



# HOW TO EXCEL

## IN YOUR FIRST 30 DAYS IN YOUR NEW LAW FIRM



WHERE LAW FIRMS COME  
**TO RECRUIT LEGAL TALENT**

# The truth is that the interview process lasts a lot longer than you might think.

After working hard with a specialist recruitment company to find and land your perfect role, you might think that is everything handled.

The truth is that the interview process lasts a lot longer than you might think. Even after a hiring manager has offered you a role in their company it is still crucial that you validate their decision that they made the right choice in hiring you.

During your first 30 days, it is up to you to prove to your new manager and team that you have what it takes.

The good news is that there are a number of time-tested strategies that you can implement from day one.

This guide will provide you with everything you need to know to streamline the transition into a new role. By the time you have finished reading, you will be ready to hit the ground running, and make the right impression in your new company.

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# Step 1: Knowing Where to Focus Your Efforts

## What is Expected of Me?

Everyone wants to start their new career on the right foot, particularly when it is a role they've wanted for years. From the moment you start on your first day, it's imperative that you validate their decision.

Importantly, that does not mean running in with a to-do list and a pre-defined set of goals to accomplish from your personal perspective, which is based on what you think is critical. Remember every role and organisation is different. Though your recruitment company will have helped you to find a position that suits your unique skills, abilities, and career goals; it is now up to you to find out what's expected of you, and how you need to interact with the key members of your team and department.

Ask yourself:

- What are your manager's priorities? While this may be covered in the onboarding process, it is worth clarifying with your manager what you are expected to achieve both in the short, medium and long term.
- What will it take for you to be successful in your day-to-day role, and how can you excel in the months to come?
- What does your manager, team, and department need to deliver?
- What is your manager's style and how can you both work together to address the bigger goal and have a good working relationship?
- How will you be measured/evaluated? Will your performance be reviewed in the next 3 to 6 months?
- Which key performance indicators will be crucial for you to achieve?

The more you know about your legal position and what is expected of you in your new company the better.

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## Focus on Learning and Growing

Once you have clear insight into your new role and the performance parameters against which you will be measured; it is time to look at your ongoing development.

There is a well-known saying that; “every day is a school day.”

It is especially true if you want to perform well. We live in an economy where change is the only constant. Therefore, the skills and abilities you developed a few years ago will need to be continuously developed.

If your employer provides training during the onboarding process, this is the perfect time to soak up as much useful guidance as possible. During these moments, demonstrate your enthusiasm by asking as many questions as you can think of about your new role. Such as:

- How does my manager prefer to communicate?
- What will my critical goals be within the first 30 days?
- Whom can I expect to work with on a regular basis?
- What are the essential contributions my department makes to the business?
- How does my role support the organisation in the short term/long term?
- How can I demonstrate my value in the first month?

The more questions you ask, the easier it will be to position yourself in your new role. While many people will ask questions about systems and processes, it is astounding how few new recruits pose the kind of questions referred to above. You can now begin to see how easy it is to start standing out.

## Important

While your capability to deliver in your role is important, so is your ability to communicate well with everyone in your organisation. As a market leader across the legal landscape hiring managers frequently tell us that they are looking for individuals who can communicate well, are good team players and have a ‘positive’ and willing attitude. These are skills anyone can develop.

From asking relevant questions, which we will come onto later, to making Google and Amazon your friends, investing time and energy into developing ‘you’ is a trait we see in candidates that have the choice of any role they want.





## Get To Know People

Knowing the right people is a logical way improve your opportunities of securing a role in a great Law Firm. Once you find the job of your dreams, the connections you make within the firm will help to ensure that you excel in your legal role while impressing your new manager and team mates.

As your new role is also in a new law firm start building your network. Do this by speaking to people in your team, getting to know your peers, and talking to colleagues in cross-functional teams that you will interact within on a day to day basis as well as people across the wider business.

Remember the saying, “Your network equals your net worth.” No matter the law firm you work for, human dynamics will always play a role in how people get along. The reality is that we are all different and it is easier to get along with others who are different to you than most people think. It takes a little thought and effort, that’s all.

Pay attention to differences between how you did things in your previous role, and how things operate with your new company. Culture is a huge factor in our workforce today. If you have used the services of a specialist recruitment consultancy like ourselves, they will know and understand how different businesses and their cultures work. They will not have recommended that you consider an organisation that wouldn’t be a fit for you.

Understanding your new culture and the people within it takes a few simple steps. Make the most of every micro-interaction with your peers and learn about others communication preferences.

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For instance:

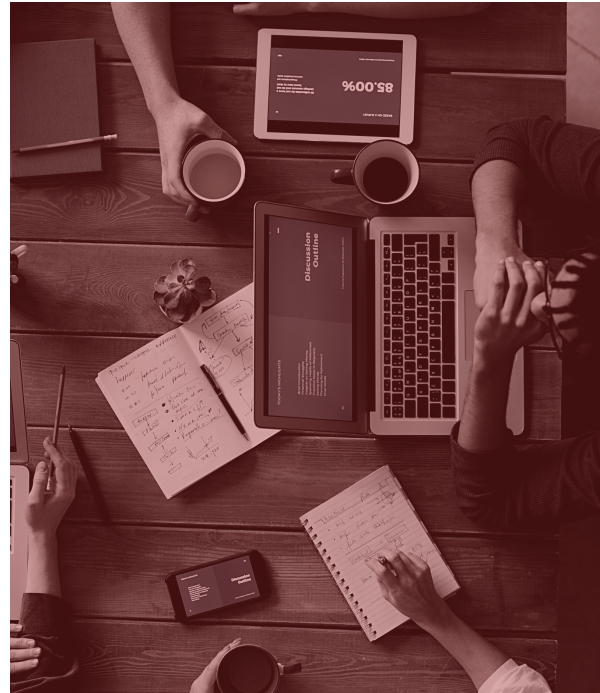
- Do you call, email, or walk across the room to communicate with someone?
- Are you more likely to influence a colleague having an informal or formal meeting?

It's also good to understand:

- When are meetings optional or mandatory? Should you be eating lunch with colleagues, or at your desk?
- Is it ok to say no to 'drinks' after work?

Understanding the communication foundation will help you to get to know your new company and connect with people faster. Building connections with others will create 'trust' between yourself and your new colleagues and manager.

As a result, you will enjoy more support on a day-to-day basis, allowing you to demonstrate you are a team player and create ongoing opportunities to grow and develop.



## Step 2: Demonstrating the Right Skills and Attitude

The skills you need to demonstrate in your new position will depend on your role. Think back to the job description you read when your recruitment partner was supporting you to find the right career move.

Today organisations have people of every generation and often culture working for them. Therefore, it's important to show an ability to work with people in an inclusive and positive way in your first 30 days.

Here are some examples that hiring managers share with us about what they are looking for their new hire to demonstrate.

### 1. Specific Technical Skills

Your recruitment company recommended you for your new job because you had the right training, education, and background for the role. In the same vein, your employer will have hired you because they saw the potential in your experience, connections and past projects you have delivered.

Review your job description carefully and think about how you can demonstrate your technical knowledge during the first 30 days of your new role. For instance, business development, setting and meeting targets, presentation skills in a management meeting.

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## 2. The Ability To Work With Others

Great employees know how to work as part of a well-rounded group. With that in mind, make sure that you are ready to be friendly, respectful, and professional with everyone you encounter.

Refine your communication skills and be as articulate as possible when it comes to explaining issues or asking for help. Make sure you are familiar with the way people connect with each other in your department and be ready to adapt.

Mood hoovers and negative complainers; sorry to be blunt, are rarely the most favourite person in the office. Consider this, with company culture and a leadership team tasked with improving employee engagement, demonstrating a positive attitude and the company values will be critical in your first few weeks.

## 3. Proactive Problem- Solving Skills

The businesses that recruitment companies like ourselves work with have managers that understand their new hires will need extra help during their first few weeks in post.

Although you may feel nervous to start with, learn as much as you can about the business and its objectives so that you can use good judgment and context to make decisions. It's better to then go to your manager having thought through the challenge first and have some options to discuss. Trust me this will impress them!

## 4. Flexibility

Although every team member has the right to say "no" to work that's beyond their knowledge base or skillset, managers are looking for a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty from their employees. While it's vital to know what's expected of you in your new role, it's important not to use that understanding to avoid additional tasks and requests.

Being flexible wherever possible will help you to earn the respect of your manager and colleagues by showing them you're willing to do what it takes to be valuable to the company. At the same time, it can also mean you build relationships with other team members, particularly if your flexibility helps them out. For instance, you might agree to assist a colleague with a complex project, even if it's not directly part of your job.

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## 5. Active Listening Skills

There's a difference between hearing someone and actively listening to them. In a chaotic workplace environment, it is easy to hear someone speak and start forming an automatic response in your mind. Note to self: As soon as you start thinking about your response to someone you have already stopped listening. Take this as a sign you need to engage in listening and understanding actively.

Demonstrate the quality of your listening skills by checking the meaning of what you have just heard. Only then will you be in a position to contribute fully to a solution.

In summary, when you start in a new position or company, listen and learn as much as possible. The more you can absorb about the industry, the brand, and the expectations of an employer, the more likely you are to get excellent results.

[Hint: Never make assumptions about the way things are 'done' in your new organisation. It is much better to ask for clarification first.]

## 6. Prioritise and Organise

During those first 30 days, think about where you might be able to generate quick wins to validate your managers hiring decision. Review your existing work systems and ask yourself whether they fit with what you have learned about your new company and team.

Put in the time and effort now; it's for your benefit in the long term.

Though we are not advocating that you arrive an hour before everyone else or are the last to leave, remember that starting any new role is likely to push you outside your comfort zone. Therefore put in the hours to get through this learning curve.

There is a famous quote by Mohammed Ali that fits well here.

**"I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit'. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion."**

Ask your manager what is the main priority for you now.

Top Tip: Write it down and take copious notes that you review. Then jump into action.

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# Step Three: Forming and Demonstrating the Right Habits

Everyone develops certain professional habits over time - sometimes without realising it. These habits are formed by; our understanding of company culture, knowledge of preferred work styles, as well as an understanding of how to complete tasks as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The trouble is, the habits that worked for you in a previous role might not be as effective in a new job. While sometimes they can map across to your new position that might not always be the case, and some awareness and insight need to be used.

Here are some crucial habits to develop or maintain as you transition into the next stage of your career so that you are prepared to thrive.

## 1. MAINTAIN PROFESSIONALISM IN EVERYTHING YOU DO

Fully understand the culture you are immersing yourself into, make sure you maintain a professional image in everything you do, which includes dressing in a way that fits with the company, being punctual, and acting respectfully towards others. Avoid getting involved with workplace gossip even if it seems like a good way to build new friendships; it isn't, instead focus on making allies through being positive and passionate about what you are doing.

## 2. FOCUS ON RESULTS

Look for ways to validate yourself and demonstrate your worth to your manager. Keep notes of the results that you have helped the business to achieve. For instance, month to month revenue or new business. Focusing on results will help you to highlight where you have excelled in performance reviews. Additionally, it will also ensure that you stay focused on the goals at hand when you are developing your career.

Remember, if you want to generate as many positive results as possible, then take the opportunity to shine whenever it arises, even if it means you take the initiative and create them. A good question to pose yourself is? If I do X, how will this move me closer to my goals and make a measurable difference to the company?

## 3 LISTEN TO FEEDBACK AND WORK ON SOLVING PROBLEMS

Feedback is not always easy to handle. However, some of the world's best employees excel because they know how to respond to developmental feedback without taking things too personally. The more you listen to the suggestions your employer gives you, the more you can work on improving your performance.

Come up with creative ways to resolve issues that might be holding you back as you transition into your new environment. Demonstrating you are willing to do whatever it takes to help the business succeed will also communicate how serious you are about your career..

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#### 4. STAY CALM AND COLLECTED

A new job can come with increased pressure. During the first 30 days, you will be under the scrutiny of managers, and members of your team. However, it is essential to show that you can cope with this pressure and respond accordingly. Even if you feel nervous, make sure that you do not show it. Demonstrate confidence and look for ways to solve problems before ask someone else for help.

#### 5. OWN UP TO MISTAKES

As tempting as it is to strive for perfection when you are trying to impress your new boss, remember that you are probably not going to get everything right from day one. It takes time to get used to a new company, and your employer will appreciate your willingness to learn, grow, and respond positively to your mistakes.

Own your mistakes and demonstrate that you learn quickly from each experience.

#### 6. CONSTANTLY IMPROVE YOURSELF

One of the best habits you can manifest in a new career involves learning what you need to work on and constantly seeking ways to improve. Determine exactly where you need to develop your knowledge, skills, and network so that you can continue to grow your contribution to the business.

Share your thought with your manager and gain their input and support to ensure you can access the relevant training and mentoring that will result in you achieving your performance goals.



## Step Four: Deciding What To Give Up

Succeeding in a new role isn't just about refining your skills, developing new ones, and learning as much as you can about the organisation you work for.

A new role in a different company can be a fresh start, and a chance to leave unsupportive habits behind you once and for all. Thriving in a career is as much about letting go of the things that are holding you back, as it is embracing resources and methodologies that might propel you forwards.

Consider whether you might need to give up the following things to unlock your true potential in the position of your dreams.

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### 1. THE QUEST FOR PERFECTION

It's easy to get frustrated when things don't work out exactly as planned. Many professionals spend their days getting stressed and upset over small details. However, when you're constantly beating yourself up about the things that go wrong, it's very difficult to focus on making improvements to ensure that you don't encounter the same problems in the future.

Sometimes, being successful in your career is about letting go of the negative voice that chastises you for every mistake. Stop holding yourself to unreasonable standards and focus on doing your best. When mistakes happen, learn from them and move forward.

### 2. SAYING 'YES' TO EVERYTHING

During the first 30 days in your new employment environment, you'll want to demonstrate your value at every opportunity. This might mean going beyond the call of duty and volunteering for tasks that aren't in your job description. However, while it's good to help where you can, it's important to know your limits.

Saying "yes" to everything straight away might set a precedent that makes it hard for you to thrive in your new work environment. Additionally, when you agree to countless extra tasks, you might lose the ability to focus on your work, which impacts your performance. Know when you need to say "no." Contrary to some employees' beliefs, companies need employees to have the strength to say no. If the culture in a business does not cater for this, question whether this is the right company and role after all.

### 3. EXCUSES

While it's important not to beat yourself up for everything that goes wrong in your professional life, that doesn't mean that you should be pointing the finger everywhere but at yourself. The most efficient and productive employees know how to own and take responsibility for their shortcomings and proactively make a change.

Now that you're starting in a new role, you have a great chance to leave excuses behind you. Remind yourself that you're going to make errors along the way to success, and that's okay. It's how you respond to the mistakes you make that matters. Rather than blaming other people, or the conditions for things that you've done wrong, address the problem head-on and ask yourself what you need to do to avoid it in the future.

### 4. LOOKING FOR SHORTCUTS

There is such a thing as working "smarter" not harder. Sometimes, the best thing you can do in your career is to look for ways to make your job easier. However, finding ways to be more efficient isn't the same as looking for shortcuts or taking the easy way out. Make sure that you challenge yourself to accomplish your best with every task you take on. Work smart, but don't cut corners.

### 5. DISTRACTIONS AND PROCRASTINATION

Distractions are a common problem in any career. There are some days when you're bound to turn up to work and feel less motivated. The key is knowing how to deal with the urge to procrastinate when it strikes. Often, the easiest way to fight against distractions is to organise your time as efficiently as possible. Start each day by listing the three most important tasks you need to do by the end of your day, making sure that these tasks keep moving you towards your weekly and monthly performance goals.

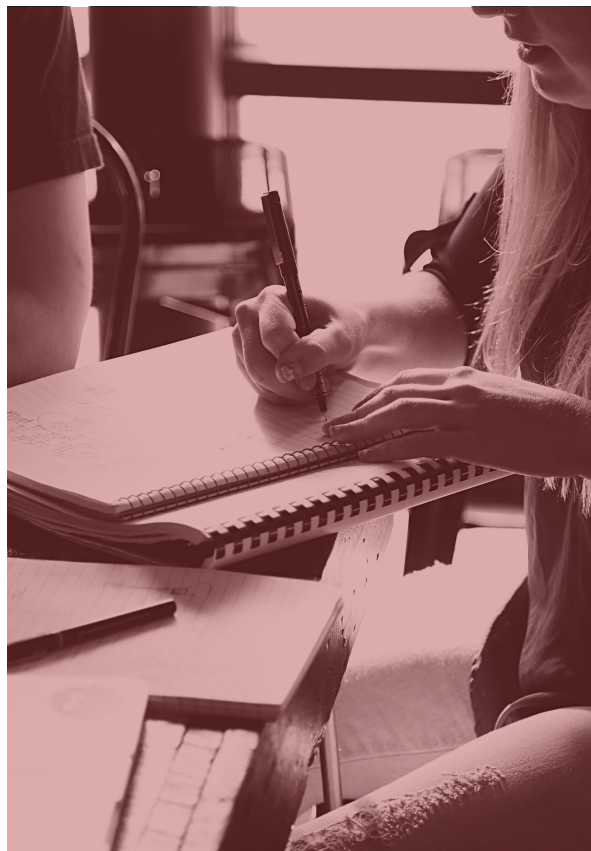
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Another good idea might be to block yourself off from typical distractions. If you know you'll be tempted to check your phone at work, turn it off as soon as you walk through the door. Turn off notifications on your PC and have set times that you check email. Manage your email instead of letting it manage you.

## 6. THE FEAR OF FAILURE

Finally, chasing your goals in the professional world takes work. The more you progress, the more you'll need to break out of your comfort zone, explore new things, and challenge yourself. Unfortunately, the fear of failure can hold a lot of people back and stop them from reaching their full potential.

Remind yourself that you have the skills and talents to succeed in your new role (remember it was you who got the job), and don't let yourself fall victim to negative thoughts and self-doubt. Stay positive and remember, view every mistake as an opportunity for growth.



# Achieving Success In 30 Days

The first 30 days of your new career can be critical to your long-term career plan. Regardless of whether you're starting in a position with a new company, or you're exploring the new responsibilities that come with a promotion, be prepared and know how to put your best foot forward.

By learning what to focus on from day one, discovering which skills and habits you need to demonstrate, and letting go of the things that might be holding you back, you can impress your manager which will affirm in their mind that they made the right decision in hiring you.

## CLAYTON LEGAL

We understand that while talent is your greatest asset - it can also be your scarcest resource - which is why you need a recruitment partner with the market expertise, insight and network to deliver the right people at the right time.

Clayton Legal has been partnering with law firms across the country since 1999 and during that time has built up an enviable reputation for trust and reliability. We provide an experienced and credible voice in the market by being able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the legal sector's talent agenda. Talent is all about people and just like you, our consultants are true experts in their field with a real drive for excellence which informs everything they do.

From Partners and Associates through to Solicitors, junior fee earning positions and support staff, Clayton Legal is the only name you'll ever need - and what's more - we are nice people to do business with!

## LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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