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10 Associates On The Secret Of Success

Law360, New York (December 23, 2015, 2:31 PM ET) -- Success may seem elusive to many inexperienced attorneys. Associates struggle with getting better at practicing the law while also trying to impress the partners at their firms and their clients. Law360 reached out to associates and asked them to share their secrets.

Amanda Norris Ames, Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice PLLC



"I think it's important to remember that lawyering is a people job. It's easy to get lost in technical arguments and procedure, so I remind myself to look at the big picture: My work involves people's jobs, businesses and liberties. This perspective helps me understand the interests and motivations of my clients — and opponents — and allows me to come up with solutions that I might otherwise miss. It's also important to maintain a diverse practice and pursue outside interests — knowing a little about a lot has allowed me to contribute to diverse teams and has kept my career interesting."

Audra Byrd, Turner Padget Graham & Laney PA



"Firm mentoring programs pairing new associates with partners are extremely beneficial. However, it is also equally critical to seek out more experienced associates for guidance. Strong relationships with more advanced associates create pipelines to a greater variety

and volume of work since most associates at that level need help with heavy caseloads. Experienced associates are also more likely to allow you closer involvement in their work, giving you opportunities to participate in depositions, hearings and trials. Most importantly, associate mentors can better relate to the struggles and issues you will face in the first years of practice."

Paul M. Gales Jr., Greenberg Traurig LLP



"Beyond the basics of hard work, a positive attitude and respect for clients and colleagues, associate success is driven by doing, saying, writing or thinking the right thing at the right time. Having a feel for this is inherent, but can be enhanced by education, observation and practice. Educate yourself on the business of your firm and your clients because legal practice is customer service — matching your abilities with your clients' needs. Observe mentors, colleagues and other professionals. Practice necessary skills by emulating successful observed behaviors. With time, you get a feel for what works and what does not."

Rachel A. Greenleaf, Hirschler Fleischer PC



"Per the unofficial credo of this generation's working women, 'lean in,' but also know when to 'lean back.' A successful associate is one that goes the extra mile, takes on the additional project, is out networking and volunteering, etc. But the practice of law is a marathon, not a sprint — take on too much, and the quality of your work and your quality of life will suffer. The work-life balance is different for each person. Try to push your boundaries but do so within reason."

Meghan Gruebner, Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP



"The key to success for an aspiring associate extends far beyond being smart. I find an important skill to have is the ability to make clients and partners feel like they are your top priority. Mastering this skill is not a science but an art, and I recommend a few helpful tips: (1) Be responsive — if you cannot provide a response to an email immediately, simply acknowledging receipt of it can go a long way; (2) understand deadlines and manage expectations for completion time; (3) learn your clients' and partners' businesses — this may require nonbillable time; and (4) be concise."

Corey A. Johanningsmeier, Keker & Van Nest LLP



"Always volunteer for the work you want before anyone assigns you the work no one wants. Remain open-minded and relentless about where and how you will get the stand-up opportunities you need to convince clients and partners that you can be trusted with stand-up opportunities."

Joshua Kotin, BuckleySandler LLP



"Share the love. Partners want solid work product — something that can be passed to the client without additional fuss. While I often deliver the product to the partner, rarely am I solely responsible for creating all of the content; junior associates play a big role. Making sure the partner knows who did what well fosters loyalty and camaraderie. When the

junior associates are successful, I am successful. I've also been fortunate to work for others who share the love — for these people I always want to find extra time, or make an additional push, to get them what they need."

Ariel E. Ronneburger, Cullen & Dykman LLP



"As an associate, it is important to set yourself apart in order to be successful. The best way is to hone a skill or area that you excel in, whether it be writing or research, so that partners know they can always rely on you for high-quality work. Another way to distinguish yourself is to become an 'expert' on a certain topic so that, when a partner or other colleague needs help on that issue, you quickly become the go-to attorney. Developing such skills and gaining a reputation for your work ethic will solidify you as a valuable asset to the firm."

Calli Turner, Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP



"Make meaningful connections. Seek out those attorneys who went to your undergrad or law school, or attorneys with any other shared experiences or interests. If you make the most of these connections, you're more likely to have zealous advocates for your offer at the end of the summer, rather than a roomful of attorneys who 'kind of' remember you. And, importantly, these connections carry over to your time as an associate."

Falon Wrigley, Armstrong Teasdale LLP



"To be successful as an associate you must actively engage in your work, be adaptable and add value that exceeds expectations. Take ownership of every case and project, no matter how small. Ensure you understand what your partner or client is trying to accomplish and think through the issues, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in your position and proactively seek solutions. Even though ultimate responsibility may lie with someone else, always, always assume it starts and stops with you. Beyond great work product, start developing an expertise, build relationships in your firm and community and execute a client development strategy."

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