

# From Classroom to Boardroom:

## How you can prepare for practice

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# INTRODUCTION

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- Objective: To help law students make the leap “from classroom to boardroom”
- Overview:
  - 20 tips
    - under 4 broad categories:
      - Professionalism
      - Interpersonal Skills
      - Work Product
      - Engagement
  - Your Participation is Welcome

**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:*

- Conduct yourself with maturity. 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.

# 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

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## *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.
- Never 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 humour.



**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:*

- Think!
- 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 reasonably 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 a lawyer with problems without first having thought through a possible solution.

# ENGAGEMENT



## *19. Be Helpful:*

- Help your internal and external clients.
- Help your peers.
- Strive to be viewed as a “team player” by lawyers, students and staff.
- 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.



**QUESTIONS?**

# THANK YOU!

