



Top 5 Summer Tips: Social Events and Networking

by Anne Tompkins, Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP

This practice note outlines five practical tips you can use as a summer associate to make the most of the social and networking events your firm has planned. Your summer associate experience will include a number of social events, from lunches and dinners with associates and partners to fun and exciting group events. An important purpose of these social events during your summer is to provide opportunities for attorneys to get to know you outside of the workplace. Remember, however, that your behavior at social events is being observed and noted. The following tips will help you exhibit great qualities during both the workday and at social and networking events.

1. Jump in.

Attend as many summer events as possible. Remember that a lot of time, energy, and resources have gone into planning them. Don't consider the social events as optional—they are an important part of the summer program. Your enthusiastic commitment to attending these events will be

noticed and appreciated. Firms want your summer social and networking events to be fun, but each and every event may not be one that you would naturally choose to do. If you don't play softball—go to the game and cheer on the team. A no-show suggests possible disinterest in the firm. So, jump in and attend as many social and networking events as possible.



2. Attitude is everything.

Your fit with the firm—as demonstrated by your great attitude and your willingness to be a team player—is being assessed at all times, even at social events. Intelligence and work ethic are critical for your success as a summer associate, but attitude is equally important, both during the workday and in social settings. Stay engaged in social settings and be appreciative of the effort that people at the firm have made to provide for an interesting event and a memorable summer. Let them know that you enjoyed it.

3. Be memorable for the right reasons.

Social and networking events are the best time for attorneys at the firm to get to know you. Naturally, you want to be memorable. But, be careful. Be genuine. Share life experiences that help you make connections with your new colleagues, but don't over-share family secrets. Listen as much as you speak. Have fun but limit your alcohol intake. Remember that reputational harm done after enjoying yourself too much is hard to erase. Accordingly, act with care and discretion, and don't say or do anything at a summer event that you wouldn't say or do in the office. A general rule of thumb: Avoid excesses of any kind. You can still be memorable, but be memorable as the sophisticated, mature, and fun summer associate.

4. Branch out.

At firm events, resist the urge to huddle with your fellow summer associates, sharing your war stories of the day.

Branch out and introduce yourself to someone new, including partners. Be respectful but not intimidated by partners. They will attend summer associate events and are there, in part, to see if you have the fortitude to step up, make an effort, and meet all members of the firm. Such access to partners may be harder to come by when you become an associate, so take advantage of the opportunity being given to you as a summer associate to network with partners. That being said, don't focus all your efforts on the partners. There is great value in getting to know associates at big summer events as well as over smaller lunch meetings. When you start practicing law, remember that your most valuable contacts will be junior, mid-level, and senior associates.



5. Be prepared.

Everybody loves individuals who have done their homework. When meeting someone for the first time, know something, even a little something, about that person. It's flattering and demonstrates a genuine interest. Before going to lunch with partners or associates, read their firm bios. Read articles they have written and try to understand the issues so that you can discuss topics important to them. (It's okay to ask questions about these issues too.) Such initiative shows the partner or associate that you are interested and enthusiastic about what they do and what you will be doing as an associate in the firm. The summer associate experience is a two-way street. Law firms have chosen to bring you in to get to know you in the hopes that you will join the firm. Being prepared for networking and social events lets your firm know that it has chosen well.



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