

SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING THE LEGAL FIELD IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19



STAY VISIBLE AND CONNECTED

AS YOU PREPARE TO BEGIN YOUR SUMMER INTERNSHIP, IT'S EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO STAY VISIBLE AMONG YOUR PEERS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ALMOST ALL OF US ARE WORKING FROM HOME WITH LITTLE TO NO FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT.

REACH OUT OFTEN



Many attorneys have children at home without daycare who they must now care for and/or homeschool, which in turn means these attorneys have had to shift much of their work schedule to the evening. A great way to remain visible is to occasionally reach out and check in with the people you work with later in the day or in the evening and simply offer to help on any overflow work they may have. This does not usually entail having to stay up late at night working on an assignment. Instead, it will put you back on an attorney's radar as someone needing and willing to work and set you up for projects for the following day(s), while at the same time lessening some of the burden and stress on that attorney. This easy act of sending an email to a partner, associate, or other coworker letting him or her know your availability will go a long way in not only providing you with the opportunity to showcase your work product, but also proving that you are willing to be a team player and pitch in where needed, which is more important than ever while everyone adjusts to working from home.

ATTEND ONLINE MEETINGS AND EVENTS



Whether we like it or not, Zoom happy hours are now a thing, and they're likely here to stay for the foreseeable future. These are a great opportunity to be seen and get face-to-face contact with the people you work with. Take every chance that you can to attend online meetings and get-togethers. This will help keep your name and face at the front of people's minds, and let people get to know you a bit more beyond just your work product.





MAKE THE BEST OF THIS TIME

WITH SOME COMMITMENT TO BUILDING AND MAINTAINING YOUR NETWORK AND LEGAL KNOWLEDGE, YOU CAN FIND WAYS TO MAKE THIS TIME WORK FOR YOU!

KEEP UP WITH LEGAL PUBLICATIONS



Look at where legal practices and trends are heading. Pay attention to hot topics that are popping up as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While you may not have an idea right now of what you want to practice when you graduate law school, keeping up with legal trends in the wake of COVID-19 will give you some insight on what practice areas will have opportunities when you eventually start practicing. Along those lines, stay up-to-date on the legal market and how potential employers are managing business disruptions caused by the pandemic.

VOLUNTEER



This is a great time to get out and help your community. Not only is it a good thing to do, but it can help you build your network. Look at any work your local bar association or law school organizations are doing to see if and how you can help out.

START BUILDING YOUR REPUTATION AS A THOUGHT LEADER



Think about using this time to learn about an emerging legal issue and really dive into the topic. See if you can find any publishing opportunities within your school's organizations or local business groups. Bylines in good, thoughtful publications will stay with you throughout your career. Even if you write it and publish it now, you can list it as a published work down the line once you start practicing.

TOOT YOUR OWN HORN



If you accomplish something major or hit a big milestone during this time, don't be afraid to reach out to your attorney contacts and let them know. If you won a student body election, had something published, or won an award, spread the word. This will keep you top-of-mind, and right now, people are looking for good news to celebrate.



BE PREPARED FOR ANY OUTCOME

MOST IMPORTANT, WHILE THERE ARE MANY OPINIONS ABOUT HOW THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 MIGHT PLAY OUT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT NO ONE CAN SPEAK WITH ANY SORT OF AUTHORITY REGARDING WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH LEGAL RECRUITING OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS, SO BE PREPARED FOR ANY OUTCOME.

GRADUATING JDs



If you are in the Class of 2020 and you have an offer you have not accepted, but plan to do so, seriously consider doing so now. Many will recall from 2008 that offers do get rescinded, even by premier law firms. You may have noticed that firms have been cutting salaries, laying off and furloughing attorneys and non-attorney staff, but look on the bright side that there have not yet been the deep cuts to attorney ranks that were seen during 2008 – 09.

If you have accepted an offer, do not be alarmed if your start date has been pushed back. If 2008 is a model, then late in January or February 2021 would be a popular new start date. Do not take a deferral personally, it is just business. Law firms are already considered to be high-stress environments and are going to be even more stressful for a while. If your offer is deferred, you are offered some kind of furlough, or your previous offer is in any way adversely impacted, show a positive display of emotional intelligence by projecting an attitude of understanding and gratitude. It is not in your interest to complain about it.

If your offer is rescinded, consider a masters in tax, an L.L.M., or a with the intention of trying again in the next cycle. This is not the time to become sluggish. The competition for these positions will be intense. Another consideration is to look into firms which are considered less prestigious on law school campuses, particularly boutiques with a practice that is common across Big Law.

If you have done all that you can and find yourself displaced, have “No Shame.” There is no shame in being displaced in a down market. Many of today’s most successful attorneys were victims of the 2008 recession. Let people help you. Reach out to your network. Know that you will bounce back.

In the meantime, keep your ears to the ground and stay in the know. Sign up for legal alerts from popular legal news blogs, i.e., Above the Law; Law 360; and Law.com. If you are interested in working in your local state, sign up for alerts from your local legal blog or news publication. Also, become student members of your local bar associations, as the list serves for those organizations may provide insightful information regarding the health of the legal market and potential job opportunities.



MAKE IT EASY TO MENTOR YOU

BEING A MENTEE AND ACCEPTING CRITICAL FEEDBACK FOR YOUR WORK PRODUCT IS NOT THE EASIEST THING TO DO. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN THE LEGAL FIELD BECAUSE ATTORNEYS ARE OFTEN TOO BUSY TO PROVIDE VALUABLE INSIGHT INTO WHAT YOU ARE DOING RIGHT, WHAT YOU ARE DOING WRONG, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO BETTER IN THE FUTURE. HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE MAKING IT EASY TO MENTOR YOU AT SCHOOL AND AT WORK.

BE PROACTIVE



This means maintaining an eager attitude and asking for feedback at appropriate times. When you send an attorney work product, you can ask for feedback or suggestions on what needs to be changed, or you can ask for direction on what to do next. As a young attorney or summer intern, projects and assignments can often be a one-time occurrence where you aren't asked for anything further on the same matter. You can sometimes work around this by asking the attorney follow-up questions or asking if they need help in the next step of the process. Think about what the attorney is going to do with the work product you send and suggest ways that you can be helpful moving forward.

ACCEPT CRITICISM WELL

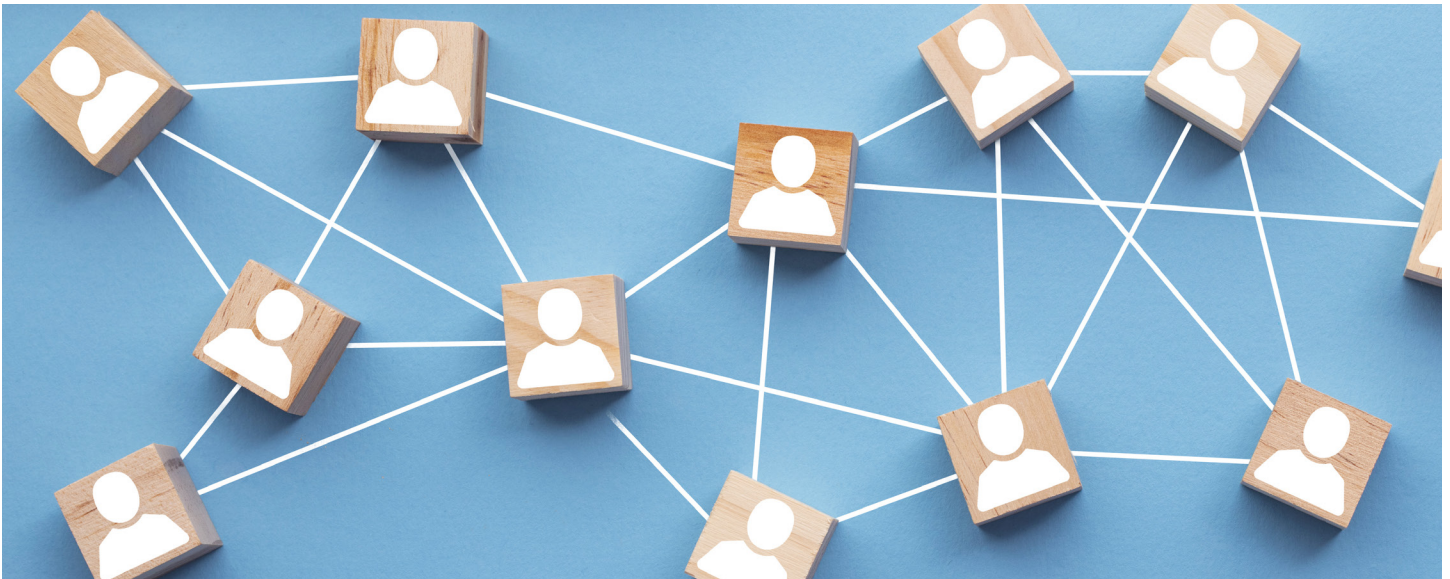


This is difficult to do, no matter the circumstances. Accepting criticism does not just mean saying “ok” and moving on. It may mean that you take some time to think about what the attorney suggests and think about ways in which you can incorporate it into your practice. It also means being open, honest, and grateful for criticism when it does come. If someone takes time to tell you how you can do something differently, it is a positive sign that they are trying to actively mentor you.

ASK YOUR MENTOR FOR ADVICE



Mentoring is a two-way street. Do not be afraid to tell someone that you are struggling with a certain assignment, area, person, etc. Ask for help or guidance on how to approach whatever you are struggling with. Don't be afraid to push back or ask why their suggested approach is the best approach, but always ask respectfully. Take the time to thank your mentor for whatever advice they have to offer.



IN THE MIDST OF THIS GLOBAL SITUATION, MOST EMPLOYERS AND THEIR PEOPLE ARE ADOPTING A “NEW NORMAL” AND ARE WORKING TIRELESSLY TO ENSURE SAFETY AND CONTINUITY OF THEIR PEOPLE AND OPERATIONS. EMBRACE EVERY OPPORTUNITY YOU ENCOUNTER THIS SUMMER AND KNOW WE WILL COME THROUGH THIS TOGETHER AS A STRONGER AND MORE UNITED COMMUNITY.

AUTHORS



Sharonda Childs Fancher
Associate
Birmingham
205.244.3837
sfancher@bakerdonelson.com



Tanisha Pinkins
Associate
Atlanta
404.589.3411
tpinkins@bakerdonelson.com



Xeris Gregory
Associate
Birmingham
205.250.8319
xgregory@bakerdonelson.com



Sean M. Wood
Associate
Nashville
615.726.5662
smwood@bakerdonelson.com

ALABAMA • FLORIDA • GEORGIA • LOUISIANA • MARYLAND • MISSISSIPPI • SOUTH CAROLINA • TENNESSEE • TEXAS • VIRGINIA • WASHINGTON, D.C.

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