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SUMMER ASSOCIATES *Outlook*

Shaping Summers To Suit Up: The Roles Associates Play in Firms' Summer Programs

Each role is an essential element of the program

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All the summer program's a stage. And all the attorneys merely players. They have their exits and their entrances. And one associate in her time plays many parts.

Her roles can be categorized into five characters. At first there is the Buddy: dining and entertaining on the firm's budget. Second, there is the Summer Schmooser: in humor and high spirits with good times had by all, with warm hearts and legends of summers past, and full of wise advice and modern anecdotes. Third, there is the Delegator, who is entrusted with work, teaching her Aspiring (f/k/a "summers") a craft, and made to succeed in the art of advocacy.

Fourth, there is the energetic Mentor, with her briefcase and shining morning face, advising, educating and encouraging

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all around her with a willingness to shape her Aspiring's experience.

And so she plays her part. The fourth role shifts into the thoughtful and meticulous Coordinator, with dinners to organize and events to plan. Her knowledge of and experience with the firm is all too valuable. Her determination, and her energy and drive, molds not only the Aspiring's experience but the firm's culture and environment. And so this tale begins . . .

The Buddy

Did someone say "free-lunch"? Yes, that is the motto of the Buddy. She is lots of laughs, tons of fun and a friend to boot. Accordingly, firms typically cast energetic, personable characters in the Buddy role. While the Buddy may not be fully integrated into firm life herself, she is a leader-in-training and often learns just as much as she teaches during the summer program.

The Buddy is a junior associate (first through third year) who can best relate to the Aspiring (summer associate) in both

experience and knowledge. On the surface, the Buddy invites the Aspiring out for lunch, on the firm's dime of course (hence the motto), pops in for time commitment!

The Delegator

Come one, come all — step right up and submit your assignment form. No reasonable offer will be refused. While it's easy to get caught up in the summer hoopla, we must not forget the primary purpose of the summer program is to set the stage for the Aspiring's debut as a practicing attorney. A Delegator must be patient, experienced (to some extent) and understanding. She must appreciate the Aspiring's legal inexperience while still challenging her capabilities. She must choose an assignment that will showcase the Aspiring's talents and serve as a springboard for her education. Notably, she must invest in reviewing the work product and providing constructive feedback.

On the flipside, a goal of the summer program is to give each Aspiring desirable assignments. The depth and breadth of the "assignment pool" is essential in determining the overall success of the Aspiring's experience. The ability to provide the Aspiring with the type of assignment she is looking for and that satisfies her professional curiosity can help ensure that the Aspiring feels like an integral part of a team. For example, a recent Aspiring stated, "This past summer I worked on a major transaction. When I returned to school in the fall, I found out that I was

the only one of my classmates who had this role on a deal. The fact that the lawyers at the firm were willing to include us in a key deal demonstrated their truly exceptional confidence in us.” This is the type of response the firm strives to achieve and it simply could not be possible without the thoughtful and engaging assignments submitted by our Delegates.

The Mentor

By no means a bit part, the Mentor is perhaps the pivotal supporting role of the summer program. When cast properly, the Mentor is undoubtedly the key liaison between the firm and the Aspiring. A trusted confidant, legal guru and social “wingman,” the Mentor must be played by someone who is ready, willing and able.

For most Aspiring, law firm life is uncharted territory and being thrust into this foreign environment can be overwhelming. Seasoned attorneys are quite familiar with the inevitable anxiety an Aspiring can have about making a good impression and ultimately securing an offer. Therefore, a goal for the summer program is to make the Aspiring feel at ease and confident in her ability to succeed. These feelings can be instilled in the Aspiring through effective mentoring. An Aspiring should view the Mentor as an ally — her own personal guide to the inside workings of the firm. The Mentor should be able to provide the Aspiring

with substantive feedback on work assignments, ensure that she gets to know many different people at the firm and answer any questions she may have about the firm’s practices and policies.

While being a Mentor may not be the most glamorous role, the job does have its perks. Aside from participation in the social extravaganza, the Mentor gets a “behind the scenes” look at the recruiting process. Before serving as Mentors, at times it may have seemed associates were hired by some mysterious wizard hiding behind a curtain. At the firm, the Mentor gets to partake in meaningful discussions with the firm’s hiring committee and learns the firm’s thought process in making hiring decisions. This is a direct opportunity for an associate to influence who she may (or may not) be working with in the future.

The Coordinator

Last but far from least is the Coordinator — the firm’s leading lady. The firm casts this role with its stars: the associates who shine in ability, as well as personality; the associates who rise to the challenge and embrace this great responsibility with an eagerness and excitement that is unsurpassed; the associates who share in the firm’s present achievements and support its vision of the future.

The Coordinator is a fierce combination of every role. She not only designs

the summer program, from cooking classes to casino night, she serves as an ambassador, if you will, of the firm. She weaves an intricate web of fun-filled events and interesting assignments, all the while integrating the Aspiring and sculpting firm culture. She is challenged to create a 10-week program that captures the firm’s vast practice areas, diverse population and sophisticated clientele and that accurately reflects the demanding yet exciting career of an attorney.

The Coordinator plans the event, attends the event and later evaluates the event. The Coordinator creates the assignment, delegates the assignment and later reviews the assignment. Indeed, while the Coordinator may have great power and control over the summer program itself, she also wields great responsibility for each Aspiring’s experience, education and ultimate success. As the summer comes to a close, the Coordinator is tasked with making influential suggestions as to each Aspiring’s ability to develop and grow as a firm attorney. These critical decisions in due course shape the future of the firm.

Closing

During the last scene of all that ends this strange, eventful summer are offers for the Aspiring and change for the firm in diversity, in sophistication, and in excellence, dominating all areas of the law and transcending all barriers. ■