

New Jersey Law Journal

VOL. 200 NO. 9

MAY 31, 2010

ESTABLISHED 1878

SUMMER ASSOCIATES *Outlook*

MAY 31, 2010

An ALM Publication

Be Constructively Creative To Capitalize On Opportunities This Summer

By Ari Kaplan

Rutgers School of Law-Newark rising 2L Nick Hastings, a Nanuet, N.Y. native, was not having luck with his traditional job search, so he decided to cold-call 15 small law firms in New City, Nanuet and Nyack to express an interest in working with their attorneys this summer. He left a few voicemails, spoke with a few secretaries, and had a conversation with one lawyer, who encouraged him to place an ad in the Rockland County Bar Association's newsletter. He did just that (for free) and a few weeks later, a small firm in nearby Orangeburg hired him for a paid position, where he will focus on business matters, employment issues and litigation. "Try an idea that you think might work because the worst thing that can happen is that it doesn't," Hastings recommends to his peers. "Put yourself out there in a constructive way," he adds.

Kaplan is an attorney and the author of The Opportunity Maker from Thomson-West. He teaches students and professionals how to stand out in today's stagnant economy through live programs and webinars.

As it did for Hastings, constructive creativity will serve law students well over the next few months. In a down market, summer hires will need to perform at the highest level of professionalism, but also connect with others as effectively as possible. "I am going to try to speak to as many attorneys as I can, ask questions about the law and try to establish a good reputation," Hastings says. In fact, that mindset will be critical this summer given the contraction in overall hiring and resulting increase in competition.

Students typically enter summer internship or associate positions expecting to meet those individuals with whom they work, but are not necessarily thinking about broader opportunities to network with clients, at bar associations or during other events, notes Stephanie Richman, Assistant Dean for Career Services at Rutgers School of Law-Newark. "Students should be more aware of outside networking opportunities this year," she says. "In this market, you have to look for those opportunities to network beyond the internal audience," she adds, highlighting that such effort is crucial to one's development at a particular employer and to his or her professional development generally.

Be a Resource

One of the best ways for students to network and remain in touch with others is to serve as a resource. In some of your conversations, you will likely learn about areas in which your target audience is interested. For example, if you meet or are working with someone who is interested in teaching a law-related course in a local law school or college, visit Chronicle.com and set an alert so that you will receive e-mails when a relevant position become available. It is free, takes seconds, and could create an exceptional opportunity for follow-up.

In addition, study editorial calendars. Lawyers are always interested in showcasing their talent and ability in a published article. New Jersey-based law students may consider studying calendars for local publications to share writing opportunities with their supervisors and others they meet this summer. Industry-specific newsletters, which you can find at EzineHub.com, may also offer the potential for connection and even collaboration. Working together on an article would both showcase the talent of the practitioner with whom you are working and provide you with an important writing sample.

Make Yourself Indispensable

In addition to writing samples, you

will need to secure strong references and referral sources, which will be easier to establish with enthusiasm. In fact, your attitude will drive the tone of your summer, notes Millburn-based litigator Mark Ingber of Ingber & Gelber. “You want to leave a positive impression because it doesn’t matter how good an attorney you are; if you don’t have people calling you, it doesn’t make a difference,” he says.

You can create that impression by learning about the lawyers with whom you are working, using tools that are much more mainstream than they were last year. First, begin using Twitter to follow lawyers that comment on topics related to the area in which you are working this summer. You do not have to participate in the conversation to derive benefit from its contents. In fact, it is likely that you will be the only person at the firm ‘listening’ to these conversations and may have an opportunity to share unique insights with your team. It will demonstrate

initiative, enthusiasm and a sincere interest in the subject matter.

Also, try to learn additional details about clients and contacts using LinkedIn. A simple search on the social media platform may reveal information that will be helpful to the senior attorney with whom you are working either in terms of client development or to enhance an existing relationship. Even if it does not necessarily help, the mere effort will set you apart.

Look Ahead

That distinction will have long-term effects because the market will eventually recover and those students with strong experience and a deep network will be the first to benefit. For instance, Margo Goldberg, another rising 2L at Rutgers-Newark, has secured an internship with the United States Attorney’s office in the Eastern District of New York, but is already

talking to New Jersey-based law firms in an effort to create opportunities a year from now. Ingber suggests that in addition to building their network, students ensure that they gain experience by participating in pro bono initiatives at their firms or visit ProBonoNJ.org to learn about potential opportunities. “It is important to do things that will add to your marketability,” he says.

Ultimately, students have a variety of networking opportunities this summer. You may not be as bold as Hastings and cold-call prospective employers or place an advertisement in your local bar association’s newsletter (though it is obviously effective), but you can leverage the power of social media tools and the Internet to learn more about your audience and find stronger connections. Students who become resources to members of the bar and those in the broader community will distinguish themselves in a meaningful and memorable fashion. ■