



The Hidden Rules of Law School Networking – Building Relationships with Professors, Alumni, and Legal Professionals Early

Building a robust professional network during law school is crucial for a successful legal career, yet it is not something extensively covered in law school curricula. Engaging early with professors, alumni, and legal professionals can open doors to mentorships, job opportunities, and invaluable guidance. Here are some strategies to help you navigate the nuances of law school networking:

Make the Most of Internships, Externships, and Summer Placements

Internships, externships, and summer placements aren't just résumé boosters—they're prime opportunities to build meaningful professional relationships. The colleagues, mentors, and supervisors you meet can become valuable connections throughout your career. Approach every assignment with curiosity, seek out feedback, and engage with attorneys and staff beyond the work itself. Take initiative in networking, whether it's joining a lunch, attending firm events, or following up with thoughtful questions. These experiences are about more than gaining legal skills—they're about becoming part of the professional community you hope to join.

- **Choose Placements Strategically:** Select positions that align with your geographical area of interest and/or desired practice area.
- **Foster Relationships with Supervisors and Colleagues:** Show initiative, ask insightful questions, and maintain communication beyond your placement.
- **Seek Referrals and Recommendations:** A strong professional impression can lead to introductions within the legal community.



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Build Strategic Relationships with Faculty and Staff

Your professors are more than educators; they are well-connected legal professionals. Developing meaningful relationships with faculty members, especially those in your practice area of interest, can be beneficial.

- **Engage with Non-Tenured and Adjunct Professors:** Adjunct faculty members often practice law in addition to teaching, meaning they have valuable networks and insight into hiring opportunities.
- **Try to Secure a Research Assistantship:** While these positions are typically competitive and offered to top-performing students, they provide direct mentorship and professional connections.
- **Attend Faculty Events and Workshops:** Many professors hold office hours, lectures, or panel discussions outside of class that can provide networking opportunities.



Connect with Alumni

Alumni can offer insights into various legal paths and may introduce you to other professionals. To connect effectively:

- **Utilize Alumni Networks:** Join your law school's alumni association and attend events to meet graduates.
- **Seek Informational Interviews:** Reach out to alumni working in your areas of interest to learn about their experiences and seek advice.
- **Engage on Professional Platforms:** Connect on LinkedIn and participate in discussions to maintain relationships.

Network with Legal Professionals

Building connections beyond your school can provide broader perspectives and opportunities. Consider the following approaches:

- **Join Local Bar Associations:** The more localized the organization, the better the networking opportunities. Many bar associations have student memberships and host networking events.
- **Attend Legal Seminars and Workshops:** Participating in Continuing Education of the Bar (CEB) events and similar programs can expand your network.
- **Participate in Moot Court and Competitions:** These events allow you to showcase your skills and engage with practicing attorneys.
- **Get Involved in Clinics and Experiential Learning Opportunities:** These programs provide real-world legal experience under the supervision of practicing attorneys and can help you build strong connections.



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Leverage Campus Resources

Your law school offers various resources to facilitate networking, and utilizing them effectively can help you build meaningful relationships.

- **Join Law Reviews and Journals:** These organizations provide direct access to faculty members and legal scholars, along with networking opportunities with high-achieving peers.
- **Use Career Services:** They often host networking events, workshops, and can connect you with mentors.
- **Participate in Student Organizations:** Joining groups aligned with your interests can introduce you to like-minded peers and professionals.
- **Attend Guest Lectures and Panels:** These events are excellent opportunities to engage with industry leaders and academics.

Leverage Digital Networking Platforms

In today's legal industry, digital networking is just as important as in-person connections.

- **Optimize Your LinkedIn Profile:** Ensure your profile is professional, up to date, and includes relevant experiences and achievements.
- **Engage in Online Discussions:** Join LinkedIn groups, comment on legal industry posts, and contribute to discussions to make yourself visible.
- **Follow Up with Digital Connections:** After meeting professionals at events, connect with them on LinkedIn and send a personalized message.

Develop and Maintain Your Network

Networking is an ongoing process, and relationships require effort to maintain.

- **Follow Up: After meetings or events,** send thank-you notes or emails to express appreciation.
- **Stay Connected:** Periodically update your contacts on your progress and engage with them on professional platforms.
- **Offer Value:** Share relevant articles, congratulate them on achievements, or offer assistance when possible.
- personalized message.

By proactively building and nurturing relationships with professors, alumni, and legal professionals, you lay a strong foundation for a thriving legal career. Networking in law school is not just about meeting people—it's about forming lasting professional relationships that can shape your career trajectory.

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