



YOU'RE DETERMINED
THIS IS THE YEAR YOU
ARE GOING TO EXCEL.
YOU PLAN TO DEVELOP
YOUR BUSINESS
ACUMEN, MARKETING
SKILLS AND LEGAL
KNOWLEDGE. THIS
IS THE YEAR YOU
WILL PUSH FOR THE
RECOGNITION AND
PROMOTION YOU
KNOW YOU DESERVE
... YOU MAY ALSO
REMEMBER HAVING
THESE THOUGHTS THIS
TIME LAST YEAR.

Stand out from the crowd

The decision to take active steps to excel in your career can require an attitude adjustment in junior lawyers. Simply achieving your billable targets and doing the bare minimum is unlikely to attract the attention of senior management. Instead, if you try to improve the way you are perceived within your own firm by making real improvements to your skills set as a lawyer, career progression should naturally follow. The following categories can be easily addressed by young lawyers:

Build relationships

Some of your best resources and allies in any law firm (and of course later on in your career) are your contemporaries. The group of young lawyers who are roughly the same age or at the same level of career progression will almost always be able to offer you valuable insight. They may also be able to discuss potential ways to develop your career.

If it is possible to strategise your career paths in conjunction with each other, then this can often fast track progression as you are accountable not only to yourself but also to each other.

Often, one of the best ways to see how you're doing and what you need to do next is to simply ask the people who are able to assess it the best – the partners at your firm. They have not only been in your position but they've supervised other junior lawyers who have gone through the same experiences and difficulties that you are facing.

Measure achievements

Knowing where you are in the big scheme of things is important. You might feel that you are at the bottom rung of a very experienced ladder of people. However, you wouldn't be working at your law firm in the first place if the firm didn't see value in having you there. This is why it is crucial to have measurable targets, whether it be keeping track of what billable hours you are doing, or whether the hours you spend are generating productive work for you or not.

It is a good idea to keep track of what you have learnt, so you always know what your skills set is. Keeping track of what you do know at this early stage of your career is a good way of setting up a program where you know what you need to learn next, and perhaps more importantly, the firm can track your progress – which is crucial during inevitable performance reviews.

Goal setting

The concept of goal setting is frequently discussed in training sessions. However, it is still one of the most under-utilised methods employed by young lawyers.

The ability to recognise the distinct skills valued by your firm is an invaluable asset. While professional skills may be your strongest asset and what differentiates you from your peers, we have chosen to identify three further important categories as follows:

- legal skills (knowledge);
 - professional skills (the application of knowledge); and
 - interpersonal skills (how you communicate with others).

While each category is important, it is only when you combine your efforts in all three areas and set realistic, accountable and measurable goals that you will notice a substantial change in your development as a young lawyer. •

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