

# Advice from NALP Experienced Professionals on Frequently Asked Questions by Newer Professionals

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**1) I am brand new to the legal recruiting industry and NALP, how can I start getting involved without getting overwhelmed?**

*If you are new, dive in headfirst and raise your hand when things are happening. Sign up to be part of mentoring programs or volunteer for a committee. NALP and your local city group are always looking for people to get involved. Also, don't be shy about reaching out to people. We have found that people are fairly accommodating if you want to chat and learn more about the industry.*

*Ask for a mentor from the Experienced Professionals Section so that you can begin to build a relationship with someone outside your own organization. Volunteer to write an article for the Newcomers' Corner series in the NALP Bulletin+. Get involved in a work group in one of the sections or even push yourself to be a vice chair.*

*If possible, attend the Newer Professionals Forum (NPF). You will receive great training and resources and meet lots of experienced professionals while also forming relationships with others in your same role who are also new at their jobs. Take advantage of the mentoring programs offered by the NPF and through the Newer Professionals Section. Read the NALP Bulletin+ and NALPNow newsletters, join NALP Sections and read and post on NALPconnect. NALP is a warm and welcoming community — someone is always willing to share their resources and experiences.*

*Feel comfortable reaching out to NALP Leadership — particularly one of your Regional Representatives for guidance from a seasoned NALP member about where to begin — the reps are more than happy to help! Attend the regional or special interest section calls. You don't have to speak up during your first meeting in order to attend, but you will soon find yourself jumping into the conversations.*

**2) I did not attend law school. What tips do you have for figuring out the legal jargon, what certain practice areas do (specifically the niche ones), and how to message that to students who do not have a strong understanding either?**

*If you are working at a law school, sit in on programs offered by the law school or employers geared toward specific practice areas. Schedule a time to meet with professors, or staff working in a particular area. If you are working at a law firm, or other legal entity, sit in on the presentations your firm provides about practice areas within the firm. Get to know the attorneys by scheduling a quick coffee chat to learn more about their practice area, which can also help you create a better rapport with your attorneys. Your firm's marketing team is a wealth of information*

as well. Review the materials about the firm they use with clients and potential clients.

You can also use the [Law Firm Administration guides](#) on the NALP website to understand how law firms operate. Also, to stay updated on the trends, read the NALP Weekly Industry News Digest emails sent out on Fridays.

**3) What are effective ways to maintain a good working relationship between law schools and law firms?**

*Communicate. Its cliché but just being present helps. If you are visiting a school (or if you are from a law school, if you are visiting a city which you are not based), you should make some time to connect with your peers from the other side of the aisle. Also, OCI is crazy for everyone, and most people are starved for information. Help the career offices that you work with by providing information about their students in your pipeline. Of course, it's another thing to do during a busy time, but helping them helps you and builds better relationships with them.*

**4) How do I foster internal relationships with my organization? How can I create buy in with individuals or other departments to foster more useful collaboration?**

*Reach out, reach out, reach out — even when it feels one-sided. Be helpful and kind. No one wants to work with someone who is always just looking out for themselves. Yes, there are moments when you have to do the best for you, but there are times when it pays to be a good person. People have fairly good long-term memories, and they will remember the value you added and the way you make them feel. Also, be genuinely interested in their needs. Ask what occupies their days or keeps them up at night, then carefully consider and offer how you can help make their lives easier. Communicate clearly, set realistic expectations, then meet or exceed those expectations. Project positivity and enthusiasm, even when you don't feel positive or enthusiastic.*

*On the law school side, take opportunities (formal and informal) to get acquainted with colleagues from both the faculty and administration. It is particularly useful to get to know faculty from the clinical programs as well as fellow administrators from other departments, especially from Student Affairs, Academic Success, Financial Aid, and the Registrar's Office and ask questions about how things work in their respective departments — what they are responsible for, what processes are involved, how they get things done, what works, what does not work, and why? Not every law school is alike, and I think it is important to get to know the "personality" of the particular institution. Further, students tend to see their career counselor as omniscient (sometimes it seems that we are!), even about things happening on campus outside of the world of Career Services. From a customer service perspective, it is helpful to know the basics about other*

departments in case students have questions and might feel put off by hopping from office to office asking questions.

*If you are at a law firm, get to know your hiring partner and committee (if applicable). Get to know all the attorneys in your office, they will be the people you interact with regularly. They will probably help regardless, but if they like you and are vested in your success, they will go out of their way to help you. When working with other departments, especially when asking for something to be made or for them to do something, give them a decent runway. If you have something you know that should be done in two weeks, don't wait until the last minute to give it to them. People don't like having things dropped off on their desk at 5:00 pm on Friday. Other people are busy too and have their own work priorities. Sometimes it is unavoidable, but consistently asking people to go out of their way to help you is a sure-fire way to make a relationship turn sour.*

**5) I am a small/solo career service office or law firm legal recruiting department, what resources can I utilize to help me juggle all my competing priorities?**

*Learn to leverage technology to automate tasks that can be automated. Also, develop processes to reduce simple tasks. Don't feel like you must do everything; think about activities that may plant seeds now and you can scale later. If you can get help doing small things, try to outsource them and spend the time on doing things that add more value. For example, it might be great to have the perfect hiring materials, but do you really need to be the one making copies and collating them? There are other people maybe outside of your department or just in the office that might be willing to help you do it if you ask.*

*Build a network of peers with similar roles. There is a high likelihood that your peers have done research or gathered the information you are seeking. Granted, they might not be able to give you everything given antitrust concerns, but they would be able to point you in the right direction or narrow your research and task.*

*Reserve time on your calendar each week for project work and honor that time as much as possible. Keep a running list of good ideas you might not be able to try now but could try later. Most importantly, don't feel bad that you can't do everything you want to do!*

**6) What professional development conferences or trainings do experienced professionals find most valuable?**

*We cannot recommend enough for any newer professional to attend the Newer Professionals' Forum (NPF) ahead of attending one's first Annual Education Conference (AEC). Especially if you are an introvert, the AEC is a wonderful experience but can feel a bit overwhelming at first blush. The NPF is a great*

*precursor to the AEC; it is smaller and is created with the specific goal of bringing attendees into the world of being a legal career professional. It also answers all the basic questions, which you may be too afraid to ask, or might feel foolish asking.*

*Also, attending NPF and joining the NALP Newer Professionals Section are outstanding ways to build relationships and get a great primer on the key issues in our industries.*

*For law school professionals, wrangle an invitation to a workshop at the Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Profession at the University of St. Thomas School of Law — you won't regret it.*

**7) What are some successful ways you have advocated for yourself in your career? How should we be utilizing our performance evaluation process better?**

*Make it known. Every firm will have some sort of evaluation process. You must make it known what you are looking to achieve. If you are looking for a promotion, make it known. If you are looking to grow in a certain area, make it known. If you are overworked, make it known. In addition, also be focused on solutions. Don't just say there is a problem, but also have the foresight to think about how to remedy it. Coming forth with an issue is good troubleshooting, but it is almost asking someone else to solve your problem for you without some options for a solution.*

*It is hard to remember everything that you did, so write it down. Keep a file (either electronically or in hard copy) of compliments, praise, awards, and other positive recognition, or send an email to yourself detailing what you did and file it away in your email until review time. Keeping track of your accomplishments periodically (quarterly or semi-annually) will also make it easier to report on your activities and accomplishments during your performance evaluation process. You may also want to ask peers and colleagues what you think you might write. Outside perspective helps with a more holistic picture.*

*For performance evaluations, be an active participant in the process. Consider advocating for others around you if it will also help you and/or your department; for example, ensuring good talent on your team is acknowledged and rewarded can pay off for you in terms of support.*

**8) I need more resources, whether that be people, training, or technology. How can I best advocate for what I need?**

*Measure it. Data is always helpful. People respond well to rational thought-out ideas, even if they ultimately say no or are not ready for it at the moment. Simply*

saying “I need this” but not providing or having real factual evidence doesn’t help your case.

**9) Do you strategically plan your time off and if so, when do you typically take your vacations?**

*This is not a hard and fast rule but in the law school career services space, it is best to avoid taking an extended vacation during peak times for the office and the school, such as 1L orientation week, the summer recruiting season in late July/August, and during October/November, which is when you will start meeting with eager 1L students. Should you experience a personal emergency that requires extended time off, it is always best to communicate with your immediate colleagues and/or HR where necessary — we work in an industry where we support each other in good times and stressful times.*

*For law firm recruiting professionals, plan something ahead of time and take some days off when needed. Plan some getaways ahead of time so that you have something to look forward to after your busy season. Mid-September and early October following OCI are usually good times, as well as April/early May. Something to look forward to helps you get through the rough patches.*

*Also, if you are running on fumes or experiencing burnout, take a day or two off to recharge your batteries and practice some self-care. Self-care is very important. Do something that makes you happy, regardless of what “it” is — whether it is hanging out with friends, being home and reading a book, going out for a run or exercising, getting a massage, getting your hair done, watching reality TV, etc. Do things that make you happy and keep your spirit up. You are your best asset; take care of yourself. It’s a marathon, not a sprint, so take care of yourself for the long term.*

**10) What are some helpful strategies for creating more balance either for myself and/or my team?**

*Reframe the question and consider how to develop more autonomy or create more flexibility in your work life. If you have ideas on how to work smarter and not harder, bring it up! When you do bring it up make sure to have a plan or a well-thought-out idea. Bringing it up with a plan shows you are solution-focused. You should also be ready to help if people agree with your plans, so be ready for that ask. Creating better processes help the team overall.*

*For personal balance, find something you are interested in, enjoy doing, and are good at achieving. For instance, if you are interested in technology, find a way to get on technology-related projects. There are aspects of every job that people do not relish. Focusing on something you are passionate about helps balance out*

*the workload to be more enjoyable and it doesn't feel like work but adds value to your organization.*

*Realize that all projects and tasks aren't created equally. Sometimes you might be able to shelve a project until a later date or get extensions, but you have to communicate. Along those lines, if you have competing deadlines and are unsure about how important a particular project is, communicate with your stakeholder/supervisor. They can guide your workload, change the deadlines, or even get more help for the task at hand. Don't burn the candle on both ends because you imagine the task or project to be more important than it really is and stress yourself out unnecessarily.*

*Do not feel guilty about using paid time off for taking a mental health day and encourage colleagues who bring it up to do the same. Consider an office or department retreat even if it involves getting together for lunch off-campus, it is a great way to take a break, recharge, and connect with your colleagues on a more social level. Block a day (or certain half days) on your calendar that is not centered around meetings so that you can catch up on other tasks or take time for your own professional development.*