



The Playbook for Virtual Summer Programs

April 2021

Grover Cleveland

- Mentoring
- Events
- Meeting Other Lawyers
- Training and Assignments

Mentoring:

1. Inundate summer associates with mentors! Use mentoring circles to create an advisory group.
2. Allow summer associates to select a group of mentors representing an array of commonalities (e.g., parents, members of affinity groups, people in certain practice areas, people with certain interests, alumni from their schools).
3. Have mentors reach out to their mentees before summer.
4. Require mentors to check in with summer associates at least weekly.
5. Hold weekly (or more frequent) check-in meetings with recruiting and the summer associate class to discuss the upcoming week, address any questions, and provide a consistent connection.
6. Hold regular “office hours” where the recruiting team and summer associates can talk together in small groups.

Events:

7. Kick off the summer with live or video messages from firm management to the summer associates.
8. Host a competition where summer associates use Zoom backgrounds to recreate their favorite vacation.
9. During events and programming, specify a particular topic for people to discuss and indicate the order in which people will need to share. Summer associates reported that it was easier for them to speak up if they knew they had to talk about a specific topic at a specific time.
10. Solicit input from attorneys about hosting events to help engage attorneys in the summer program.
11. Use breakout sessions or host events with smaller groups (e.g., five-six) to foster better communication.
12. Provide events where the main focus is something besides alcohol.
13. Physical objects helped normalize events last summer. For example, with cooking classes, have ingredients shipped or even send firm-branded cookware.
14. Customize events based on office locale, e.g., highlighting a local cuisine.
15. Hold trivia nights. They are low-cost or free. And because they are informal, they allow the summer associates to interact more personally with one another.

16. Host virtual scavenger hunts using the [Goose Chase](#) or [Scavr](#) apps. Challenges can include questions about the firm and its people, requiring summer associates to do sleuthing. Summers can also work on teams to solve the challenges.
17. Host a “just for fun” scavenger hunt event that just involves asking people to find various objects in their homes (e.g., an item of swag, something that should have been thrown away, a shiny object, something that represents the summer associate in some way).
18. Host virtual events that combine socializing and learning, such as the [DiSC Power Hour](#).

Meeting Other Lawyers:

19. Assign imaginary offices to the summer associates and provide summer associates and lawyers with a floor plan. Encourage the summer associates to meet the people in their “vicinity.” And ask lawyers to meet their summer associate office “neighbors.” In other words, tell a summer associate that she would be in a certain office on a certain floor and share names and locations of people who would be near that office. This helped give summer associates a reason to reach out.
20. Provide summer associates with detailed instructions on ways to meet people.
21. Pre-arrange lawyer sign-ups for coffees or office hours limited to about five summers to keep the groups small. This helped ease some of the pressure for the summers to send cold emails to lawyers, introduced them to people they might not have otherwise met, and kept the lawyers involved.
22. Hold weekly attorney spotlights to highlight interesting attorneys who might slip under the radar in a virtual setting. Spotlights were talk-show style interviews to help summer associates get to know an attorney as a person. Questions included: “What would you do with \$1 million?” and “If you could live anywhere for a year, where would it be?”

Training and Assignments:

23. Frame the virtual summer experience to highlight the opportunities. For example, if summer associates get comfortable with virtual networking, they will have a head start on meeting people in other offices and on business development.
24. Assign “hosts” for training programs to introduce speakers and handle technology.
25. Hold icebreakers before training programs to engage summer associates.

26. Provide [resilience and stress management training](#) early in the summer. Remind summer associates that it is normal for everyone to be stressed in the current environment.
27. With workshops, set expectations at the outset and explain the importance of participation.
28. Make sure summer associates understand how to use technology to interact (e.g., pressing the space bar to unmute themselves on Zoom).
29. Use a survey to solicit questions in advance of training programs. And afterwards, provide a way to ask follow-up questions.
30. Send tangible items to summer associates — not just swag and gifts, but actual briefs, reports, and cases, etc. This will help the summers feel more like they are actually at the office.
31. Avoid “talking head” trainings. Best practices for engaging programming (e.g., captivating graphics, interaction, and limited words on slides) are even more critical in a virtual environment.
32. Provide specific, actionable advice: With panels, remind lawyers to share concrete examples that will be relevant to summer associates.
33. Give summer associates a variety of ways to interact and share ideas, such as Zoom chat, live text polling, and old-fashioned Q&A.
34. Inject friendly competition into trainings and offer prizes for participation.
35. Provide assignment checklists and remind summer associates to make sure they understand the context and purpose of an assignment since it is harder to follow up in a virtual environment.
36. Recommend that summer associates send a confirming email about an assignment before they dive in.



I appreciate the contributions from the talent teams at many firms, including **Arnold & Porter**, **Baker McKenzie**, **Bilzin Sumberg**, **Fenwick & West**, **Fried Frank**, **Latham & Watkins**, **Selendy & Gay**, and **White & Case**.

More information on *Lessons for Sharks* live summer associate programming is [here](#).