LAWYER TO LAWYER MENTORING PROGRAM
WORKSHEET Z
INTRODUCTION TO OFFICE POLITICS

Worksheet Z is intended to facilitate a discussion about office politics, including appropriate networking, socializing and personal behaviors.

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- If mentoring in-house, discuss the type of social climate that exists in the office, including whether staff is expected to be formal or informal with each other, whether there are social functions that the new associates are expected to attend, the types of expenses for which it is appropriate to file an expense report, the personalities of partners, colleagues, and other staff, the appropriate and expected attire at the office and other firm events, etc.

- If mentoring in-house, discuss the preferences and expectations of the new lawyer's supervisor. Share tips that the new lawyer could use to impress his or her supervisor.

- Suggest appropriate ways for the new lawyer to socialize and get to know other attorneys and judges in the community.

- Discuss the types of social or office behaviors that could be perceived as detrimental for a new lawyer's career, both with colleagues inside and outside of the new lawyer's office.

- Read and discuss the suggestions in the attached excerpts. KIMM ALAYNE WALTON, WHAT LAW SCHOOL DOESN'T TEACH YOU…BUT YOU *REALLY* NEED TO KNOW (2000).

- Explain to the new lawyer each non-lawyer employee's role in the mentor's office/firm, including the employee's title, job duties, and relationship to the new lawyer (if any) if in an in-house mentoring relationship.

- Discuss the importance of having support staff on your team and treating them with respect.

- Share suggested "do's and don'ts" of dealing with support staff, colleagues, and those more senior than the new lawyer.

- If the new lawyer has an assistant, secretary and/or paralegal, explain the types of task that are appropriate (and inappropriate) to ask each of them to do.

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- Discuss the importance of asking for help before taking action about which you are not sure and of obtaining assistance when you have made a mistake. Give the new lawyer examples of problems you have encountered and tried to solve without help and discuss the consequences that occurred.

- If mentoring in-house, discuss the office culture with regard to decision-making and the new lawyer's authority to do so.

- Talk about how to develop appropriate support systems of persons with whom the lawyer can discuss problems when they arise.

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around that neither of you can keep a secret. And don't blab about your personal life to people you work with, any more than you would about any other romance."

B. You Can Get Away With Just About Anything If You Learn How To Play The Game. Learn The Culture!

If you think work is a meritocracy, ask yourself why some really smart people work really hard but never seem to get the recognition they deserve. If you think that everything you need to know about a place is written up in the policies and manuals, you're burying your head in the sand in a particularly dangerous way. As Dennis Kennedy says, "Your most important job from the time you accept the job is to learn the culture of the organization you are joining."

The fact is, if you want to maximize your effort—if you want to work hours that are as reasonable as they can be, if you want to have other people applaud you and give you opportunities and help you get ahead, if you want to smoke out the best work and best people to work for—you've got to learn how the game is played. If you don't want to be the one always saying, "How come ***she*** always gets the best projects?" and "What makes ***him*** so special?"—if you'd rather have people saying those things about ***you***—then pay special attention to everything I'm about to tell you. Because superstars at the office aren't born. They follow a subtle set of rules that you can apply, too.

Now all of this may strike you as kind of skeevy. You may think, I just want to be myself. They'll have to take me as I am. I'd say to you: No, they don't. When employers talk about finding a "fit," and only wanting people who "fit in," they don't mean it as a negative. They really mean: we want people who seem comfortable with our culture. I'm not telling you to do something totally against your nature. If you're at an office that's freewheeling, aggressive, and hard partying and where the lawyers believe in working twelve hours a day and then socializing together at night, and you're a more quiet, private person who wants to spend substantial time with your family, there's nothing wrong with either you ***or*** the office. But you don't agree with the culture, and it's probably not the place for you to work.

I think you'll find that there's a fairly substantial range of places where you fit into the culture. Your goal should be to figure out what that culture is, and in doing so identify where there's wiggle room, the extent to which you can "be yourself." There's no point in fighting it because you can't

change the culture of an office all by yourself. Figure out how you can exploit it for your own benefit.

I'll give you an analogy from the world of science. Maybe you know about quantum mechanics, but if you don't, here it is: it's basically the science of really, really small stuff—atoms and subatomic particles. The problem is, these really small things don't behave like anything normal. For instance, subatomic particles don't have to be particles. Light, for example, behaves like a wave if it's measured like a wave, and as a stream of particles if it's measured as particles. And even more curious, the subatomic particles or waves don't necessarily exist at one point at a time. They can be at different points at the same time. Only measuring them makes them be anywhere specifically. When scientists first found this out they were totally flummoxed. But they learned to take advantage of the weirdness rather than fight it, and that led to a technology explosion and miniaturization of everything from motors to microchips.

At work, you should do the same thing. Take advantage of the weirdness rather than fight it.

What ***is*** that "weirdness"? What are we talking about when we talk about "culture"? When you think of the word "culture," you think of the rules, spoken and unspoken, by which a society lives. It's that way at work, too. What I'm going to do here is to teach you ***how*** to figure out what the rules are, and with those tools, what you ought to be looking for.

1. "Breasting Your Cards" Until You Know Who's Who and What's What.

Until you've figured out how the office works, you've got to tread very carefully. Soon enough you'll be in the swing of things. But when you start, you want to be very cautious about ***everything***.

a. Be *very* wary of people who try to "take you under their wing" from moment one.

You'll find at any office that there will be people you gravitate to more than others—and people who gravitate to you. And you'll find that you're the natural object of attention for your supervisor, the recruiting coordinator (if your office has one), and people like that. But if you notice somebody coming on strong to be your friend, tread lightly. It's tempting to fall into an immediate friendship when you're at a strange new place, but you can't afford to do

that. A whole bunch of people I interviewed told me to warn you about this. Northern Illinois' Mary Obrzut says, "Keep your antenna up! Margaret Mead used to say that when she went into new environments, she didn't pay attention to the first few people out to meet the boat. The ones with power were the ones standing on the shore watching. People who reach out to you first may not have power." As Harvard's Mark Weber puts it, "The first person who tries to befriend you may be the jerk of the office." Instead of clinging to anyone as a buddy, wait first to see how other people react to them. As Mark Weber says, "Watch what other people say about them. How do they react when this person's name comes up? What kind of work do they get? Do other people seek them out? Does this person spend too much time chatting, passing along the latest office gossip, taking long lunches, or whining about things at work? You need to know how credible people are before you choose your friends at the office." Hamline's Vince Thomas adds, "You don't know who's important and who's not—and who'll stay and who won't! You can curry favour with someone, and six months later you're at their farewell lunch." If this sounds a bit cold, remember: your friends at work are your colleagues first, and your friends second. You can't afford to start off being associated in your superiors' minds with anybody who's got a bad reputation.

b. Don't establish a persona for yourself until you've got an idea of the lay of the land.

Elaine Bourne recommends that you "Watch, listen, and learn before you interject yourself into situations you know nothing about." As lawyers at Waller Lansden advise, "Don't try to be the funniest or the most clever or be too visible early on. Lay low for a little while!" You want to find out what goes over big at the office, and what you ought to save for your private life, until you figure out to what extent you can "be yourself" at work.

c. Keep your opinions to yourself until you know whom you can trust, and how your statements will go over.

As Minnesota's Sue Gainen says, "Bide your time. Find out who's who and what's what before you open your mouth about anything to anyone."

2. The "How" part—the tools you use to learn the culture

a. Listen to what people say when they don't think they're telling you rules.

If people are always saying "We should let Joe know about this," or "Let's see what Joe has to say," that means: Joe's got juice.

b. As Miami's Marcy Cox recommends, "Observe interactions."

See how people deal with each other, whether they're formal or freewheeling. If everybody at the office slinks into work every day without saying anything and you sail into the office every day with a singing "Good mo-o-o-o-orning!" you're going to stand out in the wrong way. (And you're probably at the wrong kind of office for your personality!) Some places love practical jokes and silliness. As Hofstra's Diane Schwartzberg says, "If your supervisor is very serious, don't crack jokes!" If they have a newsletter that publishes silly photos of people when they were children, that tells you about a lightheartedness at work. Maybe the managing partner won't mind if you paint a whipped cream beard on his face at the firm's annual summer bash, but don't count on it until you've observed other people joshing with him the same way. At meetings, watch how people respond to the person who's talking. Do they tap their pencils and roll their eyes? Or do they snap to attention and stop fiddling around?

c. Go out drinking with your fellow associates, and let them get hammered while you nurse a single beer.

As one new associate told me, "I made a point of going out for drinks with my colleagues when I first started. I'd nurse one or two while they'd down several. They'd vent and spill the beans about office politics and all of the goings-on at work. I gained invaluable information that saved my neck on several occasions."

d. Find a hobby that you share with colleagues at work, and use that as a source of bonding.

It can be ***anything***. Georgetown's Anna Davis found that when she was working at the FTC, a group of people would go jogging together. She liked to jog, so she joined them. One law firm told me about how some of the lawyers like to knit as a way to relieve tension, and several of the associates get together once a week to knit—and gossip. Hamline's Vince Thomas says that when he was a new associate, he went running every lunchtime with a group of associates and partners. He said, "We had a rule that nothing that we said would go any further than our running group. We'd run five or six miles, and while we were running, I heard a ***ton*** about what was going on in the firm. Partners would relax and talk about just about anything. They'd talk about who was going to make partner. A lot of times I knew who was going to partner before the people ***themselves*** knew it! I had colleagues who were jealous, knowing I was hearing a lot of inside scoop. I told them, 'Bring in your shoes and come with us!'"

On the other end of the "healthy habits" scale, one lawyer told me about how when he was a new associate, he and the other smokers in the office would all go out the same door to sneak a smoke a couple of times a day. "It turned out to be a great way to bond with my new colleagues," he said. "We'd all be out there huddling in the cold New England winters."

The point is, think about what ***you*** like to do, and integrate that into your work life. It's a great way to get to know people, make friends—and learn what you need to know about the culture!

e. Heed the "myths and legends" at the office.

As Dennis Kennedy recommends, "The 'myths and legends' at the office can help you out. If the managing partners of the firm shared a table in the library for their first few years in the firm, you can learn that you'll want to hesitate before you demand new furniture. An oft-repeated tale of the female partner who called into the office within an hour of giving birth can give you a clue as to what lawyers will think of your request for substantial paternity leave."

f. Pay more attention to what people do than what they say.

If they talk pro bono but reward huge billables, their actions are speaking louder than their words. If they say their office is open and collegial, but everybody works behind firmly closed doors, they've got a different interpretation of "collegial" than you do.

g. Ask questions, the *right* questions, of junior associates.

Encourage them to talk to you. "What do you wish you knew when you started here?" "How do you like what you're doing?" Those kinds of questions will give you all kinds of valuable tidbits. As lawyers at Jones Day point out, "Attorneys more senior than you can provide not just substantial legal advice but also insights into the 'ins and outs' of the firm."

h. Look at your employer's web site and brochures.

See what they brag about. Your observations at the office will be more relevant—for instance, every employer brags about family-friendliness, collegiality, whether or not that's accurate—but the way they present themselves to the outside world will give you a clue to how they like to think of themselves.

i. Ask the people at the top.

Lawyers at Steptoe and Johnson advise that you "Go to senior partners, make a conscious effort to seek them out, and ask them what they did when ***they*** started that got their career off to a good start." What they did will tell you what they'll appreciate seeing ***you*** do.

j. Identify positive role models.

Ask the recruiting coordinator or a mentor you trust, "Who's a superstar? Who should I try and emulate? What stands out about them?" Find positive role models and then do as they do!

k. Encourage people to talk to you.

Smile and look interested when they talk about work. Don't be judgmental, don't say "I would never have done that," or "She

seems like the type who . . . " Just let them talk. You get to listen—and learn.

l. Watch how people treat their underlings.

If they treat them well, that's a big positive. On the other hand, no matter how nice they are to you, if they treat people badly who are in no position to talk back, then what they're telling you is that given the authority, they'd treat you like dirt, too.

m. Be nice to *everybody.*

It's not just the attorneys who can tell you valuable things. Secretaries, paralegals, and support staffers in general know ***tons*** of valuable information about the office. Encourage them to clue you in!

n. Listen to gossip!

That's right. I know that the standard advice you hear is "avoid gossip," but that's not what people really mean. Not entirely, anyway. Gossip is ***very*** valuable. The jungle drums teach you things you can't learn anywhere else. What people mean is, avoid being tagged ***as*** a gossip. Even senior partners listen to the grapevine. If you want to "think like a partner," you should stay plugged in, too! As Dewey Ballantine's John Ragosta says, "Malicious gossip has no place in business. But you have to stay informed about what's going on in the firm. Any partner would want to know immediately were a lateral coming to the firm, or an associate leaving. Why should you as an associate be any less interested? Don't sit in your office with your head in the sand!" Here's what you need to know about handling gossip:

1) Stay on the good side of office gossips.

You need to know the scoop. And you don't want malicious gossip to be circulated about ***you.*** That means that while you absolutely do not want to be considered a gossip yourself, you need to know what's being said! As Rutgers' Dawne Smith says, "You do need a gossipy acquaintance at work, especially if you're not much into office politics. You

have to tap into somebody who ***is***!" Harvard's Mark Weber adds, "People who ***are*** in the grapevine ***love*** to share!" However, you don't want to appear too buddy buddy with a gossip, because "you can lose credibility that way," says Denver's Jennifer Loud Ungar.

2) Pass along "constructive gossip"—gossip that will help the subject of the gossip or the person you're telling.

As the recruiting coordinator at one large firm said, "I get a lot of good information from associates. I find out if somebody is unhappy or having a little trouble. If I find out that someone's always asleep, I can give them a gentle reminder about looking alert at work. Once a summer associate's father was really sick. He tried to keep it out of the office. Another associate told me about it, and I took steps to have the summer associate transferred to another office so he could be closer to his dad."

I ***always*** make a point of telling people when I've heard good things about them. It's lovely being the bearer of good tidings, and people love to know that nice things are being said about them behind their backs. It also helps you be an office peacemaker. If you know two colleagues are at war and you can get one of them to say something nice about the other—"There must be ***something*** you like about Bluto"—passing that comment along to Bluto will go a long way toward smoothing things over and making your office a lot more harmonious for everyone.

3) Keep malicious gossip to yourself.

This is the gossip people are talking about when they say "avoid spreading gossip." Don't pass along anything about anyone that is personally destructive. Lots of people spend time at work criticizing or making fun of other people. Don't succumb. It makes you look bad. As Jennifer Loud Ungar says, "Don't be the first to know who's crying, who's cheating, who got a bad review, or anything like that. Keep it to

yourself, and if anyone asks you, 'Hey, did you know . . . ' say 'Oh, really?' Don't answer!"

4) Pay attention to the source *before* you act on gossip.

As American University's Matt Pascocello says, "Information isn't power. ***Acting*** on information is power. But only act on it ***after*** you validate it, and only if it impacts you." He suggests that you "put anything you hear through your filtration system." Let's say that you hear that your firm is in financial trouble. Pay attention to the departure of rainmaking partners, bonuses that are suspiciously small or nonexistent compared to prior years, changes in hiring patterns, those kinds of things.

When the gossip concerns what somebody in the office is like, file it away. ***Everybody*** speaks from his or her own agenda. When they recount conversations to you, they're remembering what's relevant to them, not necessarily what was said. As Ronna Lichtenberg says in her wonderful book *Work Would Be Great If It Weren't For The People*, "To figure out their agenda, remember that facial expressions are revealing, as is body language. A shrug. A lifted eyebrow. A roll of the eyes."

Also remember that everything you hear about someone else is an opinion. If someone tells you, "Alex is really a schmuck," and your own experience with Alex is pretty positive, all it tells you is that the person who made the schmuck assessment doesn't like Alex. That might be valuable information, but it shouldn't determine your own assessment. When people tell you their opinion of someone, ask ***why*** they think that. Maybe they'll say "He's arrogant" or "He never shuts up," which will give you valuable behavioral cues for yourself around the person giving you their opinion. The bottom line is, be careful about labeling people on the basis of other people's opinions, because if you start believing what they say, it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. You get an assignment

from Alex, and every time Alex does something you don't like, you say, "Aha! He ***is*** a schmuck!" As Georgetown's Marilyn Tucker says, "Listen to other people's opinions but form your own conclusions. While there are certainly difficult people in every organization, don't base your behavior toward anybody on someone else's view. Make your own judgments, and be open to each person. Don't get off to a poor start because of political naiveté!"

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Female lawyer, wants to leave private practice and work for the state legislature. The only person who gives her an offer is somebody reputed to be a **terrible** screamer. After some thought, she decides to take the offer. For whatever reason, the "terrible screamer" takes a liking to her. He never screams at her, and after she's been working for him for a year, he says, "You're doing a great job for me, but to advance your career you really should move on to something else. I'll help you with it." As she says, "Reputation doesn't tell you for sure how things will be for you. People press each other's buttons differently."

o. Take note of physical evidence of what's acceptable.

Toys on people's desks, children's artwork in attorneys' offices (particularly female attorneys), cues like that can tell you a lot about how people at work feel about individuality and family issues. One recruiting coordinator points out that "If the prime reading material at the office is the novels of Pearl S. Buck, it's not exactly going to be forward-thinking on women's issues!"

p. Listen for euphemisms.

"We like to work hard and play hard" means "We put in lots of hours."

3. What to look for . . .

a. Hours! Law Is Not A Nine To Five Job, Unless You Work Part Time—In Which Case, It *Is* A Nine To Five Job.

As is true with ***everything*** else at work, when you're talking about the hours you have to put in, you're talking about a matter of ***perception***. It's not whether or not you're putting in the hours. It's whether or not the people you work for perceive you as working as much as they expect you to work. Image ***counts***.

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Junior associate at a large Washington, D.C. law firm. He gets all of his work done and works pretty long hours. He knows that one particular partner, Partner Sundown —not one that he works for—makes a habit of strolling the halls at 10 p.m. every night, to see who's still working. One night, the junior associate has to race out of the office to help a friend at around nine o'clock, leaving a cup of coffee on his desk, his glasses next to the coffee, and his jacket on his chair. He never gets back to the office that night. The following morning, his supervising partner congratulates him, saying that "Partner Sundown said you were here working late last night." The junior associate is confused, knowing that he wasn't in the office for Partner Sundown's 10 p.m. "sweep." Then he realizes what happened: Partner Sundown saw his coffee, glasses, and jacket, and assumed that he was still there and had just stepped out of his office for a moment.

Thereafter, he makes a point of leaving a pair of glasses, a half-full cup of coffee, and a jacket on his chair every night.

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Junior associate at a small firm. He's married and has a baby. He shares an office with a new associate whose wife is getting her

pharmacist's degree out of state. The office mate is a really good guy, smart, funny, hardworking. Because the office mate is from out of town and has nothing else to do, his work is his life. He's at the office all the time. The partners start commenting on the disparity between the hours the two junior associates put in. When the junior associate mentions this to his career services director at school, she recommends, "Why don't you invite this guy to have dinner with you and your wife periodically? Introduce him to your friends? You'll never shine next to him otherwise." The junior associate does as she says, and it works like a charm.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Female summer clerk at a large firm down South. The firm's library opens onto a large rooftop sun deck. She takes advantage of the sun deck for a tanning session every day at optimal tanning hours. She sits outside in a bikini, slathers herself with suntan lotion, and relaxes for two hours. The associates and partners who go through the library can clearly see the bathing beauty through large picture windows. When the recruiting coordinator gently suggested to her that perhaps the suntanning wasn't giving her the right image, she huffily replied, "Look at my time sheets. I'm meeting the billable hours you wanted me to work. I can manage my own time." She is not invited back.

1) Figuring out when you really have to be there. It's different from place to place, and supervisor to supervisor!

I get a lot of questions for my *Dear Job Goddess* column asking me for places with "reasonable" hours. That's a tough question to answer, because although there are some generalities that are valid, they're not true a hundred percent of the time. For instance, it's ***generally*** true that if you work for the government, your hours will tend to be shorter than if you

work for private firms. But if you're in litigation, whether it's for the Justice Department or the SEC or anywhere else, you'll work a lot. If you're an assistant district attorney with witnesses to interview, you'll be in on the weekend. It's also generally true that you tend to work shorter hours in a small firm than a larger one. But again, that's not always the case. In a nutshell, the hours you work are a ***cultural*** thing.

How do you figure them out? The same as with every other element of culture: Watch, learn, emulate. A big issue at law firms is the idea of "face time." "Face time" basically means, when do they have to see your face at the office? Some places swear that they have no such thing as face time. But you can't ***know*** that for sure until you see how they ***behave***. An employer might tell you "I don't care when you work as long as you get the work done," but I promise you, if you worked a graveyard shift from 7 p.m. to 8 a.m., you'd be out of there like—well, you know what. Here are a few guidelines to figuring out when you have to be at the office.

a) If you've got a deadline—or a partner—breathing down your neck, stay until the work gets done.

Even places that genuinely don't seem to require any given set of hours agree about that. If it means an occasional night in the office until 3 a.m., that's what it means. If a partner walks into your office with a new assignment at 6 p.m. and says, "I need this tomorrow," then stay until it gets done. (Don't assume that your efforts won't be appreciated, by the way. One junior associate at one of the country's largest law firms told me that after putting in long hours on a court case, her partner walked into her office the day before Thanksgiving, and said, "See you next year." When she asked what he meant, he said, "You've worked hard enough. Take off. Go see your family. See you after New Year's." And he meant it.)

b) If you are assigned to a supervisor, be at the office when (s)he's there. That's it.

As you get more seniority, you'll have more control over your schedule. But when you're new, be there when the person you work for is there. "If your partner is looking for you at 7 p.m. and you're not there, your workload will suffer," commented one recruiting coordinator. The partner at one large firm talked about how when he was a junior associate, he was assigned to two partners. One of them would arrive at 7 a.m., and the other never left before 8 p.m. He made sure he was there for both of them. "It meant long days, but it paid off in the long run."

c) Watch how junior associate "superstars" handle their time, and emulate them.

Pay careful attention to how people react when a junior associate at the office brags about how "I spent the whole weekend here" or "I was here until midnight." It may be that people grumble behind the braggart's back, "He doesn't know how to manage his time," or "She's not impressing anybody with those hours. She doesn't have the work to justify it."

d) Err on the side of staying a little bit longer than you think you have to, at least at first.

If all of the junior associates leave between 6:30 and 7:30, then leave at 7:30. And when you're new, don't leave without walking around the office first. As Hamline's Vince Thomas recommends, "If most of the people are gone, go. If everyone is still there, don't leave without asking if you can help anyone before you go home."

e) Be aware of any "face time" requirements.

What I mean is, ask around to see if there are any times when you're expected to be at work regardless of

whether you're busy or not—that is, when they expect to see your face. Talk to junior associates and/or your mentor to see what's appropriate. At one office, some junior associates told a new associate, "We have to stay until 6:30 or 7." When the new associate asked "Why?" they shrugged and said, "We just have to." If you get that response, then it means ***you*** have to stay, as well.

At a lot of firms, Saturday morning is "face time." As one lawyer recommended, "Saturday mornings are good for organizing, because no one is around. It's a good time to catch up." Another lawyer commented that "At our firm, the board members would come in on Saturday for board meetings. Junior associates would make a point of being at the office so the board members could see them. It didn't much matter if all you were doing was cleaning your desk or talking with people. But it was a risk. Sometimes you'd get a plum assignment because a board member bumped into you on a Saturday. Once in a while, you'd get handed something and they'd say, 'I need this Monday,' so you just gave up your weekend. But it was a good idea to be there at least some of the time."

At one large firm, the managing partner had a habit of coming in on Sunday mornings to see which associate mailboxes at the office had mail in them. The mail on Saturdays was delivered at 9 a.m., and if an associate had mail in his or her mailbox, the managing partner would know they hadn't been in—and he wouldn't be happy. So associates without any work to do would come in at 9:15, pick up their mail, and leave. Other firms have situations that echo that. At one firm, a "psychotic partner" would require that his associates come in on Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. When one of them protested, "But if we have no work, why

come in?" "Because there's so much to learn!" he'd respond. He himself didn't come in on Saturdays, but he'd sometimes call to see who picked up the phone. The associates would dutifully come in with their breakfast, eat together, read the paper, and leave.

f) If you're expected to show up once in a while on a weekend, try to be there when other people are there.

It doesn't really count as face time if nobody sees your face! But if you've made the effort and nobody was there, make sure to mention it to people. At lunch on Monday, you might want to work into the conversation, "When I was here on Saturday . . . " Remember, only do that if coming in on weekends is considered a good thing.

g) Don't routinely put in time when your supervisor isn't there just to say you did it.

After a while—and it's impossible for you to distinguish at first—you learn to tell the difference between real emergencies and false ones. If people expect you there every night and every weekend, you'll soon be loaded down with work because they figure you live there. As I talk about in the section called "Balance," over the long haul you just can't physically work those kinds of hours, and developing a reputation as a workaholic won't help you.

h) Don't make a habit of coming in late, even if you're a night owl.

If everybody else is in the office by 9:00 and you routinely wander in at 10:30, you'll be regarded as a slacker even if it's not true. A junior associate at one large firm said that "There's a perception here that people who come in after nine—the ones who work until midnight—are lazy. It's a mistake to think that people

who come in the earliest are the hardest workers, but all of the partners seem to believe it. They all comment about it. So I make sure to come in before the partners arrive. They don't really care how late you stay; they don't comment about that. It's just your arrival time they notice. They're always telling me how productive and hard-working I am, even though I'm perfectly in line with everyone else. I've just moved my schedule up a few hours." At another firm, the junior associates were expected to work from 8 in the morning until 8 at night, which is when the partners were there. One junior associate had a horse, and wanted to leave at 5 o'clock every day to ride her horse. To compensate, she came in to work at 5 a.m. On her evaluations, her superiors dinged her for not being there three hours a day when everybody else was there.

i) If you work in an environment where the supervision is very lax, make a special attempt not to succumb to the luxury of bailing out early.

As one lawyer commented, "At our firm, we get a lot of freedom over when we come in and when we leave. Most senior associates and partners aren't on your back. We've had summer clerks who've taken that too far. We had one clerk who wouldn't bother to come back to work after lunch. Or he'd leave in the middle of the afternoon. Literally, he'd work maybe four hours a day and then show up at firm events. His mentor didn't even know. It's just a bad habit. Even if nobody's watching, you have to be a grown-up, because ultimately your career depends on what you do."

j) If you're unassigned (or you want to switch supervisors), find out when the person you *want* to work for is at the office, and make sure you're there, too.

As one junior associate said, "I was just dying to work for a sports lawyer at our office. I found out from his secretary that he regularly came to work between eight and ten in the morning on Saturdays. So I started doing that, too, and I made sure he saw me. We'd chat casually, and then, because I was just about the only associate there that early on Saturdays, he started giving me work. Now he's my supervisor."

k) Ignore the hours you worked as a summer clerk.

That wasn't real life. This ***is***. Pay attention to what junior associates actually ***do***, not what the party line is.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Junior associate at a large Midwestern firm: "In some firms, 'family friendly' means you get Christmas off. I clerked at this firm, and they sold me a bill of goods about how they're a 'lifestyle' firm, they're family friendly. That's really important to me because I have a wife and two small children. In fact, during the summer they would send me home at 6 p.m. even if I wanted to stay. When I came back as a permanent associate, I stuck with those hours. I was getting my work done. But then I heard through the grapevine that my supervising partner wasn't happy with me, not because of my work, but because of what he perceived as my poor work ethic. I was stunned. The lesson is this: Realize that even if a firm tells you it's 'family friendly,' that doesn't mean a 9 to 5 workday. No one will pay you more than $50,000 a year to start without expecting you to work the hours it takes to get the job done to **their** satisfaction."

2) How to be visible when you're invisible.

We live in a wired age—actually, a wireless one. It's possible to work from just about anywhere. If people at your office don't work on weekends and you take your work home with you, you run the risk of not getting sufficient credit for it because nobody ***sees*** you working. The solution? One Florida lawyer says, "Even if you're working at home, out on the deck, you can get the message across that you're putting in the hours in a lot of subtle ways. You can return e-mails on Saturday at noon. You can return voice mails on Sunday night. That way, people will know you're working even if they don't see you."

3) Make sense of the hours, and you won't resent them so much.

If you're expected to put in long hours, it's easy to become resentful. It helps to think about the ***why*** of those hours.

First of all, as many lawyers pointed out, law is a client-driven business. As lawyers at Carlton Fields suggested, "Typically, clients are not willing to pay lawyers until the problem has become severe, and then they expect their lawyers' undivided immediate attention." Carlton Fields' Hardy Roberts adds, "The word 'injunction' means 'they need it tomorrow.' It's a guaranteed all-nighter." Akin Gump's J.D. Neary echoes that, saying, "Nobody lies and tells you it's a 9 to 5 job. It's all client-driven. If they need stuff Saturday, they need it!" Florida State's Stephanie Redfearn adds, "There's a huge temptation to knock off at 3 p.m. on Friday, after working hard all week. But the problem is that that's when the big issues come in. It's often when the clients panic, so you have to be there." Despite your best-laid plans (and the best efforts of your supervisor), there may be times when you are called in to work unexpectedly because a client needs you. As Denver's Jennifer Loud Ungar suggests, "Be willing to change evening and weekend plans with no notice. Let people know where you can be reached when

you're away for the weekend. Usually they won't bug you unless there's an emergency, but it makes you look good."

Secondly, remember that the hours you put in are "an investment in yourself," says NYU's Gail Cutter. "You need to put in the time not just to get the skills, but to earn your credibility. If you ever think you might want to work part time or get parental leave, you won't be able to if you haven't built up credibility with the firm, first. And that takes hard work." In your earliest days with an employer, you're building a reputation for yourself. As Minnesota's Nora Klaphake says, "If you show up early for work the first few months that you are there and drop in on weekends, you can ease up after that because you've established yourself as a 'weekend warrior' or an 'early bird.'"

Thirdly, when you're torqued about long hours, remember that "There's a relationship between what you're paid and what you have to produce," says Georgetown's Abbie Willard. As I explain in detail in the "Econ 101" section, if you want them to show you the money, you've got to show them the work.

Remember also that not all hours are created equal. Long hours don't necessarily mean that you're killing yourself from sun-up to sundown. As Georgetown's Beth Sherman points out, "As a new associate, a lot of what you do doesn't take a lot of thought. Those hours aren't as tiring because you aren't using as much brain power." And you can minimize your time at the office by making sure that when you ***are*** there, you're being efficient. As Carlton Fields' Eric Adams says, "The most important thing is that you give them high-quality work. If you spend two hours reading sports on the Internet and then realize you have tons of work to do, then you're spending more time at the office than you have to."

4) What to do when you're away from the office during the day.

When you leave the office during the day, Minnesota's Nora Klaphake recommends that you "Let others know what you're working on and where you are. Announce loudly enough for several people to hear that you are going to court or meeting a client outside the office. That way they don't assume that you are out playing golf or shopping for an afternoon."

b. Who's got the juice?

Many lawyers pointed out to me that at every firm, there are partners whose associates "never make partner." Some partners seem powerful but they really aren't; others may seem timid and out of the loop but they're actually highly valued and well respected. As Dickinson's Elaine Bourne says, "When you start, you may have a perception that so-and-so seems to be a lame duck. They don't seem to do a lot, they're quiet, not boisterous, and when they come to you, you may be telling yourself that their work isn't as important. But don't blow them off! You need to know what the power structure really is."

In every organization, some people will be more powerful than others, even if you can't identify them immediately. As one recruiting coordinator put it, "You can smell the fear when certain people walk down the hall." Use your "cultural tools" to find out who's really got the juice.

Hofstra's Rebecca Katz-White tells you to "Watch who hangs out with who, the social interaction." Miami's Marcy Cox tells you that "At meetings, see how people respond to the person who's talking. The one who talks all the time may not be respected, but people may really sit up and take notice when a person who's usually quiet takes the floor. Some lawyers are very quiet and ***very*** well-respected." Georgia State's Vickie Brown adds that you should "See who lawyers go to for advice and information. That shows you who they think has sound judgment." And of course, listen for people's comments about the people they work with!

How should you use this information? As Georgetown's Beth Sherman says, "If you don't know what you want to do, find a

well-respected partner and work for him or her. You'll have a good experience." And as Chicago Kent's Stephanie Rever Chu advises, "You need to know who not to cross! It might be an attorney, an office manager, a secretary. The title doesn't count. The ***influence*** does."

Also, use your cultural tools to see if ***your*** supervisor is powerful. Watch when you mention his/her name to other people. Watch their reactions—enthusiastic? Noncommittal? Sympathetic? And listen to how they respond. If you haven't hitched your wagon to a star, you need to use tools to advance your career—you'll find those tools in the section called "How To Be Your Own Career Counselor."

c. Tips on working for your supervisor

In the "How To Crush Research And Writing Assignments" section, I tell you about the importance of gathering intelligence on working for a new supervisor—for instance, you need to get advice from other associates who've worked for your supervisor before. If your supervisor has likes, dislikes, quirks—you want to know that ***before*** you make a mistake.

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Female associate at a small firm says, "I was warned shortly after starting my job that if one particular partner fired me I shouldn't pack my things—he fired every associate at one time or another. Sure enough, he stormed into my office one day and fired me over something stupid. I ignored it, and he calmed down. If I hadn't heard about his reputation ahead of time, I would have been devastated."

d. Socializing expectations

You need to fit in. As Harvard's Laura Share Kalin advises, "You can't lock yourself away. Be social!" You need to watch to see ***exactly*** what's expected of you. Minnesota's Susan Gainen tells

you to "Watch for behavior cues at work. Do people eat lunch at their desks? Do they go out together? Do they work out together? Figure out what's going on by looking carefully around you. Don't isolate yourself and don't hang out exclusively in the company of support staff or your age peers!"

One career services director told of a student who called her, telling her he'd received an offer from a great firm. His only contact thus far had been interviews at the office. The managing partner had sent him a letter inviting him to the firm's annual golf outing. The letter included the line, "We know you may not golf, I don't, but I participate every year." The student asked the career services director, "Do I really have to go? I've got to study for the Bar exam. And I don't golf!" She responded, "Absolutely! You should tell them that you're really excited about it, but you've never held a golf club." He protested, but she continued, "You don't know if this is an event you can blow off. The tone of the letter suggests that every lawyer in the firm goes. If they all do it, you can't turn down the invitation."

e. The financial health of your employer

If you work for the government, we ***all*** fervently hope that your employer is financially sound. If you are at a private firm, you can never be sure. Your employer almost certainly won't say anything officially if things are going bad. You have to use your cultural tools—and your good sense—to figure it out for yourself.

If you start your career with a large firm where you're making six figures to start, you need to be ***especially*** vigilant about financial matters. Skyrocketing salaries are creating an upheaval in the entire business of law. *American Lawyer* even ran an article, under the headline "Eat Our Young," that proposed that the answer is not to hire first year associates at all. Yikes! The fact is, there are a lot of partners who are plenty pissed off about high starting salaries. You've got to keep your eyes and ears open to see their potential effect on ***your*** firm. As the senior partner at one firm told me, "If profits at a firm lag behind, if the compensation to partners gets reduced, partners leave and take their book of business with them. Yeah, they're making a lot of money anyway. But if they perceive

they can make more without having to cut in new associates with big salaries, they'll jump." So don't be seduced by the mahogany paneling and lush surroundings into thinking that nothing can rock your world. Be vigilant!

One career services director told how she had two students spend the summer at a firm. Neither got an offer at the end of the summer. When she called the firm to ask why, the firm said, "Their skills were bad." She knew the students and was highly suspicious of this answer. On top of that, she knew that the firm had been shrinking for two years. Sure enough, six months later, it closed.

One of the people I interviewed for this book was an associate at Finley, Kumble—a firm that was the third largest law firm in the country in the 1980's. It collapsed in a spectacular fashion, described in the book *Shark Tank*. The former associate said, "The firm sent out press releases, held press conferences saying that 'The rumors are totally unfounded, the firm is not going under.' It sent a memo in October to all of the attorneys in the firm, denying the rumors, saying that 'Rumors that we are going to close are absolutely false,' all underlined and in caps. The firm closed two months later. The lesson I learned was this: Always make a point of knowing a nosy person in the know who can keep you abreast of things. Merger deals, financial status, the fact that partners are leaving. Even if you don't get involved, listen! If the firm is going under, they won't tell you officially because they're afraid you'll jump ship. But if you don't listen, you're stuck for two reasons: (1) you're stuck with more work because of the people who **do** know and **are** jumping ship, and with the extra work you don't have the time to look for another job, and (2) when you finally figure it out, all of the other people who didn't listen are figuring it out, too, and you've got a ton of competition for jobs."

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Associate at a large East Coast firm in the early 1990's. It's a matter of "speculation"—a/k/a gossip—that "We're all getting

fired." The firm line is, "We're not laying off anyone." The associate says, "I hear that, and then I look at my personal experience. I'm not billing enough to support my salary. Econ 101 tells me that I'm not staying." Some of the associates bring up the unsubstantiated rumour at the next firm-wide meeting. The partners angrily stand by their public statements, and view with displeasure being embarrassed by the associates who bring up the matter in public. The associate says, "Shortly after that, I get a review that's particularly ugly. The quality of my work hasn't changed, and I'm working for the same partner I've worked for in the past. I realize: they're setting me up. They're laying the groundwork for getting rid of me.'" He immediately found another job. And shortly after he left, many of the associates were, in fact, laid off.

f. The circumstances of associates leaving the employer before you got there.

Listen carefully when people talk about associates who were forced out before you arrived. The fact is, different employers have different sensitivities about different things. For some of them, getting drunk and passing out at a partner's party would get you cashiered on the spot. At others, it wouldn't. Even though firms are hyper-conscious of sexual harassment issues, there are certain partners at certain places who are so powerful that if they harass a female associate, the partner will stay and the female associate will be forced out. If you're a woman, it's ***extremely*** important to know if there are men like that at work, so that you can avoid them at all costs. The bottom line is, see what's killed others at the office, so that you can avoid the same death!

g. Attitudes about pro bono work.

Every law firm will publicly herald its dedication to pro bono work. As I discuss in "Econ 101—The Business of Law," the truth may be very different. The only way you can tell what your employer really thinks of pro bono is by using your culture tools.

Watch carefully and see how pro bono is treated. As one lawyer points out, "Pro bono commitment varies. Some firms are very committed. At others, it's your own personal obligation." Another lawyer added that, "At many big firms, there's really only one person who does all the pro bono, but the credit is spread out." The hiring partner at one large firm lamented that "We do a lot of pro bono work, and it makes new associates believe that in everything we do, we're on the side of the 'right.' That's not realistic, and if they looked more closely, they'd realize that."

h. Handling billables.

Recording your time is an art that varies to some extent from employer to employer. I could probably have told you about it here. It would fit. But because the whole idea of billables is so tied in with the business of law, I talk about it with those topics, instead—under "Econ 101—The Business of Law."

i. Handling expense reports.

You need to learn what's appropriate to charge to the office, and what isn't. This is very much a cultural matter; different employers feel differently about different items. The easiest thing to do is to ask the recruiting administrator, hiring partner, or your supervisor ***before*** you submit your expense report. As Carlton Fields' Elizabeth Zabak suggests, "Do not expect the firm to reimburse you for everything under the sun. If you exceed the budget for recruiting dinners and the like, don't just submit the expense statement and hope for the best. Do a little public relations. Go see the recruiting administrator to explain the situation and let her know that you don't expect to be reimbursed or why this particular dinner got out of hand. Being up front goes a lot further than hoping something will slip by. ***Someone*** will notice, and you don't want it to be the managing partner."

Georgetown's Abbie Willard recommends that "For long trips, ask—how many days can you travel before submitting a dry cleaning charge, or shoe shine, or haircut? Always err on the side of conservatism. And be aware that guidelines for meals are different for associates than they are for partners!"

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

An associate files an expense report, asking for gas mileage reimbursement . . . for driving to a dinner party at a partner's home.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

A partner's wife asks the firm to pay for her new gas grill, arguing that "surely we will be hosting many outdoor parties for summer associates in the future."

j. Perceptions of you

As Vermont's Pavel Wonsowitz advises, "You need to keep your finger on the pulse of what's being said about you." When somebody brings you bad news, thank them. Don't shoot the messenger.

When people have a negative opinion of you, they will be loathe to say things to you directly—but they probably won't be as shy about saying things behind your back. Schmucks! When those comments come to your attention, keep two things in mind: 1) The messenger's motivation in telling you. Don't betray any emotion. Use your perceptions of your contact and of the original speaker to see how much credence to give to the comment. 2) Remember that anybody's perception is just that: It's only a perception. It tells you only what the speaker thinks of you at the moment they made the comment. Don't take it personally. You ***can*** change perceptions. (I talk about this in great detail in the section called "Use Evaluations And Criticism To Propel Your Career Forward.")

One associate at a firm in the Midwest talked about an experience he had when he started to work. "I had just finished the first client letter I ever wrote. My secretary, Tanya, brought it in, and I signed it. She asked, 'Would you like a copy?' She had a heavy Boston accent, and I thought she said 'Coffee.' So I responded, 'I'd love a coffee! Thanks. I take it light with sugar.' She angrily responded, 'I'm not your slave!' and stormed out of my office. I was totally confused. Another secretary came up to me fifteen minutes later, and said, 'How could you say that to Tanya? Secretaries here don't bring coffee to their bosses. Get your head out of the Fifties. Nobody will work for you if you have an attitude like that.' Thank God she said something to me! It gave me a chance to straighten things out with Tanya, and with all of the other secretaries who had daggers out for me."

k. How to Look the Part (. . . and Why Ally McBeal Is *Not* A Good Role Model)

Your clothes have always said a lot about you. When you become a lawyer, you want your clothes to say what your employer, your clients, and everybody else you have contact with professionally will ***expect*** them to say. Here's what to do to make sure you look the part:

1) Until you figure out the dress code at work, wear what you wore to interviews—as long as you dressed conservatively for those!

Your temptation might be to buy a whole new wardrobe before you start working. That makes sense only if you've spent some time with the employer previously, either with a clerkship or with some casual visits or, in the case of prosecutors, by visiting the courtroom ahead of time and watching them work. You can also buy a wardrobe before you arrive at the office if you sit down first with the recruiting coordinator or hiring partner to ask about what's appropriate. Otherwise, have just a few "interview" outfits, and hold off on any major purchases. The reason you should do this is that if you buy ahead of time, you might be buying something, totally innocently, that's wrong for the office culture. Either that, or you'll buy an entire wardrobe that's too conservative, when you might find out that there's a lot more leeway for individuality at your office. You can always add livelier clothes to your conservative interview wear once you've learned the uniform at work. As Texas Tech's Kay Fletcher says, "You

never get criticized for dressing too conservatively when you start! If you're too risqué you'll stand out for all the wrong reasons." Carlton Fields' Elizabeth Zabak points out that "Law is a conservative profession. Your initial impression will be a lasting one. You want to be remembered for your intelligence and ability, not the length of your skirt, your hairstyle or your make-up." "When you're new, you don't want to wear ***anything*** that will make people talk about you," adds Minnesota's Susan Gainen.

2) Watch what other people wear to work—and know what to watch for.

Remember the movie "Men In Black"? When Rip Torn says to Will Smith, "Time to put it on. The last suit you'll ever wear," and hands him a black suit? Well, work isn't likely to be ***that*** strict. But as a new lawyer, you ***are*** going to be wearing something of a uniform. And that uniform will be decided by people in your office. Here's what you want to watch out for:

a) I've already told you to keep an eye—and ear—out for the most respected junior associates. Wear what they wear.

b) Be aware that different kinds of employers have different quirks. Georgetown's Anna Davis recounts her own experience as a new lawyer on Capitol Hill. She says, "I figured I couldn't go wrong if I wore a conservative blue suit to work. I didn't realize that on the Hill, ***pages*** wear blue suits. I couldn't figure out what was going on when everybody handed me envelopes. They thought I was a page, not a lawyer!"

c) If you are working in a part of the country that's new to you, "Be especially adept at picking up clues about what the sartorial norms are," says Kentucky's Drusilla Bakert. People mentioned this to me all over the country. In

New York and Los Angeles, you can be more fashion-forward. At a lot of employers in those cities, a man can get away with a four-button suit that wouldn't fly in more conservative places. In Texas, women are expected to wear more makeup. In the Pacific Northwest, just the opposite is true; a more natural look is the norm. These are of course generalizations, but the point is this: be sensitive to geographic wardrobe styles if you're in a new place.

d) Be aware that some people in ***every*** office dress inappropriately. Be more conservative than the wilder dressers. And don't take your dress cues from the support staff! As Dave James of the San Diego City Attorney's Office says, "Figure that the shortest skirts are too short; the most casually dressed are too casual; the most rumpled suits are too rumpled. If your dress is at the outer margins of attire in your office, you need to move toward the center. When you find yourself defending your dress by comparing it favourably to what somebody else in the office wears, remember how impressed the highway patrol officer is when you say, 'But Officer, others were going faster than me.'"

Furthermore, remember that more experienced lawyers have more leeway to dress more individualistically. Because they are powerful, they have a bargaining chip that you don't have as a new lawyer. When you've earned some juice, you can wear the red leather miniskirt, too (unless you're a man, in which case that's probably ***never*** a good idea no matter ***how*** powerful you get).

e) Pay more attention to what people in your office wear than you do to articles about what lawyers are supposed to wear. Mississippi's Joyce Whittington tells the following story: "I saw an article one day in a national legal

magazine that said that men should only wear shoes that lace up, not slip-ons of any kind. It was during on-campus interview season. When a group of about six male interviewers came into my office the next day, the magazine was on my desk. As we all walked out of my office, one of the men asked me if I had read the magazine on my desk. I told him I had, and said, 'It was interesting to see that they said men should only wear tie-up, wingtip-like shoes.' We all found ourselves immediately looking down at everyone's feet. As it turns out, ***none*** of them were wearing the shoes the article had said were mandatory. All of them had on very nice slip-ons. I told them jokingly that since they weren't dressed appropriately, they should go home and change!"

Articles tell you only about what the reporter who wrote the article was told by whomever (s)he interviewed. If what people wear at your office belies any published source, follow what you see at work!

3) " . . . But Why Do I Have To Dress Like Everybody Else?"

The short answer is: you don't. Not all the time. At home, you can wear a tutu, scuba gear, and mukluks if it floats your boat. But at work, you're a lawyer. And there are a bunch of good reasons for dressing like everybody else.

a) You want to be taken seriously as a lawyer by the people at your office.

If you don't look the part, you won't be. As Georgetown's Abbie Willard says, "When people look at you, you don't want them to notice how short your skirt is or how expensive your suit is." Nova Southeastern's Pat Jason points out that "If you dress provocatively, you'll have a hard time being taken seriously. Not only that, but you'll be perceived as insecure. You can't put your best foot forward if it's clad in a shocking pink five-inch heel!"

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

New female associate, large firm. She attends a meeting with other partners and associates. Everybody is shocked to see that she is wearing an "Ally McBeal" outfit with a very short skirt. She sits down, and to make matters worse, she doesn't cross her legs. When the meeting is over, the buzz behind her back is about her bright yellow underwear—visible to everybody in the room.

As DePanfilis & Vallerie's Carrie Colangelo says, "If you're a female litigator, you have to start out playing by the rules if you want people to view you as capable. I started out playing by the rules. In my mind, you earn the right to wear the candy apple red suit. Once you've been around and you know what you are doing, it's all right to stand out. But when you're new, and you have no clue what you're doing or sometimes even where the heck the courtroom you need to be in is located, your major objective is to survive. You don't want to be remembered as the incompetent lawyer in the pink suit. The rules only change once you know what you're doing."

b) If you don't dress appropriately, people will question your professional competence.

It doesn't seem fair, but people draw conclusions about your abilities based on what you wear. They'll think, if you can't get the clothes right, what else are you messing up? It influences their opinion in ways they themselves may not even realize. One older attorney described a young female attorney as being "just so incompetent. And everything she owns is the color of sherbet!" That's not the way you want to be viewed.

c) Your clients deserve to have a lawyer who dresses the way they expect lawyers to dress.

Even if your office has gone to "business casual" (and we're going to talk about that in a minute), remember that whenever you have contact with clients, casual wear ***doesn't*** fly. As Venable, Baetjer's Stefan Tucker says, "I always wear a tie when I meet with clients. It's a respect thing." Hofstra's Rebecca Katz-White points out that, "When you're young, your clients have a hard enough time taking you seriously. You need to see yourself as a professional, and that means looking like a lawyer. You act more professionally when you're dressed appropriately."

When you have paying clients, they expect you to look like a worthwhile investment. As Carlton Fields' Kevin Napper says, "If you were paying someone hundreds of dollars an hour, wouldn't you want them to look the part?" DePanfilis & Vallerie's Carrie Colangelo adds, "If you want to get a client to hire your firm and pay a ten thousand dollar retainer, your stockings shouldn't have runs in them, your makeup should be on, and your nails should be neat. If you look like a mess and can't present a good image, why should anyone think you could present a neat case?"

If you are a public defender or otherwise work with low-income clients, take special care in what you wear when you meet with them. You want to dress respectfully. As one public defender pointed out, "We have men who graduate from law school and come to our office, and think, 'Hey, here I am in this cool office in the public sector, there's nothing wrong with having a pony tail down to my waist.' It's not fair to their clients! They have a right to somebody who ***looks*** like a lawyer!" You also want to be careful about flaunting your comparative wealth to your low-income clients.

As Northern Illinois' Mary Obrzut says, "You can't dress like a Junior Leaguer if you're a public defender." And one female lawyer adds, "When I deal with workers' comp clients or I'm doing pro bono work, I don't wear my diamond engagement ring. I was once trying to explain to a client why he should accept a rather paltry sum of money for his not-so-great case. He looked at my ring, and said, 'Look—I don't expect you to understand my life.'"

4) Getting the hang of "business casual." It's not the same as "law school casual."

The legal profession is in an uproar about the concept of "business casual." The fact is, ***nobody*** knows what it means. It differs from office to office. Here's some advice about how you should handle "business casual."

a) Ask!

The best advice on figuring out what to wear to a "business casual" office is to call ahead of time and ask the recruiting coordinator, hiring partner, or anybody who interviewed you about what exactly is appropriate. As Arizona's Mary Birmingham says, "Ask what to wear. They'll appreciate that you bothered to ask!"

b) "Business casual" doesn't mean "law school casual."

Sport shirts and jackets, khakis, sweaters, pantsuits for women—that's all fine. Flip flops, T-shirts, jeans, shorts, leggings, flashy jewelry are not. If you see it on MTV, nobody should see ***you*** in it at the office. Bras, definitely. Visible bra staps, no. Don't come to work in the outfit in which you went clubbing last night. Other outfits recruiting coordinators have seen new associates wearing to work: beach wear, gardening outfits, and pajamas. Don't go there!

c) "Business casual" doesn't mean "cheap looking."

As Mary Birmingham says, "You still have to look great. You can get away with polyester, but it can't be plastic bag polyester." Shop at quality stores and see what their idea of casual is. Some firms even have in-house fashion shows from Brooks Brothers! Dickinson's Elaine Bourne says that if you go to "Talbots, Brooks Brothers, stores like that—they have people who deal with 'business casual' every day."

d) Even at a business casual office, *always* have something formal at work in case you're called out of the office on business at a moment's notice.

I've made this point several times throughout the book, but it's worth making again. If you're dressed casually, you will not be able to take up a senior attorney's offer to go to a client meeting, court function, or professional event. As Florida State's Stephanie Redfearn points out, "More senior attorneys tend to dress down on occasion, but that's because they know their schedules and know when they are going to be going to court or meeting with clients. As a new associate, you don't have that kind of schedule mastery. If you're new, dress professionally or have something at the office to put on. A lawyer may call and say, 'Who wants to come to this deposition with me?' or 'Who wants to come to court with me?' If you aren't dressed appropriately, you'll miss the chance." The lawyer at a county attorney's office commented that one day when she was wearing a dress and a shawl, her boss ran into her office, and said, "I need someone to argue this case in the Second Circuit. Our adversary will pick you up here." The lawyer was mortified; she was dressed completely inappropriately for a court appearance. After that, she ***always*** kept formal clothes at work.

5) Your appearance isn't limited to the clothes you wear.

"Dress" is really shorthand for "appearance." Your appearance in general should be professional. At the risk of telling you what you undoubtedly already know, there are ***lots*** of stylish accoutrements that don't fly when you're a lawyer. Body piercing? Don't have anything pierced that will show when you're wearing a suit. A pierced lip or tongue—no. Anything below your neck—fine. Nobody will see it.

For men and women—no backpacks. Briefcases. As Quinnipiac's Diane Ballou says, "You can bring in a briefcase even if it only contains lunch, sneakers, and a magazine!"

For men—"Watches, shoes, and ties say it all," says Ronna Lichtenberg in *Work Would Be Great If It Weren't For The People.* "Watches are basically sports cars on men's wrists." For women, watch what the other women at the office do with their hair, and don't stray far from that. One recruiter in the Northeast commented on a summer clerk who came in with huge pouffy hair: "She looked like a banshee." If everybody else at the office has big hair, that's fine. But if they don't—reduce the volume on yours. Also, nails. Keep them relatively short and well-groomed. No long, curved acrylics. No designs! Set up a regular manicure appointment for yourself. It's something that used to be an indulgence, but now that you're a professional, it's a necessity. For jewelry—nothing cheap or flashy. Makeup—natural looking, no lipsticks that take you anywhere on the colour wheel away from the red family. Save the blue lipstick for clubbing—or Halloween.

6) Figuring out what's *de rigeur* socially.

As is true with every other aspect of business dressing, you can't go wrong by asking what's appropriate. Whether it's the firm retreat or a semiformal affair, ***ask***. One lawyer talked about showing up at his firm's annual retreat at a resort wearing a college sweatshirt. "Everybody else was wearing khakis and polo shirts," he said. "I looked like I was there to swab the floors!"

At more formal parties, it's easier for men than it is for women. For men, formal means a tux. A ***black*** tux; you don't want to look like Tom Hanks in "Big." (Rent it. It's funny.) Semi-formal means a suit and tie. For a holiday party, maybe a Christmas tie. For women, formal means a long gown, and semi-formal means a headache.

As South Carolina's Phyllis Burkhard says, "Female attorneys are in a quandary when it comes to semi-formal wear. Do you 'look like a woman' in dressy attire, or do you 'look like a lawyer' in a suit?" Ask other female lawyers at the office what's appropriate; ask them what they wear to these kinds of events. Phyllis Burkhard recommends something like a tailored dress or "something a bit more flashy than what you wear to the office, but still businesslike." Stay away from something terribly sexy. As one lawyer commented dryly, "You don't want to go to a senior partner's party perceived as competition for his wife." If you wind up being overdressed, Greenberg Traurig's etiquette guru Sharon Abrahams suggests that you follow her mother's advice, and say, "Excuse me, but we have another function to go to"—and pretend you dressed for ***that***.

If you are going straight from work to a social function, Sharon Abrahams says that for men, you can wear exactly what you wore to work. For women, "You want to look a little more festive. Wear a shift under a suit coat to work. For the evening, add a bit of jewelry, remove the jacket, add a little more makeup, and change shoes."

7) Remember that you've *got* to rely on your powers of observation and answers to the questions you ask as guideposts to what to wear.

As Hamline's Vince Thomas says, "Lawyers won't tell you you've dressed wrong, but they ***will*** notice and they ***will*** talk about it." As one lawyer pointed out, "Dress isn't accidental. There are these wonderful things called ***mirrors***. Think about the image you're creating."

1. Three situations where you should definitely *ignore* the culture and "do the right thing."

After telling you over and over again to follow the culture at work, there are three situations where you should absolutely, positively ignore the culture and follow your better instincts. They are:

1) Ethics.

It's the culture of your firm to "bend" the rules of ethics and/or they encourage you to do so, ***get out*** before you're led away in handcuffs. Under ***no*** circumstances "follow the herd" into ethical violations. (I address this in more detail under "Ethical Issues".)

2) Racist, sexist behavior.

Whether it's inappropriate jokes or discriminatory or harassing behavior, don't go there. Just don't. You don't want the racist and/or sexist tag to dog you for your entire career, even if you were just going along with the pack.

3) Treating support staff badly.

Maybe your superiors treat the support staff like a rented mule. Don't you do it. It's inhumane and wrong. And it tells you something very significant—and very bad—about the people you work for.

4. If you're African-American, here's some advice about starting your career from an experienced African-American attorney.

I'm not African-American. My heritage is British and Indian. So half of my ancestors oppressed the other half. The point is, I can't possibly know what it's like to be African-American. But many people I interviewed pointed out to me that new lawyers who are African-American face a host of issues that white lawyers don't.

For advice on this issue, I turned to an African-American senior associate at a large Midwestern firm. He is often called upon to address race and gender issues for groups of law students and new practitioners. Here's his advice for you.

"As an African-American associate at a large firm, realize that starting at a large firm is tough for ***everybody***. You can't sulk too much. You can't tell yourself, 'Everybody has it easier than me.' You're only making it harder for yourself. Don't be eaten up by feeling 'I'm not being treated fairly here.' In that sense color is no different than gender. You can't be bitter and make partner. You have to be serene. Don't draw energy away from what's already a difficult task. If you get swallowed up by anger, the firm won't care. They'll just say that you're another associate who didn't make it. You can't be distracted by things that will destroy you if you want to succeed.

"It helps if you find a social niche. Find a situation where color or gender isn't an issue. Find golf, tennis, aerobics, bowling, a book club. Get yourself into situations where distinctions disappear; get to know people on a fundamental level to break down the race and gender barrier.

"As an African-American lawyer, use warmth and candor to break down barriers. Speak candidly about your own life experience so people can say, 'In a lot of ways he's no different than me. He's middle class, he went to law school, he has dreams for his career—how different is he really?' Tell people about your parents' jobs, about your childhood. Let them get to know you. Let them see that you're struggling to make a success of your career, too. Don't be on pins and needles. Let them know they can joke around with you. Of course you have every right to be aloof, but it helps to be warm if you can!

"When I started at my firm, I was the first African-American lawyer they'd ever hired. There are many, many law firms with very few attorneys of color, maybe yours included. When you're in that situation it's very easy to have your head turned. I remember going to a furniture store to buy a desk for my apartment when I first started out. When I got talking with the salesman, he asked me what I did for a living. When I told him where I was working, he responded with genuine respect, 'You are with the finest law firm in this city.' I was pretty full of myself. Then I got invited to a county minority lawyers' association meeting. The speaker was the first African-American judge in the county. The room was full of guys who had graduated from law school in the 1960s and 70s, when a job like mine would have been closed to them. They were very talented but they were shut out without a chance. They had careers but not a lot of prestige. Seeing people who strived the way they did was a humbling experience. I had no pretentiousness after that. The fact that I was the first one at my firm instead of one of them was a historical accident. It should have been one of these older lawyers who broke the color barrier.

It doesn't pay to be arrogant no matter who you are. You don't have to pump yourself up. The fact is, if you win a big case or do great work or get elected to office, people will heap praise on you no matter who you are. You'll get your due."

C. GETTING ORGANIZED . . . AND STAYING THAT WAY!

Maybe you're a naturally organized person. But the number of books on the market about getting organized suggests that you're probably more like me. I've got a bunch of those books, and as soon as I can lay my hands on them in my office I'm going to get organized. I know they're in here ***somewhere***.

The fact is, life is a lot easier for you if you get organized and ***stay*** organized. This came home to me a couple of years ago, when my sweetie Henry and I were planning a trip to San Francisco and the Napa Valley. I was chatting with our neighbor Claudia, and when I mentioned our trip, she said, 'Oh, come into the house. I'm sure I have an article about the wine country.' I followed her into her den, where she opened a file cabinet that was meticulously organized. She flipped straight to "Travel" and under that topic, "Wine Country." She pulled out the article and handed it to me. The whole exercise took her about ten seconds. I was dumbfounded. Heck, if you asked me to borrow a book, it'd take me ***hours*** to find it. Even for a book ***I wrote***. Claudia saw the look on my face, and said, "I always say: if you can't find it, you might as well not have it." And by gum, she's right. In this section, we'll talk about everything you need to know to get organized—and why you should be that way!

1. Six great reasons to make your office hum like a well-oiled machine

As a lawyer, you've got a lot more riding on your organizational skills than your vacations. There are six excellent reasons to take the time to get organized ***right now***.

that your employer can easily track your web usage. If you have to visit dirtypanties.com (I heard that there actually ***was*** such a web site), do it from home. And get professional help while you're at it. At work, "'Extracurricular' web surfing constitutes a misuse of employer time and property," says Gail Cutter. Nobody cares if you scan the web for headlines or sports scores or stock quotes a few times a day, but other than that, save it for home.

It may be that you visit chat rooms for lawyers; some local bar associations have them, and I gather they can be pretty lively places to visit (not as lively as dirtypanties.com, but everything's relative). As Lewis & Clark's Lisa Lesage points out, "If you comment about facts of a case in lawyer chat rooms on-line, be careful that you don't reveal privileged information. There's no expectation of privacy in an Internet chat room."

H. Social Graces, Or—How *Not* To Be Seen As A Pig, And How To Make Conversation With *Anybody* In Any Social Situation

1. Social Functions. As Woody Allen Says Of Life: "80% of it is showing up." Here's how to handle the other 20%!

If you don't feel entirely comfortable in employer-related social situations, you're far from alone. Dr. Joy Browne, my favourite radio psychologist, reports that 83% of people think of themselves as shy. Boston University's Betsy Armour says that "Lawyers as a group are not comfortable with cocktail parties. It's a necessary evil." Georgia State's Vickie Brown adds, "If you're new, you're intimidated. Everybody is." Sharon Abrahams, who runs business etiquette seminars around the country, says that the most common question she gets from summer clerks and new lawyers is: What do I talk about?

I'll tell you how to feel more comfortable, and what to say when you ***do*** talk to people. Here are a few ideas for you:

a. It's not the Bataan Death March. It's a *party*.

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Socializing is really a lot of fun if you approach it as a learning experience. Will Rogers used to say that a stranger is just a friend he hadn't met yet. For all you know, somebody you meet at an employer event could turn into a lifelong friend. And no matter how much you dread it, remember that "You've got to achieve a level of comfort with professional social situations at some point," says Betsy Armour. "You've got to start sooner or later. So you might as well start now."

b. Don't walk in alone.

Betsy Armour suggests that you buddy up with someone, and walk in together with another summer clerk or associate so that you don't feel so intimidated. (However, once you're at the event, don't cling to your buddy. The reason you're there is to meet, and talk with, other people. So split up as soon as you arrive!)

c. Talk about what's in the news.

Sharon Abrahams recommends that you talk about what's in the news. "I give people a list," she says. "Listen to the news, read the newspaper, scan *Time* and *Newsweek* and *Business Week*. If you don't have time to watch the news, listen to National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*, at least at the top of the hour and at the half hour for the headlines." What she's saying is, make yourself an interesting conversational partner! The easiest way to talk with people is to mention something that you heard in the news, or an interesting story you heard or read. "Can you believe they found water on Mars? I heard that they think . . . " One thing you should avoid discussing is what you're working on. As Kentucky's Drusilla Bakert advises, "Try to find something to talk about other than the fascinating memo you're working on." While an interest in your work is something that every employer looks for, sometimes you've got to turn it off. Lawyers work hard. They ***like*** to get away just as much as you do!

Prepare to have clients present at some social functions by "keeping up with what's going on in your clients' industries," says

Sharon Abrahams. If they're in biotech, read up on the human genome. If they're car dealers, keep up with gas-electric cars, ethanol—whatever issues face them. This way, when you talk with them, they'll see that you're taking an interest in their business, and that makes you an ***excellent*** potential rainmaker (and a charming conversationalist, to boot!).

d. Don't say anything that will embarrass people.

When you're new, it's not the time to test your skills as a provocateur. There are ***tons*** of interesting things to talk about without stretching the bounds of good taste. ***Tons***. Virtually anything in the newspaper is fair game. Don't say anything that will make people question your judgment—and wonder whether you can act decorously around clients.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Out at a bar with partners and summer clerks, one summer clerk is sitting next to a partner. She points to a bowl of peanuts on the bar and casually says, "Did you know they did a study that showed that ninety percent of peanuts on bars have urine on them?" She goes on to explain it's because men go to the john, don't wash their hands, and come back to the bar where they grab at the peanuts. "I thought I was going to choke," comments the partner.

e. Only discuss politics if you and the colleagues with whom you are speaking have the same views.

Save political debates for your friends ***outside*** of work. As Sharon Abrahams advises, "When it comes to talking politics, know the politics of the firm you're going to. If you disagree, don't discuss politics at all." The fact is, they're not going to convince you, and you're not going to convince them. And ***you*** may like a good political throw-down, but they might not—and you can't risk it. So if you see a photo on your boss's office wall of him shaking hands

with President Reagan, don't spout off about how you think George Bush is an empty suit.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Staunch Republican new associate, very liberal firm. He takes every opportunity to make what he believes are provocative, joking comments about Democratic politicians. Within six months, he's asked to leave the firm.

f. If you're shy, talk one-on-one.

Denver's Pat Powell suggests that you socialize in your "comfort zone." "You don't have to be the life of the party, dancing in the middle of the floor. You can sit and talk to people one-on-one, if you prefer it."

g. Take advantage of social events to cultivate powerful people and especially people you want to work for.

In the chapter on being your own career counselor, I talk about the fact that the best way to get the work you want is to go to people you want to work for, and ***ask*** for it. At a social event, you won't ask for work—but you ***can*** get to know the people you want to work for so that they know you and feel comfortable with you. As Georgia State's Vickie Brown suggests, "Just extend a hand and say, 'I haven't met you, and I wanted to say hello.' Say what you've liked so far about your summer clerkship (or new job) to muckety-mucks, and be honest about it. Nobody likes a phony suck-up, but everybody loves hearing honest compliments. And don't feel funny about it. They never get sick of hearing positive comments; nobody does!"

h. Ask questions!

As communications guru Dale Carnegie always said, if you get people to talk about themselves, they'll love you. Ask clients, "'How did you get into this business?' 'What do you like about it?' 'Where will it be in five years?' Then shut up and listen!" says

Sharon Abrahams. Ask lawyers, "What's your most interesting case?" "What are you working on?" "Where did you grow up?" If you know something interesting they've done, bring it up! Often when you meet a group of people, you'll learn interesting things about other people in the group. You might be talking to one associate who says, "Hey, did you know that Sean climbed Mount Rainier?" or "Did you know that Eleanor once met President Kennedy?" When you meet Sean or Eleanor, ***ask*** them about the incident you already know about. Don't worry about asking them about an incident they've probably discussed a lot of times with other people. Don Larsen, the New York Yankee pitcher who pitched a perfect game in the 1956 World Series, was once asked, "Don't you ever get tired of people asking you about your perfect game?" He answered: "Why ***would*** I?"

i. Use "personal disclosure" to break the ice.

Sharon Abrahams recommends that you break the ice with personal disclosure, "something inoffensive about yourself." "I've never been to this event before—have you?" "I never know how to make a choice at a salad bar like this." She suggests that you ***practice*** talking to people in all kinds of settings—at the cleaners, the drugstore, all over the place. "Nobody cares if you look foolish there—and you'll polish your conversational skills," she says.

j. Don't expect everyone you meet to be a sparkling conversationalist in return!

Virtually everybody is interesting if you get them talking about something that fires them up. But some people . . . well, not everybody's going to be your cup of tea. Sometimes people are preoccupied, or wanting to be somewhere else, or obnoxious. I was at a party a little while ago, and the person I was talking to asked, "So what do you do?" I answered, "I'm a writer," and he went on, "No—I mean, what do you do for a ***living***?" Oh, well then—I'm a prostitute. Duh. See ya. If for whatever reason the conversation isn't catching fire, stay for a minute or two so you don't seem rude, and then excuse yourself with a smile—and don't come back.

2. Now that you're a "real lawyer," you *still* can't get tanked at employer social events . . . even though they can't withdraw your offer!

When we talked about summer clerkships, in the "1,640-Hour Interview" chapter, I talked about how you can't drink heavily at summer social events because your employer is judging you even at parties. When you start to work after you graduate, it's tempting to think, "Hey! I'm in! Party down!" It's true that you're no longer being sniffed over as offer material, but these are ***still*** your professional colleagues, and you have to show ***some*** decorum. Getting drunk obliterates your good judgment. Before you know it, you're hitting on a colleague (bad news) or exposing client secrets in a crowded bar (***really*** bad news).

So you should reread "Employer Social Events Aren't The Place To prove Your Beer-Drinking Capacity And Your Ability To Belch The Alphabet . . . And Other Alcohol-Related Advice." It's in the "1,640-Hour Interview" chapter. There you'll find everything you need to know about nursing drinks without seeming like a dweeb.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Two junior associates go to interview students at a law school in New York. The two go to lunch and get hammered. They stumble back to school for the afternoon interviews. The next interviewee they talk to says, "I'm sorry, I didn't get your names." They write their names on Post-It Notes and stick them to their foreheads, shrieking with laughter.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

A number of lawyers from a small firm attend a testimonial dinner for a local judge. One of the senior partners sits on the dais with a number of other luminaries. His colleagues sit at a table in the audience. As the evening progresses and the speeches drone on and on, the partner's colleagues notice he is getting increasingly drunk. After an hour or two, the partner looks around, as though uncomfortable, during a particularly long speech. He picks up a smoked glass water pitcher in front of him. It disappears under the table. A minute later, he puts the water pitcher back on the table. It's full. And he's smiling a relieved smile.

3. Don't drink the contents of the finger bowl, and other hazards of dining with your colleagues

If you eat as though you learned your manners at a hot dog eating contest, nobody's going to want to socialize with you—and they won't turn you loose in front of clients. Nobody expects you to be able to negotiate a 24-piece place setting of Queen Anne cutlery, or to wield an escargot utensil like a pro (remember Julia Roberts in "Pretty Woman"?). But you ***do*** have to have some modicum of good manners!

What I'll do here is to give you a very brief primer on common dining faux pas. My source for much of this advice is the wonderful Sharon Abrahams of Greenberg Traurig. She is an etiquette guru and runs seminars about business etiquette (her contact information is in Appendix C, at the back of the book).

Let's see what you need to know!

a. The cardinal rule: If you can't identify it, don't eat it or touch it until you've see somebody *else* try it first.

Once you've been working for a little while, you can be an adventurous diner (as long as there aren't any clients present). But as a summer clerk or brand-new associate, people's opinions of you are still being formed. Stick with what you know! If you see a bowl with lemon floating in it sitting near your salad, it's not salad dressing. Don't drink it. It's a "finger bowl," designed to rinse your fingers before the next course. If you sit down and see a little plate with what looks like a quarter-sized embossed dinner mint on it, don't pick it up and pop it in your mouth. It's formed butter, and it's meant for your bread roll. Look around and see what other people do with something unfamiliar before you try it yourself!

EMBARRASSING (BUT KIND OF ENDEARING) MOMENT . . .

Interview lunch. New York law firm, student from a small town in the Midwest. One partner and two associates take the student to an exquisite Chinese restaurant. The partner orders for the table. One of the dishes he orders is Mu Shu Chicken, a dish which is served with thin pancakes that look something like flour tortillas. When the dishes arrive, the waiter puts the Mu Shu pancakes next to the student. Mistaking them for face towels, she picks one up and dabs her face with it. The lawyers, not wanting to embarrass her, do the same.

b. Throughout the meal: How to show people you were raised in a house with a table, not a trough.

1) For every course, wait until everyone is served before you dig in.

   If the dishes come out at different times, that's not your signal to strap on the feed bag. Sit tight. It's up to the person (or people) who is still waiting to fire the starter's pistol and give you permission to start. Don't dig in until you get the green light from them.

2) No "boarding house reaches"—if you want something that's not in front of you, ask that it be passed to you.

   A lawyer at one firm talked about being at lunch with a colleague who "reached across my place for the butter. I could have bitten him, his arm was so close to my face. Even worse, he dropped his sleeve in my dish!"

3) It's not a bib, it's a napkin. It goes on your lap.

4) Silverware—You work your way from the outside in.

   No matter how many forks, knives, and spoons are placed in front of you, the rule is always the same: The cutlery at the outside goes first, and you work your way inward, toward the plate, with every course. If you have any questions about which fork goes with what, discreetly ask the waiter.

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Associate at a large firm in Washington, D.C. She is at dinner at a very fancy restaurant with partners and clients. She has eighteen pieces of cutlery in her place setting. She surreptitiously calls over the waiter, and says, "What the heck do I do with this?" as she gestures toward the cutlery. The waiter smiles, and says, "Barbara Bush asks the same thing."

5) No "wandering forks."

   One lawyer told me about a lunch she'd had with the managing partner of the firm and a few other associates. "We all get our meals, and the next thing you know, the managing partner says, 'Hey, yours looks good!' And stabs a piece of chicken on my plate. I had ***no*** idea how to react."

6) No "train wreck in a tunnel." If there's food in your mouth, your lips should be closed.

   As Sharon Abrahams says, "Chewing with your mouth open is OK if you're three years old and you have a stuffed nose. Otherwise, it's not OK." She adds that like much of good manners, "It's just common sense. If you talk with your mouth full, you can choke."

CAREER LIMITING MOVE AND A SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Summer clerk at a large firm. He's brilliant, #1 in his law school class. At firm cocktail parties, he chews with his mouth open and spits partially-masticated bits of food at

people. The managing partner calls in the recruiting coordinator and says, "We can't hire this guy. He's socially unacceptable." The recruiting coordinator gently breaks the issue to the clerk, who takes it well. He goes out to "practice" dinners with friends, asking them to critique his manners. He cleans up his act, and winds up with an offer.

7) If you've used a fork or knife, it never goes back on the table—only onto the plate.

Sometimes you'll only be given one knife, and you use it for your salad. You'll need a knife for your main dish. What do you do? Don't put it back on the table, and for gosh sakes don't wipe it off with your napkin. Instead, just ask the waiter for another one.

8) When you're done, put your silverware side by side on your plate to indicate you're finished. Don't crisscross it on the plate.

EMBARRASSING MOMENT . . .

Junior associate, on a business trip to London. She dines alone at a fine restaurant. Shortly after she begins to eat her entrée, she gets up to go to the restroom, leaving her knife and fork side by side on her nearly-full plate. She comes back to find her dinner cleared away. The waiter thought she was finished. [This is Kimm talking. I grew up in England. They take this cutlery stuff ***very*** seriously!]

9) No elbows on the table.

10) Cell phones and beepers off! (Or set them on vibrate, which is more fun anyway.)

Do you remember the TV ad where the guy's cell phone rings during a grand pause in an opera, and he answers it, and the diva on stage throws a flaming spear through the phone to the wild applause of everyone in the audience? ***Everybody*** feels that way about cell phones. Unless you're anticipating an urgent client call, your wife's about to give birth, or the President is going to consult you any minute about pushing the button, turn ***off*** your cell phone when you sit down to eat.

If you set your beeper or cell phone on vibrate, "Get up and excuse yourself," advises Sharon Abrahams. "Don't look at the beeper at the table, or—God forbid!—talk on the cell phone."

11) Don't throw your weight around with the help. It'll make you look bad.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Summer associate sits in a restaurant with other summer clerks, attorneys and members of the Recruiting Department. He is extremely rude and demanding to the waiter. The incident is discussed extensively at the Employment Committee meeting when offer decisions are being made.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Summer clerk, dining with other summer clerks and two partners at a fancy restaurant. One of the partners, the managing partner of the firm, is getting flustered trying to attract the waiter's attention. The waiter is standing at a wait station some distance away. The summer clerk stands up, and throws his fork at the waiter to attract his attention.

12) Discussion taboos.

You've heard the old saw about avoiding sex, politics, and religion. Current affairs is a safe conversation topic, although

as Sharon Abrahams points out, "During the Monica Lewinsky scandal, current affairs were all about sex and politics. So sometimes you can't avoid it!"

One other topic is off-limits, and it's anything gross. This isn't the time to discuss that surgery special you saw on the *Discovery Channel*, or the *Road Kill Cookbook* you just heard about—or anything disgusting you've ever eaten. When you're eating with your friends, heck, anything's fair game. But these are ***business*** meals we're talking about, and you have to be a bit more careful.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Summer clerk at a large New York firm, eating dinner with two other clerks and two associates. "One of the other clerks starts talking about something called 'Wiggle fish' while we're looking at the menus. Someone asks him what it is, and he says, 'It's these little fish, and they're alive when you put them in your mouth. That's why they call them 'wiggle fish.' They don't die until you bite down on them.' I could see from the looks on the faces of the associates that they were grossed out. But the other clerk didn't notice. He goes on, 'That's **nothing**. I saw this movie 'Faces of Death,' where people are eating live monkey brains. They clamp this monkey's head through a hole in the middle of the table . . . ' I looked over at the two associates. They're looking at this guy as though they're thinking, 'Have you lost your **mind**?'"

13) If you have to use the rest room, just excuse yourself—you don't need to add, "I've got to drain the lizard."

Trust me. If you get up from the table in the middle of a meal and say, "Excuse me," nobody's going to think you suddenly got called to appear on "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" You don't have to announce where you're going any more than you have to be specific about what you're going to do in there. And especially if you don't know your fellow diners really well, avoid cute euphemisms. Remember Robert Wagner in *Austin Powers*, where he plays Dr. Evil's underling, and he's sitting in a casino at a blackjack table. He gets up and says, "Excuse me, I've got to go to the little boys' room." That was ***supposed*** to be funny. You don't want that image with your professional colleagues!

Sharon Abrahams points out that it's much more polite if you hit the john before you sit down. If you do have to excuse yourself during the meal, "Leave your napkin on your chair if you're coming back, and on the table if it's at the end of the meal and you won't be returning to the table."

14) Relax your formal manners in a casual setting, like a firm picnic.

Plastic cutlery doesn't come with four kinds of forks. If you're at a casual do, don't cut the meat off the ribs with a knife and fork while you're balancing a plate on your lap. If everybody's eating ribs and corn on the cob, then use your fingers—but be as tidy as possible! A picnic is not a license to let your face look like a Jackson Pollack painted in barbecue sauce.

c. Ordering the food. It's a minefield!

1) Don't order anything you've never eaten before just because it sounds exotic.

A lunch or dinner with new colleagues is not the time to explore brave new culinary worlds. It might turn out to be something you hate—or can't figure out.

EMBARRASSING MOMENT . . .

Summer clerk at a large Los Angeles firm. The clerk had never tried artichokes before, and ordered one. "It came

out on a plate and it was arranged like a beautiful flower. I didn't know how to eat it. I didn't know you're supposed to eat the edible part off the leaf. Instead, I put a leaf in my mouth and chewed and chewed and chewed. I was dying. It was like a huge tumbleweed in my mouth. Finally, in desperation, I spit it into my napkin, dropped the napkin on the floor, and kicked it away from the table!"

2) While you're still a summer clerk, don't order the most expensive thing on the menu.

As Sharon Abrahams points out, "For an interview or summer clerkship dinner, you use the same rule you'd use on a date when it comes to the price of your entrée: don't read from right to left and order something because it's the most expensive thing on the menu!"

There's only one exception to this. If your host says, "Oh, you really should try the chateaubriand stuffed with foie gras in truffled 24-karat-gold sauce. It's delightful"—then you've got a free pass. Go ahead and order it!

3) Don't order *any* food that can sabotage you.

There are only a few foods that are on the banned list when you're dining with colleagues, and they're pretty obvious. Sharon Abrahams calls these the foods that can "sabotage" you, like "French onion soup (the cheese strings are simply uncuttable), and anything you eat with your hands—corn on the cob, ribs, fried chicken, lobster, crab legs. And don't order a burger. As soon as you put a burger together and take a bite, whoosh! The burger flies out the other side. It's messy and greasy. Order your burger without a bun and tell them you're on the Zone diet. Then eat it with a knife and fork."

You ***can*** order chicken on the bone, but when you get it you have to cut the chicken off the bone and eat it with a fork. "You can't pick up the chicken bones and eat the last gobbet of meat from them," says Sharon Abrahams.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Medium-sized firm, buys a table's worth of tickets for a dinner honoring a retiring judge. Several of the lawyers take along the three summer clerks. The food is Chinese, and it's served from a buffet. One of the summer clerks picks up a plate of Chinese ribs from the buffet and brings it back to the table. She eats the meat off the bone, and then—to the slack-jawed astonishment of her colleagues—she proceeds to eat the bones themselves, with a loud Crrunch! Crrrunch! as she snaps off every bite.

4) If you follow a special diet, handle it *discreetly.*

As Sharon Abrahams recommends, "If you follow a diet that is kosher or vegetarian or you only eat plants that don't kill the plant they come from or you have allergies, call over the waiter and tell them ***quietly*** what your diet restrictions are. I'm allergic to wheat, so I can't have soy sauce, and I often have to mention that to the waiter. You ***have*** to take responsibility for your own food."

If you're ordering from a menu, it's simple enough to have your meal prepared specially. If the meal is catered, Sharon Abrahams suggests that you "Call ahead and ask for the menu. If you can't eat it, ask for 'just a salad' or whatever you ***can*** eat. They'll accommodate you."

5) Ordering drinks and wine.

When it comes to drinks with meals, "The days of the three-martini lunches are over," says Sharon Abrahams. "Getting drunk doesn't impress people. At lunch, don't drink at all. At dinner, if someone else wants to order wine, fine. You can have one glass, no more."

What if a superior asks if you want a drink at dinner, and they haven't ordered yet? As Georgetown's Beth Sherman advises, "Be careful. You can say, 'I haven't decided yet. Why

don't you start?' If they order a drink, then you can, too—but remember to stop at one drink."

If they ask you to order the wine and you've never done that before, it can be embarrassing. Beth Sherman suggests that you say, "Thanks, I appreciate the compliment," and then ask the waiter for a wine recommendation, and then you can get a consensus from the table about the wine everybody would like to drink.

d. Time to chow!

1) Which is my bread plate? Which is my water glass?

This used to trip me up all the time. I'd sit down with people, we'd all grab the bread plate we thought was ours—and someone would wind up without a plate while somebody on the other side of the table had two.

Here's the rule, per Sharon Abrahams: "Your bread plate is on your left, and your water glass is on your right."

2) Much ado about bread . . .

OK. I said you couldn't eat with your hands. But you'd look like a major dork if you used a knife and fork to eat a dinner roll!

Instead, Sharon Abrahams says that "You ***can*** eat the bread with your hands. They did it in the Bible, so it's OK for you, too. You take one roll, put it on your plate, take one pat of butter and put it on your plate. Break the roll up into two pieces, then each half into two. Butter the piece you're going to eat. You can bite it and put it back down; you don't have to break the roll into bite-sized pieces."

What if the bread arrives in a loaf, instead of individual rolls? You can't tear the loaf apart with your hands. You're not Piltdown Man. You're ***civilized***. Instead, "Use the napkin that comes with the loaf to hold the loaf down with one hand," says Sharon Abrahams, "and cut off your slice."

3) Cutting up your meat. Don't mince the whole meal before you take a bite.

Sharon Abrahams tells you that "If you eat the American way, with your fork in your right and the knife in your left (as opposed to the European way, which is the reverse), you don't cut up a whole steak with your fork in your left hand before you transfer the fork to your right hand to eat. Cut off three or four bites, eat those bites, and then cut up some more."

4) If my dessert comes in a chocolate cup, can I eat the cup?

Of course! That's the best part. Otherwise they might as well serve your chocolate mousse in a baggie. Sharon Abrahams says that you should "Hold down the cup with one utensil and break it with another. If you don't hold it down, it'll fly! Then you stick the bits of cup to your spoon with a bit of the mousse."

5) At a catered sit-down event, signal that you don't want coffee by turning your cup over.

e. "Can I have a doggy bag?" What To Do When You're Done Eating.

1) No doggy bags. Darn!

Especially if you're a summer clerk and you're spending your summer at a large firm, you'll probably go out to lunch several times a week. No matter how often you dine out with colleagues (unless it's a group of friends), you can't take a doggy bag. If you're a new associate and you're taking summer clerks or interviewees to lunch, a doggy bag is also verboten. I'm not suggesting that you clean your plate. At a lot of restaurants, the portions look more like something Fred Flintstone would eat. But like the saying goes, you can't take it with you. It doesn't look professional.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Summer associate, large Midwest law firm. At lunch, she would finish the food off everyone else's plates at the table

and if she was too full, she'd ask for a doggy bag—not just for her own plate, but everyone else's as well.

2) "How much do I tip?"

Sharon Abrahams advises that "At upscale restaurants, 18 to 20% is de rigeur. At a regular restaurant, 15% is OK."

f. Disaster strikes! What to do when something goes wrong at a meal.

1) "Ewww! I took a bite, and it's *disgusting*."

You take a bite and it's gross. What do you do? Sharon Abrahams says that "There are two rules. If it's something inedible, like bone, gristle, or a hunk of fat—you discreetly spit it into your napkin, and ask the waiter for a new napkin. If you don't like it, tough noogies." Swallow it quickly and chase it down with some water or a bite of bread to get rid of the taste. You can't pull a Tom Hanks in the movie "Big," where he tries caviar for the first time, hates it, and tries to hoover it off his tongue with a napkin.

2) "I dropped my fork!"

Easy. If you drop a piece of cutlery, just ask for another one. You never pick it up. And you never ever ***ever*** pick it up, wipe it off, and continue using it. It's a lot quicker, but it's simply not done!

Not as though any of us have ever eaten anything off the floor. Heaven forbid. You're at home, the apple slips out of your hand, you pick it up, wipe it on your shirt, and eat it. Right? I remember once when my little niece Emily was three years old. My brother Keir, sister-in-law Ellie, and Emmy and I went to the zoo. We were there all day and towards the end of the afternoon, Emmy was at the end of her little string. She was whining for ice cream. Keir bought her a cone, just as the vendor was closing up shop. As he's wheeling her away from the ice cream stand, she takes one lick of the cone, and the

scoop of ice cream goes splat on the ground next to her stroller. She starts to scream. Keir looks around to make sure no one's looking, and makes a snap judgment: he quickly reaches down and scoops up the ice cream in his hand and plops it back on the cone in Emmy's hand. She's happy.

Hey. Come on. If you've got kids, you've done stuff like that, too. But when you're at a business meal, if it hits the turf—don't touch it!

3) "Oops! I spilled it!"

Sharon Abrahams advises that if you spill something on yourself, you hail the water, ask for club soda, and excuse yourself to go to the restroom and wipe off your clothes.

If you spill something on someone else, apologize profusely, hail the waiter for the club soda, and offer to pay the dry cleaning bill—in fact, insist on it. ***Don't***, however, try to dab the spill off their clothes yourself. The stories are legion about embarrassed summer clerks trying to dab the spilled Coke from a female associate's chest or a male associate's lap. In those cases, the cure is worse than the disease!

4. Cocktail parties, or—How do I shake hands when I'm holding chicken wings and a beer?

a. When to show up.

What do you do if there's a cocktail party at 7, followed by dinner at 8? Sharon Abrahams suggests that "If you're a summer clerk or you're new at work, there are definitely people there you want to or should see. You should arrive at the cocktail party on time and look around for the person you most want to sit with at dinner. Make a beeline for that person, introduce yourself, ask where they're sitting, and ask 'Mind if I sit with you?' Go away for the rest of the cocktail hour and then come back to them at dinner. Arrange your dinner partners at the start of the cocktail party, because once you're sitting down at dinner, you're stuck with the people you're sitting with."

b. Recognize that the point of the function is the people—not the food.

If you're going to a work-oriented cocktail party, you're there for the people. As Sharon Abrahams says, "Don't go hungry to a cocktail party! You don't want to stand at the buffet table stuffing yourself or spend the evening following around the trays of hors d'oeuvres. Apart from anything else, it's always fattening food that's bad for you. Instead, go to the cocktail party full. Eat your burger in the car if you have to. If you don't have time to eat first, go and eat in a corner, do a tooth check to make sure there's no spinach stuck between your front teeth, and then socialize. You can't eat and talk. Especially with those little skewers of food. If you're holding one, and a plate, and a drink, you can't shake hands."

c. *Never* pick up buffet food with your hands.

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

Summer associate at a large firm. The firm has arranged a Friday morning training session, complete with a breakfast buffet. The summer associate goes to the buffet table, picks up some french toast sticks with her fingers—and stands at the buffet table eating them, one after the other, from the serving tray.

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5. When a superior invites you to dinner at their home . . .

a. What if you have dietary restrictions?

Maybe you're a vegetarian or you're allergic to nuts. The socially correct thing to do is to go to the dinner party and eat whatever you can. At a large dinner party that's exactly right. Having said that, when I throw dinner parties I always ask my guests if they have any allergies or dislikes that I should know about. I ***want*** them to be happy, and if that means preparing an extra dish, I don't mind that!

If it's an intimate dinner—perhaps just you, your date or spouse, and your hosts—your skipping a course or a dish would be more obvious. What you could do in that situation is to be ***very*** gentle about it, and say something like, "Thanks for the invitation. I'm delighted to come. I'm a vegetarian but I'll be happy eating any salad or bread or vegetables that you serve; please don't make special arrangements for me." Of course they ***will*** do something special for you but you haven't been rude! Otherwise you could say something like, "I love to cook, myself—but I drive my guests nuts because I'm a vegetarian and I don't cook meat." That way you're letting them know without being demanding.

The thing to avoid in any social setting is shrieking, "Do you realize you're eating dead animals?" Don't skewer people for ***their*** choices any more than you'd want to be vilified for yours!

b. Don't show up empty-handed.

As Sharon Abrahams advises, "If you are invited to your supervisor's house for dinner, bring a gift. A box of Godivas, a bottle of wine, flowers with no strong scent. If you bring wine, remember that the hostess is ***not*** obligated to serve what you bring—don't get your nose out of joint!" If they cellar your bottle of white burgundy and pull out the cranberry wine with the screw top, that's the way it goes.

c. Be on time.

Duh. For a dinner party, don't show up late. Your hosts won't appreciate it, and neither will the soufflé.

d. Before you leave, seek out the hosts and thank them.

If the dinner party is a little larger so that your hosts could be absorbed with other people when you leave, don't slink away into the night. Always say your thank-you's first.

e. Follow up with a thank-you note.

Thank-you notes make an ***incredible*** impression. As Sharon Abrahams says, "They differentiate you." She adds, "Don't e-mail your thank-you's or fax them. Send a personal note." I keep a stack

of note cards for just such purposes. You can get any kind—with your initials or some neutral picture. (Mine have Tiffany windows on them. They're beautiful, and always suitable. I get them from Papyrus in New York City.) Keep them handy and use them frequently. People will notice!

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Large Florida law firm throws a cocktail party at a law school where it's interviewing. It invites the hundred or so law students it will be interviewing the following day. Of the hundred students who attend the cocktail party, only one of them writes a note afterwards to the managing partner, thanking him for inviting him to the cocktail party. Even though his grades are mediocre, he winds up with a job offer over better students "because he had the decency to write," says the partner. "If you want to stand out from the crowd, do the ten-minute thing that makes you shine!"

SMART HUMAN TRICK . . .

Recruiting Coordinator, large New York firm, tells the following story: "We routinely take our summer clerks out to the movies. One summer clerk had guests in from out of town the day of one of our movie 'field trips.' I told him, 'Bring them along.' The summer clerk sent me a thank you, and his guests did the same. It's a little thing that makes a big impression. It creates a happy feeling."

1. WORK IS WORK, YOUR PERSONAL LIFE IS YOUR PERSONAL LIFE . . . AND PEOPLE AT WORK ARE COLLEAGUES FIRST AND FRIENDS SECOND.

That sounds awfully cold, doesn't it? But it's the truth. It's important to like your work and the people you work with. You spend more of your waking

hours working than playing. But it's dangerously seductive to get your work and private lives muddled. At work, you've got to have your emotions under control and your private life out of sight.

There are going to be times when you want to tear your hair out or scream or cry. Fine. Get out of the office or do it behind closed doors. Screaming at a coworker will make people think you can't control yourself, and they'll be reluctant to give you responsibility where you'll have contact with clients. Tears of frustration will make people think you can't handle the pressure of being a lawyer, and you don't want that.

If you go through a personal tragedy—God forbid—nobody expects you to be a tower of strength. Cry, but do it discreetly. Who you tell and what you do about it depends on the nature of the tragedy. If it's a break-up with a boyfriend or girlfriend or the loss of a pet, you're better off not telling anybody at work at all. While these kinds of events can be devastating—gosh, I've seen people cry more over the death of their dog than when they lost their grandparents—on the tragedy scale they don't rank very high. One lawyer suggests that with troubles like these, "Leave at 5 p.m. if you must for a few nights and cry for the evening, then go to bed and get up and go to the office and put it out of your mind for the next eight or nine hours. That's what a professional does. An amateur cries at her desk and tells all her coworkers her troubles. The problem will still be there at 5 p.m. Cry about it then if you must. If it's too much and too serious, it's a good time to take some vacation time."

If the personal trouble is one that anyone would recognize as more serious—a death or serious illness of a spouse or family member, for instance—gather your wits about you and explain briefly what's going on to your supervisor and perhaps a very close colleague. You'll probably find them tremendously supportive. But don't make your private business general news. Save your tears for when you're with your family and outside friends, and get with them as soon as possible. Do whatever you need to do to make yourself feel better, but do it away from the view of your colleagues in general. You're no help to anyone, including yourself, if you're so torn up inside that you can't pay attention to the work you're supposed to be doing. Take time off, talk to a therapist—your emotional health is ultimately more important than anything else—but when you're at the office, people need to see you focusing on your work. It ***is*** cold, but it's the truth.

One hiring partner told me about a young associate at his firm who was going through a double whammy—a divorce ***and*** a bankruptcy. He said, "We all felt terrible for her, but it was ***way*** too common knowledge. She stayed at work, but couldn't do anything. Her supervisor gave her work that just sat there. She really needed to take a leave of absence, but she just wouldn't do it."

Incidentally, I'm not trying to suggest that your coworkers won't be sympathetic. They may be incredibly sympathetic. They might startle you with the depth of their caring; I've heard many, many wonderful stories about coworkers coming through in a crisis. What I ***am*** saying is that you can't ***count*** on that, and you've got to soldier on as best you can in the circumstances.

Don't ever, ever share with colleagues any information about your private life that reflects adversely on your professionalism. The partner at one firm in New England told me about a summer clerk she'd hired. "He was giving me a ride to a client meeting, and the whole time he's whining about how he's so bad with his finances, he's overdrawn, he's going to be lucky if he's not evicted. The whole time I was thinking to myself, 'And I'd trust *you* with client matters?'"

When it comes to friendships at work, as Ronna Lichtenberg says in her book *Work Would Be Great If It Weren't For The People*, "Friends are what you have outside the office. Inside you can have cordial relations, nice lunches, long conversations, and good buddies, but that's it . . . It's not until you leave your office that you discover who your friends are." Amen to that. Many, many people echoed that advice. NYU's Gail Cutter points out that "People at work are your professional colleagues more than they are your friends, and their primary concern is the work of the firm." A public interest lawyer said that "I socialize with supervisors, but I know that if I screw up they're my boss first and my friend second." Remember that your first loyalty, and that of everyone you work with, is to the employer, not each other. That leaves a lot of wiggle room for wonderful friendships—but they're not without their limits. Most of the things you'd share—plays or movies you've seen, books or magazine articles you've read, TV shows you've watched, sports activities, cute things your kid said—those are safe. But keep in mind that every time you share anything about yourself, you should act judiciously. That's why it's important to maintain a life, and friends, ***outside*** of work. As

Quinnipiac's Diane Ballou recommends, "The less people know about you, the better. Don't talk about your dates. Listen more than you talk. Then less can be said about you!"

CAREER LIMITING MOVE . . .

In-house patent lawyer. He's friends with many people at the company, including an older man in manufacturing. The company has a big layoff, and the older friend is one of the people laid off. He's furious, and becomes part of a lawsuit against the company alleging age discrimination. The case is handled by outside counsel. The guy who gets laid off calls the in-house patent lawyer, saying, "Let's have lunch." The in-house lawyer is uncomfortable, but likes the guy, and so he accepts the invitation. He says, "At lunch, all this guy wanted to do was pump me for information about what was going on at work. It was extremely uncomfortable. I dodged his questions. I couldn't believe he'd actually think I'd say something negative about the company—especially with him suing us! And I really didn't like hearing all kinds of bile about the company, because after all, I still had to work there. When I got back to my office, my secretary had mentioned to my boss that I was having lunch with this guy. My boss chewed my head off, questioned my loyalty—and my intelligence. I realized that until this whole thing blew over, I really couldn't be friends with this guy."