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SUMMER ASSOCIATES *Outlook*

The Summer's Perspective

The unmatched opportunity to interview a firm while they are interviewing you

By Christopher J. Dos Santos and Gregory J. Cannon

Serving as a Summer Associate with a law firm provides a law student/aspiring attorney with an unmatched opportunity to interview a firm while the firm is essentially interviewing you for 10-12 weeks. Of course, the journey begins during the previous summer, a full year before you set foot in the door as a Summer Associate. After determining that you would like a law firm experience during the summer after your 2L year, the search for the right Summer Associate position begins.

Christopher J. Dos Santos

I knew that I would have to begin my search before the "Fall Rush." I contacted several attorneys in my hometown to gain their perspective on summering and the practice of law in general. Armed with their insight and targeting law firms in

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the eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey areas, I embarked on the Fall recruitment path seemingly as soon as I arrived back on campus for my 2L year. I learned quickly that you need to develop thick skin and you need to prepare for rejection. While the lesson may be a tough one to learn, it still carries with me today. Not every firm is going to offer you a job; in fact, as I found out, sometimes you will count yourself lucky to even receive a response! Undeterred by the flurry of letters tactfully advising that "We are not hiring at this time" and "We have already filled our 2006 summer positions," my search for a Summer Associate position pressed on into the early Fall.

While I went on several interviews and received a few offers, none of these firms seemed like the right "fit" for me at the time. I did not want to settle for a firm I genuinely did not believe was a good fit. I continued my search. One day, while scanning my law school's OCI database, I came across an advertisement for a medium-sized law firm in New Jersey, "The Firm." Hailing from Pennsylvania, I was not familiar with The Firm, but after performing some Internet research (Internet law firm research was one thing I became quite proficient in, that Summer/Fall), I decided to send The Firm my information. Lo and behold, a few weeks later, I found myself driving east and interviewing at The Firm's office. I interviewed with two Partners and two Associates individually,

all of whom seemed to really enjoy life at The Firm and the practice of law generally. I came out thinking not only do I think the interviews went really well, but more importantly, I really liked the people that I met and I could certainly see myself there for not only the next Summer, but as a full-time Associate.

The next week, I received an offer of Summer employment and accepted soon thereafter. Not only was I happy to know that the grueling interview season was officially over for me in late September/early October and that I could "enjoy" my 2L year, but also that I had a position with a firm that seemed to be as interested in me as I was with them.

The Summer experience was enjoyable both inside and outside the office. The highlights include: receiving a variety of assignments in differing areas of law with varying levels of difficulty; having the opportunity to get out of the office on "real lawyer" tasks; and even playing softball on The Firm's co-ed softball team. What I was really looking for aside from the work and the activities, was whether or not I could get along with, relate to and eventually see myself practicing law with the other attorneys and support staff at The Firm. All signs pointed to yes, and I could not wait to get an offer of full-time employment.

Gregory J. Cannon

My search for a Summer Associate position was very much akin to what Chris experienced. I started searching

early and mailed my résumé often, admittedly, perhaps more often than was needed. Nonetheless, I was very excited about the prospect of gaining an opportunity at a high-quality law firm. Admittedly, I had little idea of where I really wanted to end up. I interviewed with a number of larger firms in Philadelphia and New York City, but I began to realize that the “big-city” law firms were not where I wanted to spend my next summer. Thus, as my 2L year began, I tailored my search to mid-sized firms. I happened across an advertisement in my law school’s career strategy office and applied to a medium-sized law firm in New Jersey, “The Firm.” I received an interview at their office, during which I decided that The Firm was at the top of my list. Although cliché, I have to say that it was everyone’s attitude at The Firm which sealed it for me, as I got the feeling that everyone I met during my visit was genuinely pleased to be working there. Luckily, I received an offer a few months later and the real interview began.

When the next summer began, my intuition turned out to be correct and The Firm did have a distinctive “family-atmosphere.” The Firm events were not just

well-attended; they were fully-attended, with everyone having a great time. Most of the time, The Firm’s co-ed softball team drew enough people to play our own game, without the opponent firm. Win or lose, we all went out afterward to a local pub or restaurant where the good times continued. Over the summer there were numerous other events as well, including the Family Picnic, Lobsterfest (an all-you-can-eat extravaganza), and the Golf Outing. These events were a great time in themselves, but more importantly, everyone who attended demonstrated the camaraderie that I had sensed during my initial visit, making them even more memorable and leaving me with a great impression of the attorneys and staff.

While the after-work summer events were terrific, more significantly, the legal work I received as a Summer Associate was both varied and important. I did not spend my summer reviewing boxes of documents in the proverbial basement, as is every Summer Associate’s primary concern (read: “every Summer Associate’s nightmare”). Instead, I worked with numerous partners in matters ranging from complex securities litigation

to environmental remediation. Certainly, The Firm was not kidding when they told me I would be working in as many practice areas as I was able to fit into my three-month stay. It’s no exaggeration to say that I became acquainted with the entire firm during my summer there and I was pleased with everything I had seen when I left to return to law school for my 3L year. Upon arriving back at law school, my hope was that The Firm was pleased enough with me to extend an offer of full-time employment.

Of course, more stressful than the interview process or completing assignments over the Summer, was wondering whether you will receive an offer. The Summer Associate Program at The Firm ends in early August and offers typically are not extended until mid-September. Because of the uncertainty, it is prudent to apply for other full-time positions in the event an offer is not extended. Nevertheless, both Chris and I were offered full-time Associate positions at The Firm beginning in the Fall of 2007. We respectfully withdrew from consideration for other positions and accepted The Firm’s offers of full-time employment. ■