

# Law without tears

How to succeed as an associate without billing 2,100 hours.

By Warren Smith

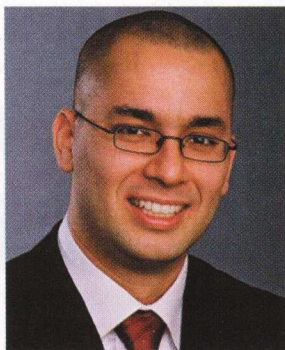
As a recruiter, I'm often asked what makes a junior associate stand out among her peers. There's no universal model for "star lawyers," but I've consistently seen certain traits among emerging leaders in practice. Although solid billings are always a plus, they're never the single defining aspect of successful associates.

Here are five tips you can use right now to give you that star quality as you begin your career in law:

## 1. Publish, Present, Participate

Perhaps the single biggest improvement you can make as a junior associate is to find opportunities to use the three P's of practice: publish, present, and participate on panels.

As an associate, you possess some of the most current knowledge in your practice area. Your research puts you at the forefront of Canadian legal knowledge — partners rely on you to provide them with the latest developments in law. Finding an opportunity to present your knowledge in a business or academic environment takes little additional effort and offers you the opportunity to stand out from the crowd.



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## 2. Find a Mentor Outside Your Firm

External mentors offer three significant advantages to junior associates. First, they're not caught up in the politics of your organization — they can give independent advice and help navigate potential minefields inside your firm. Secondly, they can supplement your firm's collective wisdom, offering alternatives and allow-

ing you to debate the generally accepted wisdom of your firm without fear of repercussion.

Finally, an external mentor need not be a lawyer. A non-legal perspective can often prove valuable when making decisions.

## 3. Never Eat Lunch Alone

Most lawyers buy their lunches, yet it astounds me how many eat it in their office alone! Lunch is the one time when people are generally free — take this opportunity to build your relationships. Whether it's with co-workers, classmates or prospective clients, this is one of the easiest ways to (re)connect with your network for little additional cost.

Most firms require you log some business development hours anyway, so this is an easy way to meet that requirement,

grow your contact base, and maybe even get a free lunch once in a while!

## 4. Congratulate at Every Opportunity

The next time one of your colleagues, clients or friends receives an award, is mentioned in the news, or accomplishes anything noteworthy, take a minute to call and congratulate them. Better yet, send a nice card (no, e-mail doesn't count). You'd be surprised how few people take the time to do it.

If you really want to make it easy, pick up a pack of congratulatory cards and leave them in your desk, so you always have a card on hand.

## 5. Build Visibility Inside Your Firm

As a junior associate, visibility inside your firm is as critical to your success as "external" visibility. Building a reputation among the partners for doing excellent work will open doors to bigger and better files, and will give you increased responsibility over your current files as well.

As your practice matures, you'll be in a better position to attract and retain future clients, as your legal skills and judgment will be visibly superior to many of your peers in practice.

So there you have it: a few easy practice tips to get your career started off right. Keep it up, and before you know it, people will be asking how you became a star lawyer at the firm without billing 2,100 hours last year! N

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## Bien entreprendre sa carrière

Réussir sans avoir à facturer 2 100 heures.

Comment un avocat salarié junior arrive-t-il à se démarquer de ses collègues? Un nombre élevé d'heures facturées peut donner un avantage, mais il ne s'agit pas du seul critère en jeu. De nombreux avocats qui facturent 1 700 ou 1 800 heures par année finissent par devancer leurs collègues qui facturent plus de 2 000 heures.

Voici cinq conseils qui vous permettront d'exceller en début de carrière :

1. Les trois « P » : publiez, présentez, participez. Les associés comptent sur vos connaissances et vos recherches. Pourquoi ne pas saisir l'occasion et présenter votre savoir dans un contexte commercial ou universitaire? Cela nécessite peu d'efforts additionnels et vous permet de vous démarquer.

2. Recherchez un mentor à l'extérieur de votre cabinet. Il pourra vous

donner des conseils impartiaux et vous aider à éviter les pièges. Vous n'êtes même pas obligé de choisir un avocat. Une perspective non juridique peut être fort utile quand vient le temps de prendre une décision.

3. Ne mangez pas votre lunch seul dans votre bureau. Profitez de ce temps libre pour casser la croûte avec des collègues de travail, d'anciens camarades de classe ou même des clients éventuels : un excellent moyen de construire et d'entretenir votre réseau.

4. Ne manquez pas une occasion de féliciter un de vos collègues, un client ou un ami qui reçoit un prix, fait parler de lui dans les médias ou réalise un exploit. Appelez-le ou expédiez-lui une carte par la poste.

5. Soyez plus visible dans votre cabinet. La visibilité à l'intérieur du cabinet est aussi importante que la renommée extérieure. Cultivez votre réputation d'excellence et les portes s'ouvriront. N

— Pierre Allard