring Partner, Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP**

Dana Seshens is a partner in Davis Polk's Litigation Department. Her practice focuses on complex commercial litigation, securities class actions, and bankruptcy litigation. Dana has extensive experience representing corporate clients and professional firms with respect to a wide range of civil litigation and advisory matters.