

3 Real World Preparation Strategies for Your Final Year of Law School



final year of law school

It's all worthless. Not your final year of law school, of course, but your GPA

[Laszlo Bock](#), former head of HR at Google had this to say about GPAs and test scores. *"GPAs are worthless as a criteria for hiring, and test scores are worthless."*

This isn't surprising, is it?

Experience seems to validate this over time for law firms as well.

"Google famously used to ask everyone for a transcript and G.P.A.'s and test scores, but we don't anymore, unless you're just a few years out of school. We found that they don't predict anything."

Law firm expectations have changed as well

Remember the trend I talked about in my previous post? Today, modern clients are obsessed with value. This means successful law firms are focused on value as

well.

Is that what we're seeing?

Absolutely.

Law firm expectations continue to rise. Clients place an exorbitant amount of pressure on firms. As a result, firms expect a tremendous amount of new skills from new graduates/potential associates. Skills associates [didn't need 10 years ago](#).

Skills most law schools don't teach.

Most new graduates are unprepared for work in a thriving law firm. This means *any* firm that hires these new graduates will need to invest a significant amount upfront before seeing a reasonable return.

Something law firms aren't eager to do.

Law firms used to be different

The practice of law used to be different. Graduates only needed two things, legal acumen and experience. If they were good at their jobs and they serve clients well, they did well.

Not anymore.

New graduates need readiness and real-world skills they can put to work immediately. Your LSAT test scores are still important, but they aren't as relevant as they used to be. Today employers are looking for demonstrated competency.

They want graduates to *show* what they know.

Most graduates are completely unprepared to do this. This isn't their fault. They're simply expected to demonstrate skillset they haven't learned yet. Here are three real-world strategies law students can use to win a coveted spot in a flourishing law firm.

1. Learn your role, expand your role

Most attorneys fit into one of [four distinct roles](#). Finders, binders, minders and grinders.

- **Finders a rainmakers.** They're expected to bring new clients and new business to the firm. As far as law firms are concerned, finders are exceptionally rare is also whether so valuable. If you're looking to eventually make partner the skill is a must.
- **Binders are connectors.** They're sophisticated networkers, professionals were capable of building and maintaining relationships with powerful and influential people. A mature binder eventually becomes kingmaker, a professional who is capable of conveying, absorbing and revoking power.
- **Minders are managers.** They're bureaucrats who are skilled at managing the never-ending mass of clients, employees, partners and politics in their firm. They thrive on administration.
- **Grinders are workhorses.** These associates are expected to do one thing and one thing only. Do all of the work that's set before them, producing high-quality work in a reasonable amount of time.

New associates are typically hard to be grinders. Partners are expected to be a combination of finder, binder and minder.

As far as roles are concerned, grinder is typically **imposed** while the other three roles are **earned**.

This is the problem.

Savvy law students will work to develop skills in each of these areas. They'll...

- Become a student of [psychology](#) and [marketing](#), learning to attract new clients on demand
- Learn how to [build deep, loyal and lasting connections](#) with tremendously powerful and influential people
- Master easy-to-learn efficiency and productivity skills like [Tiny habits](#), the [Pomodoro technique](#), [Ivy Lee method](#) and others.

One year of training, with examples you can demonstrate, will put you ahead of most *veteran* attorneys.

2. Learn business development

Law students who understand the ins and outs of business development and the fundamentals of good marketing are able to [write their own ticket](#).

Why is that?

Here's what Joe Ankus, founder of legal recruiting and training firm Ankus Consulting had to say about this trend.

"The era of a new graduate joining a law firm, being an associate and being invited to become a partner over a martini lunch five years later is long gone. There is no question that over time the trend has evolved to this: Lawyers are not only expected to be competent lawyers, but also they are expected to be prolific rainmakers."

Rainmaking is no longer optional.

If you'd like to maintain a strong negotiating position in your law firm or avoid being pushed out during layoffs or restructuring, rainmaking is a requirement.

Firms are hesitant to kill the golden goose (you).

The better you are at generating new leads and business for your firm (whilst maintaining control over your lead generation mechanism), the more secure your financial and negotiating position will be in your career.

Which brings us to the next strategy.

3. Learn to create, implement and maintain systems

If you're a grinder, you won't have a tremendous amount of time to dabble with each of the roles I've mentioned. You'll need to have systems in place – a way to automate and semi-automate the strategies I've mentioned.

Educational materials

- [The Fifth Discipline](#) by Peter Senge
- [The Art of Thinking In Systems](#) by Stephen Schuster
- [Learn To Think In Systems](#) by Albert Rutherford

Systems you'll need in your career

- Systems to build connections rapidly and establish new connections on-demand
- Systems to build authority, credibility and influence (e.g. public speaking, guest posts, interviews, etc.)
- Marketing systems to attract leads, clients and revenue – for your firm or yourself

- A working knowledge of case, document, project, time and [practice management software](#) tools
- Experience with a variety of third-party tools and resources e.g. Box, Stripe, PayPal, QuickBooks Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat, and others
- Personal time management and automation tools e.g. [Calendly](#), [Zapier](#), [IFTTT](#) and others.

Systems thinking is the secret ingredient that produces *transformative change*.

Remember that? Here's a quick recap.

- **Conventional results.** Being great at your job, going above and beyond and performing well in general. If you're a grinder your work is pristine and above reproach. You're fast, efficient helpful, productive, etc.
- **Transformative results.** These are results that make things better for your firm, your career, the industry or customers as a whole. It can be as simple as shared knowledge or as comprehensive as advanced rainmaking or brokering deals on behalf of your firm.

Conventional results build trust. It helps you to keep your job. Transformative results win coveted opportunities in highly competitive environments (e.g. make equity partner).

Change in expectations requires a change in strategy

The pressure is on.

Graduates are expected to hit the ground running. New attorneys need skills they didn't need 10 years ago.

Skills most law schools don't teach.

Most new graduates are unprepared for work in a thriving law firm. Firms are hesitant to invest a significant amount of capital before seeing a reasonable return.

They won't have to.

At least, not with you. Armed with these three real-world preparation strategies, new graduates will have the unfair advantage they need to attract consistent employer attention in the marketplace.

They'll be ready and able to show firms what they know.

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