

NEWCOMER'S CORNER

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ASSOCIATES

BY ANNA FRIESENHAHN

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As with any good relationship, strong relationships with your firm's associates are built on mutual trust and understanding. Great, you say. So, how do I get there? Establishing relationships – good relationships – takes time and effort. Keep in mind that these individuals are, in most cases, young, talented, intelligent overachievers who've just accomplished a major goal of landing the "Big Firm" job, and they want to be treated as such. Here are a few pointers to set you on your way:

- Treat them as you'd like to be treated. A good general rule is to give every lawyer

(and staff person for that matter) the same amount of respect, from the most senior partner down to the first-year associate. Don't make distinctions between junior and senior lawyers when it comes to your attention. Your professionalism will be appreciated at both ends of the spectrum.

- The recruiting possibilities are endless – take advantage of them! I love to involve associates in the recruiting process. It's never too early to get them involved. Summer associates often find new attorneys to be the easiest group to relate to – being the group that is most closely removed from the summer program themselves. Let new attorneys be your eyes and ears on the practice floors and, more importantly, let them know you're relying on their help.
- Be involved in associate firm life. Don't be a stranger. Stop into their offices when appropriate and find out what's going on in their lives. Does your firm have an Associates' Committee? Offer to organize meetings, assist in planning end-of-year dinners and social outings, or help with the

annual election process. They'll come to depend on you for support.

- Remember your pipeline! This year's summer associates will be next year's associate attorneys. Laying the foundation for a healthy relationship during the summer program will give you a head start on building a strong and lasting connection with your future associates.

This may all seem like common sense, but establishing yourself as a trusted source of information and assistance to your associate pool can pay big dividends down the road. If you stay at the same place long enough, you may even have the opportunity to see your summer associates become partners, and, ultimately, the leaders of your firm, which I'm sure most seasoned recruiters will agree is a very rewarding experience indeed. ■

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