

THE TOP FIVE THINGS EVERY ASSOCIATE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED AS A NEW LAWYER

BY MORLEY WITUS

1. Master the law and the facts.

First, read the governing contract, lease, court rule, or statute; then re-read it; come back to it later and read it again. Learn the facts, backward and forward. God is in the details. Bone up on the relevant legal subject by reviewing a hornbook or survey article. Then dive into the specific cases or issues after you are familiar with the legal context.

2. Get things done ahead of time and never miss a deadline.

Speak up early if you see a problem looming (like the fact that you have other pressing assignments that will prevent you from doing the new project right then).

3. Report back.

Don't wait until the partner has to ask you where the matter stands. Touch base with the partner periodically to let him/her know what you are finding. Keep him/her informed.

4. Take responsibility by giving the partner briefs that are ready to file, transactional documents that are ready to use, and memos ready to give to the client.

Don't submit partially-baked products to the partner "because he is going to change it anyhow." You have to deliver something that you feel is in final form and ready to go. Then the partner will revise it, but he won't throw it back in your face.

5. Get involved.

Get involved in the firm, in the legal bar, in the community.

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