Best Practices to Impress Corporate Counsel and Ways to Win Business as a Young Lawyer

Kelly Jones Howell
Harris Beach PLLC
100 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005
(212) 687-0659
kHowell@HarrisBeach.com
www.twitter.com/KellyJones_HB

Thomas G. Goodwin
Operations Counsel
Atria Senior Living Group Inc
300 E Market St Ste 100
Louisville, KY 40202
(502) 779-7672
tom.goodwin@atriaseniorliving.com

Kelly Jones Howell, applies her litigation skills and expertise in science and medicine to defend a variety of personal injury matters for a diverse range of clients. She concentrates in product liability, mass torts, malpractice, general liability and toxic tort litigation. Kelly's national litigation practice focuses on product liability with significant experience managing pharmaceutical, medical device and dietary supplement cases. She regularly serves as national coordinating counsel and New York/New Jersey counsel defending clients in state-coordinated mass torts, class actions and federal multi-district litigation.

Thomas G. (Tom) Goodwin serves as the Senior Operations & Privacy Counsel for Atria Senior Living, Inc. In this role Tom oversees litigation and regulatory compliance for Atria's communities in the United States and Canada. In addition, Tom is responsible for Atria's Privacy initiatives

6 Ways Young Associates Can Impress Partners

By Alex Andonovska, JD Journal, June 17, 2020

Ask any seasoned attorney at a law firm, "how can young associates impress partners?" and you'll hear, "By treating partners the same way they would treat a client." It's the 'golden rule' for advancing in a law firm.

There is a small wrinkle in this advice—the ever-present imbalance of power in the lawyer-client relationship. The client is always in control of the relationship, given that he/she wields the power to hire or fire the lawyer.

An improved variation of this advice would be to act as a partner. Like in all aspects of life, you must act as if you are what you hope to become. Here are some helpful tips to help associates perform above their pay grade and impress partners in the process.

Be a Lawyer, Not a Helper of a Lawyer

First and foremost, don't approach assignments like a student turning in projects to a teacher and waiting for feedback. By doing that, you won't show the potential of a leader, merely an assistant to an attorney.

It's important to understand that you have the same professional credentials as your supervising partner has. With this credential comes the responsibility to act as an attorney. If you manage to demonstrate that level of responsibility, you are very likely to impress both the partner and the law firm.

By evincing poise, maturity, and a professional attitude, you convey to partners that handling the assigned matter is truly important to you and that you are ready to spend the time required to deliver a top-notch professional work product.

Take Ownership

One of the best ways to show a law firm you're partner material is to demonstrate value by taking ownership of all aspects of your work. Taking ownership of everything you do means you are self-sufficient, which partners appreciate because they do not like to micromanage. Partners are extremely busy and they try to keep their heads above water. By taking ownership of the assignment, you will minimize the partner's role on the project and make their life easier.

Go Beyond the Task

Add value in everything you do by answering more than the question asked. If you do nothing more than merely agreeing with the partner and endorse their suggestions, you are not adding value to the product presented to the client.

By thinking beyond the task and anticipating future needs, you will demonstrate a broader view of the legal matter that you are working on.

Seasoned partners see around corners for their clients, identifying risks and anticipating issues, and you must do that for your colleagues as well.

Embrace Failure as a Catalyst for Growth

The ability to embrace failure as a catalyst for growth is usually something only successful and highly experienced lawyers take pride in. Young associates have trouble understanding this, because of the 'thinking like a lawyer' and 'culture of perfectionism' taught in law school. However, you have to realize that when you abhor the idea of failing, you instantly shy away from challenges and therefore get stuck in a comfort zone. To become a partner in a law firm you must develop an entrepreneurial mindset. The main difference between thinking like a lawyer and having an entrepreneurial mindset is that entrepreneurs know they have to fail in order to move forward, while lawyers avoid failure at all costs.

As a young lawyer, you’re going to fail and make mistakes. There is no way around it. Learn to be resilient in the wake of failure, rather than being paralyzed by it when it happens—or allowing it to stop you from acting in the first place.

Be a Leader, Not a Follower

Young associates most often see the early years in their careers as a time to be led. That’s a mistake. Partners are looking for signs of leadership ability from the get-go.

Therefore, it’s never too early to distinguish yourself as a leader by taking ownership of your work.

Even as a young associate, opportunities to show leadership will arise in the context of day-to-day work. Whenever you’re stepping up to take on a new responsibility, it should feel like a stretch because leadership almost always involves pushing your own limits.

Be Involved in Business Development

Naturally, revenue is the lifeblood of every law firm. Every attorney should play a role in attracting new clients. The times when law firm associates were told to keep their heads down and focus on billing hours are gone. Now, it’s expected of anyone in the law firm to find creative ways to bring in more clients.

While for young associates bringing in clients is an unrealistic expectation, you can play an important role in supporting the firm’s marketing and business development efforts. Do your part by developing and nurturing a network, both online and offline, consisting of people who may ultimately become clients or referral sources.

3 Ways Associates Can Become Rainmakers

By Aebra Coe (https://www.law360.com/search/articles?q+reporter:%22Aebra)
Law360, New York —

The days of BigLaw associates patiently wailing for institutional clients to be dropped in their laps are largely past and, as U.S. law firms struggle with flat demand, young attorneys are increasingly expected to step up their business development game.

In addition to being the best of the best at understanding and practicing law, today's BigLaw associates must now too be well-versed in the art of attracting new clients and business, a role bestowed on them as law firms struggle to compete in a legal market plagued by increased competition and lagging demand.

The task of developing business is not something that happens overnight, according to Jay Harrington, a law firm consultant and author of the book "How to Start Fast As a Law Firm Associate."

"There are no tips, tricks or tools that can change the fact that business development was, is, and always will be a long-term game that involves developing a reputation for excellence and cultivating relationships ... it's incumbent upon associates to start laying the foundation for strong business development from day one," Harrington said. Michelle Fivel, a partner at Major Lindsey & Africa, added that associates need to make business development a priority in order to become good at it.

"Be conscious of the need to do business development and start early," Fivel said.
"Take a step back and think about the law as a business — which goes beyond just being a good lawyer. Business development is all about relationships and getting your name out there."

Here are three tips for young lawyers on how to hone their rainmaking prowess no matter where they currently are in their career.

Brand Yourself

The first step to becoming a good business developer is simply being a very good associate, which positions young attorneys to work on more projects and meet more clients, and also allows them to develop a reputation inside and outside their law firm, according to Fivel. Associates who strive to have a good work ethic and attitude, even when no senior partners are around, are piecing together a good name for themselves that colleagues and acquaintances will remember for a long time.

"Your peers will remember you later in their career. Those peers may go on to become in-house counsel, or a member at another firm that has a need to refer work out," Fivel said.

Developing trusting relationships within the legal community requires young lawyers to not only present an impeccable character at work, but also in the activities that they participate in outside of their law firm, according to Ken Young, co-founder of Young Mayden legal recruiting firm. By displaying less than stellar behavior or projecting an unreliable image to the world even outside work, young lawyers can stain their budding reputation. "If you're going to get involved, whether on a local board, children's theater or bar association, do a great job because if you sign up and don't contribute you have done yourself more harm than good," Young said.

One way associates can create a first-rate reputation is by pinpointing a specific niche, expertise, or personal brand, and then developing and presenting that brand to the world through social media and other public platforms, John Reed of Rain BDM says.

"The only way a connection thinks to contact you about a legal or business question is if you are the first person he or she recalls at that particular time and for that particular need," Reed said. "Establishing top-of-mind awareness begins by determining what it is that you want to be known and valued for, and then communicating your brand across your network of contacts."

Find a Niche

Finding an area of law or an industry that is in need of expert legal practitioners is one way associates can position themselves to be the next big business generators at their law firms.

When associates begin to look outward in an effort to develop client relationships, they should think big, but in a small market, according to Harrington. They should try to find under-served, under-pursued narrow slices of a larger industry to pursue," he said. "Don't try to tackle the national health care sector. Target surgical centers in a defined metropolitan area instead. Then 'get in the middle' of that segment of the industry by writing, speaking and networking within it."

One way to make that happen, according to Michael Di Gennaro of Lateral Link, is by moving to a law firm that allows associates to service middle market clients earlier in their legal career.

"These clients are the ones that associates have the highest probability of developing but that have no appetite for the billing rates of larger firms," Di Gennaro said. Associates should also get ahead of up-and-coming practice areas and industries by developing a keen awareness of the U.S. and world economy, as well as trends in the practice and business of law, according to Reed. "The American and global workforce is changing, not only demographically, but also in the way business — including legal services — is done. As associates develop their practice skills, they need to leam the business of law and how it's being disrupted by technology, changing client expectations, and an oversupply of lawyers," Reed said. He suggests young lawyers read books and attend webinars about innovation, entrepreneurship, marketing, and business cultures, and commit to becoming a better businessperson, a critical role laws schools generally don't address.

"There are only four ways to gain a competitive edge — faster, better, cheaper or first — so you need to deeply understand the legal economy and your position in the marketplace," Reed said.

Look Inward

Another way to begin generating clients is by making use of the internal resources law firms provide to associates, rather than focusing solely on billable hours and impressing partners, according to Kelly O'Malley, marketing director at Reger Rizzo & Darnall LLP.

"[Associates] will often overlook the vast amount of resources available to them, including marketing departments looking to assist with their business development efforts; in-house CLE trainings from partners who have been where they are today; mentoring programs; professional development initiatives ... The resources available to young attorneys in their own firm are often the most valuable, but also, the most overlooked," O'Malley said.

Additionally, building relationships within their law firm can teach associates about a variety of practices and make them good internal marketers early on, ready to fill the shoes of a rainmaker, she said. "Just because an associate joins the corporate department doesn't mean they shouldn't ask a partner in the environmental group for coffee to learn about his or her business and how they may be of help to each other in the future. This not only gets their name in front of another partner in the firm, but also shows initiative on their part and a willingness to work for new business," O'Malley said.

Harrington asserts that associates at all levels of experience should be practicing what he calls "intrapreneurship" within their firms in order to raise their profiles and burnish their reputations. "This means networking internally, across offices and practice groups. It means serving on meaningful committees. It means suggesting innovative ideas for better use of technology and project management," he said. "Before you can practice effective entrepreneurship outside of the firm, it's important to become an effective entrepreneur within the firm."

He said that while the idea is frequently preached to associates, it's often underappreciated. "The first, and most important client relationships that most associates will establish derive directly from work done for existing clients. An associate who does a great job for the assistant general counsel at a large company will be well-positioned to develop business when the AGC goes on to become GC at a new company," Harrington said.

Editing by Rebecca Flanagan and Emily Kokoll.

Here's How Young Associates Actually Impress Law Firm Partners

Joseph R. Fleming, Sheri Warsh, Robert Williams, November 22,2013

(https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/heres-how-young-associates-actually-imp-36741/)

How mighty a young associate make a positive impression on partners in their new law firm? What to do to make a meaningful impact and stand out in ways that matter?

For a perspective on this oft-asked question, we turned to the very source: partners within firms. We put it to them: tell us how associates impress you? Here is what we heard back:

Understand Our Clients' Business

From Joseph R. Fleming, co-chair of Financial Service Practice and deputy chair for Talent at Dechert LLP: "I am always impressed by associates who take the time to understand our clients' business and how it factors into our advice. Whether they are asking questions to understand fully the facts, drafting crisp and thoughtfully written memos and other work product, helping me or another supervising lawyer anticipate next steps or follow-up questions from a client, or developing alternative solutions and taking a stand on those solutions, these young lawyers show a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for the work that we do and a relentless focus on the needs of our clients — qualities that will serve them well throughout their legal careers."

Also Treat Firm Partners as Your Clients

From Dan Pyne, shareholder and chair of the Employment Law department at Hopkins & Carley: "When I think of ways associates have impressed me, two things come to mind immediately. First, associates impress me by acting as if I am their client - by taking ownership of the project on which we are working and fully handling the matter I've asked them to handle. I'm always impressed by associates that present me with work product that they believe is ready to be provided to the client or to the court immediately and without change, rather than work product that the associate knows will require revision or polish from me. Associates impress me by making my life easier and by minimizing the role I need to play on a project. I'm also impressed when associates add value in a discussion by doing more than just agreeing with my analysis or suggestions. If an associate does nothing more than agree with me and endorse my suggestions, he or she isn't adding value to the product we present to our client. I'm impressed, and our clients benefit, when an associate is able to add value by seeing an issue or an angle that I have not seen, or by devising a more efficient solution to a problem."

Be a Lawyer

From Robert Williams, partner in the Finance and Bankruptcy Practice Group in Sheppard Mullin's Los Angeles office. Mr. Williams also serves as the firm's Chief Talent Officer: "An associate impresses me when he or she makes it clear that he or she intends to function as a lawyer, rather than merely as a helper to a lawyer. I mean this on several levels:

1. Evincing poise, seriousness, maturity and a professional attitude. The associate must convey to me that handling the assigned matter is truly significant to the associate, and that he or she will expend the time that is necessary to deliver a professional work product, irrespective of the associate's personal priorities;

2. Making it clear that what is important to the associate is solving the client's problem, rather than billing time;

3. Approaching communications in a manner that inspires confidence (listening intently to instructions and explanations, and thinking carefully before speaking);

4. Taking the initiative to review treatises or file materials as necessary in order to get up to speed on the legal and factual background of the assignment;

5. Producing written work that is clear, disciplined, well-organized and grammatically correct.

An associate should not approach his or her work on a legal matter like a student who simply 'turns in' a project to a teacher with the assumption that the teacher will 'correct it.' The associate should realize that he or she has the same professional credentials as his or her supervising partner has. With this credential comes responsibility to act like a lawyer. If the associate demonstrates that level of responsibility, he or she is very likely to impress both the partner and the firm's client (which will further impress the partner)."

Go Beyond the Call of Duty

Sheri Warsh, partner in the Trusts & Estates Group at Levenfeld Pearlstein LLC, offers a very personal example of this: "Adam Garber, an associate in our Trusts & Estates Group, accompanied me to a hospital to witness the Will of a terminally ill client. Typically, on such a hospital visit, I would have also brought with me a notary, however I didn't do so on this occasion, because I had been told that the hospital would provide one. Of course, when we arrived and called the hospital department to arrange the notary, one was not available. Without prompting from me, Adam understood that the client had many more important things on his mind, and didn't need yet another headache. He walked down to the notary's office and camped outside the door until she arrived. He then immediately brought her to the client's hospital room. The client, went from being extremely annoyed to very relieved as a result of Adam's diligence, which helped to make a difficult and stressful situation for a client a little less so."

And related, of course, with another personal take:

Help Others

From Michael Healy, San Francisco Partner, Sedgwick LLP: "I am impressed when anyone, including our partners and associates, step beyond their day-to-day work pressures and take the time to help others. Recently, one of our San Francisco associates, David Mesa, took it upon himself to organize an internal relief effort for the victims of Typhoon Haiyan. He researched ways for members of our firm to make contributions, organized an internal food drive, communicated these options to the firm and followed up to make sure the contributions were delivered. Along with his wife, he also organized a happy hour fund raiser that was hosted by the Filipino Bar Association of Northern California. For attorneys, one of the most valuable things we can give to any charitable endeavor is time, and David did just that. His efforts have helped the victims of the typhoon and helped to pull our firm and the community together around a worthy cause."

.

How to Get Clients as a New Lawyer

By Randall Ryder on January 22nd, 2020
https://lawyerist.com/blog/how-to-get-your-first-client/

You might be the smartest attorney in the world, but you can't run a law firm without clients. And believe it or not, getting clients and practicing law are two distinct skills. Finding creative marketing ideas for law firms can feel overwhelming.

Getting your first client can be stressful, nerve-wracking, and quite humbling. And for the most part, it's a two-step process: mental preparation and some old-fashioned pounding the pavement.

Be Realistic and Lower Your Expectations

Your first client is going to memorable for all the reasons you don't expect. Whether you're turning to creative marketing ideas or lawyers or using what you've heard works from other attorneys, it's unlikely to be a home run right off the bat.

You are not going to represent Google in your first case. You are not going to defend a wrongfully accused defendant in a high-profile murder trial. You are not going to shake the foundations of the legal community with new precedent.

Those are all great goals, but nobody gets there on their first attempt.

I still have lots of phone calls, coffees, and lunches with young attorneys who are about to go solo. The biggest assumption many of them make is that they will "only do the big cases." All of us only want to do the big cases. It just doesn't work that way. There's a reason lawyers always talk about their big cases — they just don't happen every day.

Keep that in mind when you are trying to land your first client. If you think you are too smart or have too high of a GPA to draft a basic estate plan for $300, then you need to re-think your decision to start a law firm.

Once you have humbled yourself, you are ready for step two.

Recognize the Value in Gaining

Good news: you have swallowed your pride. Bad news: swallow it even more.

I'm hoping your business plan accounts for, and assumes, that you will not make much money for the first few months.

Depending on your life experience and your experiences in law school, you probably need to focus on learning how to be a lawyer. There are a number of skills you need to learn: how to sell a client on you, how to talk to opposing counsel, how to counsel a client, how to run a business, how to keep your business moving forward, how to deal with the unexpected, and how to deal with a bad client.

That does not mean you should give away your time. One of the things you need to learn is that your time is valuable. Once you start valuing your time, so will your clients.

What all that means is that in the long-term, you need to develop skills that put you in a position to regularly succeed as an attorney. Everyone can get lucky and land one big client or case. The attorneys that regularly get those cases get them because they have a reputation for being a good attorney. They also have strong client relationship skills. And they probably know how to run a business too.

If you aren't ready to take on "regular old cases" or think you're going to strike it rich with your first client, you will go out of business before you get your first client.

Every client has monetary value, including your first client. But the more important value in your first client is the opportunity to gain experience. The valuable experience expectations. Or it could be dealing with an unexpected good or bad event in the case.

Whatever the experience is, it is experience you currently lack. Now that you have no expectations and recognize the non-monetary value in getting experience, you are actually ready to take a case and a client.

Here's an easy way to get your first client: let other attorneys know you are looking for work. If you are lucky enough to be working in a shared office space, tell those attorneys you are looking for work.

Don't send them an email. Don't leave a note in their mailbox. Go to their office and introduce yourself. Tell them who you are. Tell them you just started. Tell them you are looking for work. Tell them you are ready to take on whatever — because you are looking to gain experience. If you have this conversation with ten attorneys, I can almost guarantee one will send you a case. It might not be a great case, but it will be a case — your first case.

If an attorney tells you "I don't really refer many cases out," offer to help out on a case. Don't offer to work for free. But you can say something like, "I'm really looking for some experience in a civil case and I've heard you are an awesome attorney. Any chance I can help out on a case?"

By working with another attorney, you are not gaining your first client. But you are gaining an opportunity to learn new skills, and to showcase your skills to another attorney that can send you clients in the future.

Even if you don't share an office with other attorneys, you can take another attorney out for coffee (it's cheaper than lunch) and have the same conversation. Other attorneys are the single best way to get client referrals. There is a common theme here, though: you need to put in some face-to-face time and effort to get referrals.

Sending an email is lazy, impersonal, and unmemorable.

If someone doesn't return your request for coffee, ask again. If they still ignore you, forget it. They aren't worth your time anyway. It may not be flattering to beg for clients, or beg for work, but it will get results.

Another option is to use a referral service. Stay away from "lead generators" or "national" law firms that want to send you their local cases. Those can be malpractice bombs waiting to go off. But referral services from your local bar associations could be a nice starting point for four reasons:

1. Local bar associations are unlikely to use unethical or illegal referral practices.
2. Clients use them. I know plenty of other attorneys that get clients from the bar association.
3. A local bar association referral usually means the potential clients are actually looking to hire an attorney, versus looking for free legal advice.
4. The fees for referrals from the local bar associations are not unreasonable.

Announce Yourself to the World

Nobody knows you are in business until you tell them you are in business. So let everyone know that you are open for business and ready for client.

As a starting point, make sure you have a working phone number and website. Even if your website just has your picture, name, and contact info, that is better than nothing. And it is much better than "coming soon!" It takes approximately ten minutes —maybe an hour — to create a static page with basic info.

Then start yelling from the rooftops, blow up Twitter, have coffee/lunch/drinks with everyone you know. You don't have to make it awkward, just be yourself, and your new endeavors will certainly become a topic of conversation.

That said, use the opening of a new business to be more self-promotional than you usually are. If you are reluctant to promote yourself, use this as your first chance to get over that. You are no longer just practicing law, you are also running a business.

Getting your first client is not easy. But with the right mental approach and some hustle, you'll have a full caseload before you know it.

Originally published 2016-01-11. Updated 2020-01-22.

Randall Ryder is the Director of Appellate Advocacy & Lecturer in Law at the University of Minnesota Law School

@randallryder **https://www.linkedin.com/in/randall-ryder-9606604/**

How To Win Clients As A Junior Lawyer

By Evan Richards (https://www.legalcheek.com/author/evan-richards/)
Feb 13 2012 10:45am

Writing under the pseudonym Evan Richards', an up-and-coming London corporate lawyer explains how to get ahead in the cut-throat game of business development

How does a junior lawyer build their own client base? It is one of the most difficult conundrums facing any young lawyer. After all, until you have been practising for many years and have a good few grey hairs to show for it, how can you expect clients to want you to advise them?

Clearly client loyalty is something that comes with time. But anyone who has ever browsed the job adverts for lawyers of seven or eight years' plus standing will doubtless have seen numerous ads that insist on potential recruits having a 'client following'. Despite this, many lawyers in their fledgling years seem to think that it is too soon for them to worry about it. They're kidding themselves. Here's how to start the process.

Select a target

On whom do you want to focus? If you work for corporate clients, then it probably goes without saying that you are unlikely to want to spend too much time working on the senior counsel or execs. Far better to focus on individuals at your level or just above, who, in any case, are the ones likely to still be needing your services in twenty years time.

Younger clients will in general be more likely to want to take advice from someone their own age, will be less likely to have cemented relationships with lawyers already and will be around in business longer to give you work in the future. Even now they may have more influence than you think.

The other key point is to focus on people with whom you have a rapport and with whom you would get on well if you met them in a normal social context. That will make the process much more fun and they are the relationships far more likely to be worth maintaining.

Get your own expenses account

The next thing is to sit down with your own bosses and ask them for a business development (BD) budget. Here it helps to have an enlightened boss. The amount that you ask for needn't be a wild amount of money. Presentation is key. Highlight the benefits to the firm of them giving you this money; such as cementing relationships with key clients and getting close to the people that might be in charge five years from now.

Any boss worth their salt - and clearly there are far too many bosses around not worth their salt - should acknowledge what you are trying to do and provide you with a bit of help to do it.

If you are successful then you should see this as a real positive. Getting your firm to pay for drinks or a lunch with people that you (hopefully) like spending time with ought to be a real perk of the job!

Aim to become somebody's 'go to' individual

As tempting as it might be to think otherwise, good relationship building does not just mean taking people out to the pub and buying them drinks. Consider whether there are simple ways that you could help people out professionally. For instance, I will always make sure that my main contacts know that they can pick up the phone to me if they need someone's brain to pick, or have an idea that they would like to bounce off somebody without necessarily going straight to their boss.

Make it clear that this is not about formal advice, and that the chargeable timer won't be on, just a few minutes on the phone to chat something through informally. It needn't always be a legal point. It doesn't matter. You must always make sure that your offer is not being abused, but small offers of help can go a long way.

Become an internet celeb

By virtue of your relative youth, you are likely to have another potentially significant advantage over the partners and managers with whom you work: an appreciation, and far deeper understanding of, social networking and other modern media.

Could the rainmakers of the future be the individuals who find ways to attract clients through the cult of internet celebrity? Perhaps. So be creative; think about how you can use the internet to build your name and ultimately win clients. Before too long those job adverts requiring a 'following' might not seem so out-of-reach...

Evan Richards (name changed) is a London-based corporate lawyer