



NALP 2011 Annual Education Conference

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From Classroom to Boardroom: How Career Services and Law Firm Professionals Can Help Students Prepare for Practice

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INTRODUCTION

- Topic
 - “Law school doesn’t prepare students for practice.” (*curmudgeonly senior partner*)
 - “I don’t want to pay for your associate’s learning curve.” (*“fee sensitive” client*)
 - “I wish I knew then what I know now.” (*former summer associate, dusting off his resume*)
 - Objective: To help law students make the leap from “classroom to boardroom”

INTRODUCTION

- Your Panel
 - Matt DeGrushe (Assistant Dean and Dean for Career Services, USC Gould School of Law, Los Angeles)
 - Marketta Jokinen (Director of Professional Recruitment, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, Vancouver)
 - Pamela Cyr (Director, Career Services, University of British Columbia Faculty of Law, Vancouver)
 - Ari Blicker (Director, Student & Associate Programs, Aird & Berlis LLP, Toronto)

INTRODUCTION

- Overview:
 - 20 tips
 - under 4 broad categories:
 - Professionalism (Matt DeGrushe)
 - Interpersonal Skills (Marketta Jokinen)
 - Work Product (Pamela Cyr)
 - Engagement (Ari Blicker)
 - Audience Participation
 - throughout
 - at the end of the presentation, tell us what we have “missed”

PROFESSIONALISM



PROFESSIONALISM



1. *Be Professional:*

- Dress professionally; act professionally.
- Err on the side of conservatism in your dress and conduct.
- Make sure that the lines between your work life and social life don't get too blurry.

PROFESSIONALISM



2. Be Mature:

- Reputations are established quickly.
- Try to stay out of office gossip and politics.
- Assume anything you say to someone else in the firm will be repeated.
- Deal with any inappropriate comments or behavior professionally and ensure your response is proportionate.

PROFESSIONALISM



3. *Be Ethical:*

- Remember your duty of confidentiality and your duty of loyalty to your client.
- If you are concerned about something, approach your mentor or an appropriate senior person at the firm to discuss it.
- Be truthful.

PROFESSIONALISM



4. *Be Responsive/Client Centric:*

- Treat the assigning lawyer as a client, and always keep in mind the external client.
- Make sure that you have clarity regarding deadlines and make sure you meet them.
- If you are at risk of missing a deadline, communicate with the lawyer well in advance of the deadline, and provide a strategy for managing the issue.

PROFESSIONALISM



4. *Be Responsive/Client Centric:*

- Learn about clients and their businesses.
- Return calls and emails promptly.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



5. *Be Confident:*

- You may be new at this but you are here because you have potential. Project confidence. It makes others more confident in you.
- Remember, there is a fine line between confidence and arrogance.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



6. *Be Communicative:*

- Communicate, but do it wisely. Figure out what mode of communication will work best based on the context.
- E-mail has its place, but don't over rely on it. It can be a blunt instrument for more nuanced communications.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



6. *Be Communicative:*

- Meeting in person or talking by phone are often better ways to move matters forward.
- Approach every meeting/interaction with an assigning lawyer by determining what you need to impart in the meeting and what you need to get from it.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



6. *Be Communicative:*

- Make sure that all your written communications are polished and persuasive.
- Make sure that your oral communications are concise.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



7. Be a Good Listener/Observer:

- Think before you speak. Use your emotional intelligence to gauge when to speak and when to listen.
- Pay attention to your own body language and that of others.
- Be mindful of generational differences.
- Observe senior lawyers and learn from them how they conduct themselves and handle their practices.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



8. *Be Respectful:*

- Respect everybody, regardless of their role within the firm or the firm's hierarchy.
- Some of your best “allies” will be support staff.
- Don't be late – ever.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



9. *Be Grounded:*

- Take time for life outside the office.
- Try not to let the stresses of practice get the better of you.
- Maintain your sense of humor.

WORK PRODUCT



WORK PRODUCT



10. *Be Resourceful:*

- Familiarize yourself with firm resources.
- Take responsibility for getting the most out of your mentors (formal and informal).
- Remember that the assigning lawyer may not always give you all the facts you require to complete your assignment.

WORK PRODUCT



11. *Be Organized:*

- Stay on top of your to do list and deadlines.
- Keep a reminder system for documenting all important dates.
- Keep your files (hard and soft copy) organized.
- Keep your office tidy – it will keep you calm and will project an organized image.

WORK PRODUCT



12. *Be Efficient:*

- Manage your time carefully. Avoid distractions by dividing up your work day.
- Focus on the task at hand. Check e-mail periodically but not compulsively.
- Learn to delegate appropriately, to provide clear instructions and offer feedback.

WORK PRODUCT



12. *Be Efficient:*

- Make sure that you have an understanding of the basics of law firm economics (billable hours, write-offs etc.).
- Make sure that you capture the time you spend on files (billable and non-billable).
- Don't write off your own time.
- Complete your time sheets daily.

WORK PRODUCT



13. *Be Meticulous:*

- Law is a very detail-oriented profession, so make sure that you approach everything you do with that in mind.
- Proofread everything carefully.
- Making mistakes is part of learning, but try to avoid making mistakes.

WORK PRODUCT



13. *Be Meticulous:*

- If you think you have made a mistake, don't panic, it is usually fixable.
- Don't bury it or try to fix it on your own. Concealed mistakes may lead to more serious issues.

WORK PRODUCT



14. *Be Creative:*

- You are a “fresh set of eyes.”
- Don’t be afraid to respectfully play “devil’s advocate”, and speak up if you notice a helpful fact, legal argument, or have a fresh take on strategy.

ENGAGEMENT



ENGAGEMENT



15. *Be Proactive:*

- Figure out your “target market” of lawyers to work with; seek out work from them.
- Contemplate what the next steps might be and offer to assist with completing them.
- Go through proper channels before communicating externally.

ENGAGEMENT



16. *Be Engaged:*

- Put yourself out there. Be visible at applicable firm events, seminars and practice group meetings.
- Seek out feedback (at appropriate points)
- Follow up to see what happens on files in which you are involved.
- Stay on top of current events, especially the business news.

ENGAGEMENT



17. *Be Dedicated:*

- Take on as much work as you can handle. If you are busy and productive, you will be happier.
- Work begets work. Say “yes” to work unless doing so would risk negatively affecting your existing commitments, the new commitment or both.
- Convey a sense of urgency. Be the person who drives matters to closure.

ENGAGEMENT



18. *Be Accountable:*

- Take ownership of your assignments. Busy lawyers are happiest when you take things off their plate and deal with them.
- It is expected that you will check in regularly to advise on the status of matters and to identify issues.

ENGAGEMENT



18. *Be Accountable*

- Wherever possible, present a recommendation for confirmation by the assigning lawyer.
- Don't come to lawyers with problems without having thought through a possible solution.

ENGAGEMENT



19. *Be Helpful:*

- Help your internal and external clients.
- Help your peers.
- This is how you become viewed as a “team player”.
- Display a positive attitude about the work you are doing.

ENGAGEMENT



20. *Be Cool:*

- Stay calm, even in the face of pressure. It will earn you a great deal of respect.
- If something upsets you, take a step back and coolly consider why, and determine what the best approach is for dealing with it. Don't let your emotions dictate the outcome.

STRATEGIES FOR CONVEYING THIS MATERIAL

- Employer perspective
- School perspective

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

- Suggestions? What have we missed?
- Questions for the panel?

THANK YOU!

