

[If Med Schools Look at More Than Grades, Why Shouldn't Law Schools and Law Firms?](#)

Posted by [Cordell Parvin](#) on July 20, 2011

Yesterday I posted a blog [What is a Collaborative Law Firm and...Does It Matter?](#) and linked to HBR blog posts suggesting that great people are overrated. At the end I mentioned I would write today about how law firms can determine whether a student or lateral will become a great lawyer.



After [Bill Taylor](#) wrote his controversial Great People are Overrated, he wrote [How Do You Know a Great Person When You See One?](#) In that post he referenced a [New York Times article](#) describing how the medical school at my alma mater, Virginia Tech, screens applicants.

As you will see, they conduct "speed" interviews to determine whether applicants have people skills, how well they think on their feet and how well they work in teams. Aren't those the same skills law firms should determine when hiring first year lawyers and laterals?

We are trying to weed out the students who look great on paper but haven't developed the people or communications skills we think are important," said Dr. Stephen Workman, the school's associate dean for admissions and administration. "Our school intends to graduate physicians who can communicate with patients and work in teams," added Dr. Cynda Ann Johnson, the school's dean. "If people do poorly on the M.M.I., they will not be offered positions in our class.

If you are a regular reader, you know I have written more than once that it takes more than good grades to be a great lawyer. In what turned out to be a controversial post, I wrote [Are You Hiring the Law Students Who Will Succeed?](#) In that post, I discussed two lawyers we hired many years ago and how the one who worked hard for B's did much better than the lawyer who coasted through law school with straight A's.

In August, 2010 I wrote [16 Things Law Firms Expect of New Lawyers](#). Arguably, only a couple of the listed expectations have anything to do with getting good grades.

A few months ago I wrote: [16 Reasons Why Some Really Smart Lawyers Do Not Make Rain](#). If you read that post you will see I was addressing some of the very points that the Virginia Tech medical school is seeking to determine.

It costs any law firm a great deal of money to hire a new or lateral lawyer. Doesn't it make sense to look beyond grades to determine which of the candidates will be in the next generation of great lawyers?

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