Making the Most of a Virtual Start

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Welcome, everyone. So good to see, not necessarily see, but even seeing your names is exciting to me, because we miss all of you. So we'll give it a couple minutes and let some more people join, and then we'll get started.

CAITLIN SHAW: Hello, everyone. Thank you all for joining today. I'm Caitlin, I serve as the director of alumni engagement here at Duke Law School. And we're thrilled to have you all here with us today for this special program. Just before we get started, a few important reminders. We kindly ask that anyone, when you're not speaking, to please keep yourself on mute.

We will be using the raised hands feature in Zoom for questions throughout the program. And so anytime that you have a question, you can click on the participants button in your menu bar, at the bottom of your screen. And then there'll be an icon that appears to allow you to raise or lower your hand. So please feel free to do that. And then when you're called on, you can unmute and ask your question of the panel.

We're also going to place our alumni office email; in the chat. If for any reason you experience any technical difficulties throughout the program, just reach out to us here and we'll be happy to assist. And thank you all, again, for joining.

Today's program is hosted by the Duke Law alumni leadership council. This council is newly formed in January 2020, and we're thrilled to have our members here today, to share some of their insights on how to make the most of a virtual start in this unprecedented time. So with that, thank you and welcome. And I will pass the program off to our moderator, Jenn Caplan.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Thank you so much, Caitlin. And again, it's so great to have some of our '20 grads joining us today. We've been thinking of all of you out starting your legal career in this very unique and challenging time. And we miss all of you, because we still hope for a chance to see you back on campus sometime in the not too distant future.

But in the meantime, our goal today was really to help provide some support to you as you begin your legal careers virtually. I some people started later this summer, especially those with clerkships, plenty of others are starting early next year. So there's kind of a wide variety of timelines, and also different types of positions represented by the group that RSVPed for this program today.

So we will cover a wide variety of topics today. Any time you have suggestions, questions, anything, as Caitlin said, feel free to use the raise hand feature. You can always put it in the chat if you're more comfortable with that. Chat it specifically to myself or Caitlin.

And with that, I would love to get started by having our panelists introduce themselves. Talk a little bit about where they are currently in their legal career, any steps along the way, and then, if you could each get us started with some more detail about your virtual work setup at home. I know this is something we all have been working hard to try to find what is most comfortable for each of us.

So Serena, could you please get us started?

SERENA RWEJUNA: Thanks, Jenn. Hello, everyone. My name is Serena Rwejuna. I am a member of the class of 2013. I'm originally from North Carolina, and I went to undergrad and business school, go [INAUDIBLE], but also forever Duke.

I am in Washington DC, I am a senior associate in the energy practice group at Jones Day. And I lateraled over to Jones Day just a little over two years ago. I started my career in the Washington DC office of another international law firm. And so I have gone through the process of starting a new workplace, not just once, but twice. So I can talk to you about both in-person and virtual starts.

My practice is pretty varied. Everything from regulatory and compliance, to transactions and litigation. So if you have questions about energy or regulatory practice, definitely connect with me offline. In addition to serving on the alumnae leadership council, I also sit on the Duke DC regional board of directors. So if anyone is in DC, definitely look us up, or look up your local Alumni Association. And I co-chair the professional development committee for DC, so happy to answer questions about that along the way, as well.

In terms of my setup, so you guys are in my living room. Welcome, welcome. This is my video conference setup. So I have two workspaces that I've tried to define for myself in this work from home universe. So this is my comfy spot.

I'm sitting in my favorite video conference chair, where I can lean back and be a little comfortable. I've got the fireplace behind me. It's a great conversation starter. You hop on these Zooms a little early, it can be awkward silence sometimes. I've found that folks love to talk about the fireplace. So it's my comfortable spot where I have something that I can talk about with folks, and provides a nice background for meetings that involve video.

When I am down in the nitty gritty, and I need to be super laser focused, and use my double screens, and all of the other technology aspects that make working from home more efficient, I go to my home office, where I have my desk and my double screens, and everything else that I need laid out. Working from home, sometimes, it can start to feel kind of like live from work, rather than work from home. So I've tried to be very intentional about having dedicated spaces where I work.

So I have this one here in my living room, that's my video chair. And I have my home office, where I really try to do the majority of the kind of really hard thinking work. And then I try to keep other spaces in my home kind of special and carved out. And I don't let work invade them, so that I can have some sense of separation between my work life and my home life. Even though for this period of time, they are colliding in ways that I don't think any of us may have imagined they would.

So that is my introduction. Happy to answer more questions along the way.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Sounds great. Thank you so much, Serena. You definitely win the award for most inviting background I've ever seen. And I've seen a lot of them over the past months. But I just love it. And I think that's a great point, about trying to draw whatever line you can between your home space and your workspace, since it's obviously all-- especially, I know many of us are living in cities, and have a smaller space. It can be hard to accomplish, that's important. Kristen.

KRISTIN SEEGER: Hi, I'm Kristin Seeger. I am a partner at Orrick, Herrington and Sutcliffe in San Francisco. I am from the class of 2007, same as Lauren. So we're the same class.

So I've been practicing for 13 years. I originally started at Thelen Reid and Priest, a firm out here in San Francisco that went bankrupt in 2008. So went through the 2008 financial crisis as a junior associate. So I went through kind of a similar uncertain time as a very junior attorney.

I've been in Orrick now for about 12 years. I'm in the energy and infrastructure group. My practice focuses entirely on mergers and acquisitions for renewable energy companies. Being out in San Francisco, it's heavily solar focused. But I also do biofuel, wind, kind of the whole gamut.

Fun fact, Serena and I were actually on opposite sides of a transaction last year, in the energy space. So it's a small world. And happy to be part of this panel. Look forward to talking with all of you. And congratulations, also, on your graduation.

In terms of my home space, I would say that similar to Serena, I've tried to keep my work environment separate from my living environment. This is my office space that you're seeing right now. And just one additional tip. You're all going to have laptops, and I think that when I first started working from home, there's the tendency to maybe unplug your laptop and carry it around to different places in your home, take it to the kitchen, you know, wherever you are.

And I made a concerted effort to leave it plugged in where it is, so that this is my home space. And that when I'm away from the computer, if I'm getting lunch or something like that, then it stays where it is, docked where it is, very similar to how it would be in my office, so that you're able to have that mental space from your work, as well. Not only the physical space, but creating that mental barrier where you're able to actually walk away. And you don't need to be plugged in every minute, to your email, which can be anxiety provoking.

So that would be my tip on your home environment. Lauren.

LAUREN LINDER: That's a really good one. And I'm going to take that. That is brilliant. Hi, so yeah, I'm Lauren Linder. Same class as Kristin, class of 2000s. Been practicing for about 13 years now. I'm in Atlanta, Georgia. I currently work as deputy general counsel of a company called Parallel, which you may not have ever heard of.

We operate under different brands in different markets that we are in. We are a cannabis company, so THC or cannabis, in the states where that is legal. Which for us, we are in Florida, Massachusetts, Nevada, we just bought a license in Pennsylvania, we are applying for a license in Georgia, Virginia. So kind of little bit over East Coast bend.

Before working at Parallel, I ran a small legal department at the Weather Channel. And before that, I was at Turner Broadcasting. And before that, at Kilpatrick's. So kind of like Serena, I have a lot of first starts and first impressions that I can kind of pull from. Although, obviously, this the first middle of a pandemic. So this is fun, this is new.

And I started Kilpatrick in Atlanta as a trademark and copyright lawyer, so that is my background. So trademark, copyright, entertainment, and now weed.

Let's see, I know that was kind of fast. But we'll probably get into little bits of that. Oh, and I also am taking on a business role. So when we have our Georgia market, I will be the president that market. So a little bit of both hats.

I pulled up on, let's see, if you have the gallery view, I did it this way so that you guys can see my setup. I don't know if you can see it. If you look down in the back, this is really vain, I have a ring light set up, because I want to look my best at all times. And then I have the dual monitors set up. It's a little bit extra, but I'll pop out of that. But that's my set up here.

I also do a little bit of a different background, kind of like Serena, depending on what I want to do. So this is highly functional. So if I need to be able to share screens, sit up in an office chair, I feel like I can do that here. But there are times when I'm speaking to a broader audience in my company, and I'll go into my kitchen, which is light and airy. It has kid stuff in the back. I feel like it's just it's a little more personal.

And I think that is one thing that is actually really neat about this time, is that you can really tailor the message that you want to give. And you can bring your whole self, and show aspects of your whole self in a way that you couldn't before. So we'll talk about it more we get into it, I think that's one of my big takeaways from this, is how to take some of these lemons and make some lemonade out of them.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Thank you all. I mean, that's all really helpful advice. Kristin, I definitely need to stop unplugging my laptop and carrying it around. And Lauren, can you actually show us your ring light? I think you were able to show it to us yesterday in our prep. Thank you.

I mean, I think that is fantastic, because so many of us are used to having lights in places that are not helpful when you're on Zoom. And so just thinking about lighting in a different way, so you feel like people can see you clearly on screen, is so important. So thank you for sharing that with us.

So let's talk about getting started at a new job. Of course, there's going to be orientation, there's going to be training, tech support, things like that. I mean, normally you would walk into an office, you would get to introduce yourself to people at the front desk, to different staff and paralegals.

I know many of you that are working at positions where you worked in past summers, you have had that opportunity in the past, so that's great. But now we're having to take this next step without these sort of casual interactions. I'd love to hear more about just getting started in the office, like ways to feel connected. Like opportunities that you can look for to reach out to people, to introduce yourself. Things like that.

Lauren, do you want to get us started?

LAUREN LINDER: Yeah, I think, so again, sort of glass half full. I think one of the neat things about this is that you can use a pandemic as a bit of an excuse to reach out to people in a way that might even be awkward before. You might not feel comfortable just knocking people's doors and introducing yourself, but now I think it's perfectly reasonable to send an invitation for a 15 minute, you can call it a coffee, and have coffee, or not.

And just do like a 15 minute video introduction with somebody. And say, hey, I know it's sort of a weird time, but I'd just love to briefly introduce myself and get to you. And just put 15 minutes on their calendar, set up a Zoom or similar kind of virtual meeting. I think that's a really good start, just for people to see your face. And then you can kind of control the narrative around your first meeting.

Some of your calls will be calls, audio only. Some will be video only. I think it's really nice to have a first strong video introduction. I think it's a good way to get going there. I can keep going, but.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Feel free, keep going.

LAUREN LINDER: OK, I will say one thing. So I actually got a new boss during the pandemic, a couple months ago. And we haven't met in person at all. And that is exactly what I did.

I feel like I was able to really prepare for that first meeting in a way that maybe would have been a little more organic in person, but it was good that it happened that way. So I would just definitely recommend to be a little more proactive. And then be really thoughtful about where do you want to sit, where you want to wear, what you want to cover, and have that all prepared. And then everything else from there can be more organic.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: That's great, that sounds definitely challenging, to get a new boss during this time. So how do you learn about us supervisor's communication style or work style? Do you just ask right up front? Or things like, do they prefer email? Do they like calls? Do they like Zoom? Do they like to be updated all the time, or kind of given some more space? And you run with it, that sort of thing. How do you get a feel for that?

I'm going to come back to you, Lauren. And then we'll jump around.

LAUREN LINDER: So I recommend just asking upfront. What's your communication style, what do you like. And I actually asked my boss upfront, like do you have any pet peeves? Is there anything that just irks you and gets under your skin?

And then I would take note of that, and I would take it all the grain of salt. Because people will say things like, I have an open door policy, talk to me anytime, and then they don't. And so you just need to take some of the cues from, they seem annoyed when I do, next time let me make sure that I give them a heads up.

Pay attention to what people say, versus how they react to what you do. And then I would recommend be prepared with a range of options. Kind of like just there, Jennifer, as you said. Would you prefer that I email, text, chat, or whatever? And go ahead and think about some of the options.

Because if you just sort of leave it open to the person, say like how you like to communicate? That can be a bit much for them. And it puts the onus back on them. So I think that was a really good example of how to initiate this conversation.

So my two takeaways would be one, to ask very explicitly what do you like, what is a pet peeve, what irks you? And then two, pay attention to how they actually respond to it, as opposed to what they say.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: That is definitely a really key point. Those can be distinct things. I think it's also, if you had, say, a mid-level or senior attorney, who is between you and a partner, or you and a more senior attorney, and that person had some input, that would be great.

People do have these little pet peeves. I remember this attorney that I worked for when I first started. Hated emails that just said thank you. And they do something for you, and you feel like you need to say thank you, and it's rude not to say it. But he absolutely was like, don't clog up my inbox with things like thank you, got it, whatever it is. Just, you thanked me, let's move on.

So just little things like that, it's important. Kristin-- Oh, Serena, I see that you unmuted yourself. So please feel free to try to chime in.

SERENA RWEJUNA: I was just going to say, the point you made about other associates, or event support staff, who may work with individuals that you're going to be working with, the partners or senior associates that will be your clients, in a way, at the firm. Talk to those people who know them.

When I started as a first year associate, even though we were in person and it wasn't a pandemic, I relied on my class. There were four women who all started together in my office as first years. And we literally kept a list of preferences and dislikes of all of the attorneys that we worked with.

And so when I got a new assignment for partner y, I would go to the other ladies. And we would sit down and say, OK, who has intel on partner y? You know, OK, well, they really despise this. Or you'll get extra kudo points if you do this. And it's really helpful in this virtual world, where you can't maybe sit down day after day and learn those things naturally. Utilizing any information source that you can, can be really helpful.

And I think we'll talk about this later, but support staff are the superheroes of law firms, at the very least. The assistants who work in my office, some of them have been there for longer than

I've been alive. And they know everything about every attorney. They can be so helpful. They know about the firm and its processes outside of the individuals. So don't overlook those resources.

The other point I wanted to add was, in terms of just how do you get integrated into the culture of the firm, I love what Lauren said about setting up those quick meetings. Also utilize any types of special groups or affinity groups that might be around. If there is a black lawyers group, I'm a part of that at my firm. If there is a women attorneys group, if you actually have like a new lawyers group that the firm sets up for you all to get connected, utilize that.

I know the our new lawyers have a GroupMe that they use. And so they use that to share tips and advice about individuals they've worked with, or getting to know each other as resources. And also the other attorneys and support staff at the firm. So definitely take advantage of some of the flexibility, and some of the autonomy, that starting in a virtual work environment will give you.

It's like Lauren said, there are a lot of things that you can do in a virtual world that might not be as natural if you were starting with an in-person setting. So definitely try to make lemonade out of lemons, but don't forget about some of the resources that seem right in front of you, but that could be easily overlooked. Like your other first year attorneys, and the support staff, and affinity groups or other special groups within the firm who may be available.

I know it can kind of feel like Zoom overload sometimes. You feel like you have meeting after meeting after meeting. But even if you keep it short and sweet, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, it really can go a long way.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: I think that's definitely true. And set up different GroupMes, if they're not there. Feel free to take charge and take the lead on those things. I think we all need our peers and colleagues right now, more than ever. And I love the idea of tapping into affinity groups for sure.

Kristin, you're in a partnership role at a firm that you've been out for a long time. So you are the one kind of welcoming some new attorneys in the near future. We'd love to hear from you on sort of what you're looking for from new associates, as they join this virtual environment.

KRISTIN SEEGER: Yeah, happy to. And I think when I think about that question, I think back to some of the advice that I received as a first year, that maybe I didn't fully understand, but looking back, makes sense. And a couple of things come to mind.

The first is I had a partner, when I was a first year, tell me, treat the mid-level senior associates as almost your client. At a firm, there's a tendency to focus so heavily on the client and client service, but as a junior attorney, really think about having that kind of relationship with the mid-level and senior associates. So the kind of checking in that you would normally do with a client, do it with them.

Make yourself available, be proactive. Because those are really the people that you're going to be interacting the most with, and that are going to help you through the first couple of years of your career. And developing those relationships is really what's going to help get you staffed as you move through your career, as well. If you become that trusted advisor to them, that's how you're going to continue to get staffed. Because those are going to be the folks that are really interfacing with the client in your junior years.

The second piece of advice that I got, which made no sense to me as a first year, was a partner told me, tell me before there is a problem. And I thought, what does that mean? Like, how do I know before there is a problem?

But what he meant was if you see yourself spinning in an assignment, or you see that you're not going to meet a deadline, or you see something looming, don't take it on yourself. Come to me, because I can solve a problem. If you come to me as a partner and you told me that you're not going to meet a deadline, or you don't understand the exercise that you're doing, I then have time to fix that, versus if I find out once the deadline has already passed, that's hard for me. And now you've put me in a bad position, vis-a-vis the client.

So don't put the partner in that bad position. And there's going to be that hesitancy, right? To come tell somebody, I don't really know what I'm doing, or I'm going to miss the deadline. And you might be hesitant to do that, but I would encourage you to actually be more proactive about that. Because it's going to be better for you in the long run than putting the partner in an awkward position with the client.

And I think that that's probably even more so something to think about in a virtual environment, where it's harder to just stop by somebody's office. But really use those junior associates and the mid-level associates that you're working with to figure out some of the answers to those questions. And ask more questions than you think maybe you need to, because that's really going to help serve you in the long run.

And I'm always happy to answer questions. I would rather somebody come to me multiple times and ask clarifying questions than get an assignment that wasn't what I wanted. So that's what I would encourage. I agree with everything Serena and Lauren also said about setting up coffee dates or introductions.

Another suggestion I would have is offer maybe just to sit-in, this is more of a law firm, law firm you're going to focus so heavily on billable hours. But when I was a junior, I often asked to sit-in on meetings and not build, just for my own edification, so that you can learn the transaction. That's a great way to learn the style of the partners you're working with. It's a great way to learn the style and see what the mid-level and senior associates are doing on the deal.

And honestly, there have been several associates that have asked to do that on my transactions that I've ended up then staffing them on the transaction, because it's a natural fit. Because they already have background about the transaction. And they've already made themselves invaluable, because they already know what's going on. And so if something comes up where I go, oh my gosh, I need a junior associate to help on this deal, I'll go, oh, well I should staff so and so, because they already sat in.

And so that's a really great way, if you have extra time as you're getting ramped up, as a first year, in-house or outside counsel, to really get to know what's going on with the legal department. Get to some of the transactions that people are working on, get to see the style of the people that you're working with, get to see the style of some of the different clients. And that's all going to be so valuable to you when you do get that first assignment with that partner, or that first assignment for that client, because you'll already have that knowledge base to draw on.

The last thing I would just recommend is there is this tendency, I think, with work from home, that you're kind of working 24 hours a day. And you need to draw some boundaries around that. If you need to send emails late at night, you can do that. But just remember that if you can send stuff in normal business hours, that's going to be better for people and more comfortable for people.

So if you email me at 10:00 at night and ask to have coffee with me the next day, I'm going to not be as responsive to that as I'm going to be if you contact me within a normal timeframe. So just think about that. Be respectful of people's time.

And I think there's always this tendency, I had this tendency when I first started working, of like, oh my gosh, emails are flying around all the time. I need to look like I'm working all the time. But there is actually a benefit to showing that you are working within certain time constraints. If I have an associate that's constantly e-mailing me at two in the morning, I would actually be concerned about their time management, not be like, wow, they're working all the time.

So just think about that, too. What do other people have going on in their lives, and how can I kind of make this easier for them? And try and work within normal business hours as much as possible, because it's going to make their life easier. And it's also going to make your life easier and help with your own mental health around starting in a pandemic, and making things feel like you actually have a work-life balance there, in terms of your career.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: I think there's just so many things that you mentioned that I want to ask more about. I can see Lauren nodding her head. If you want to chime in, Lauren, feel free.

LAUREN LINDER: Yeah, quickly. I'm so glad Kristin made that last point, because I think we do need to kill this culture of busy, and this idea that if you're working around the clock, that you're somehow busier and more important. And you're so on point. Like, it really does, it suggests that you don't have boundaries, you don't have time management, you don't have interests outside of work, if you are constantly e-mailing.

I mean, it's one thing to say, OK, I need to put my kids to bed and I need to catch up on work between 9 and midnight. That's fine, but Outlook does have a delay feature that allows you to send messages in the morning, and be cognizant of the emotional effect of you sending lots of late night emails on the people you work with. And just don't assume that they're going to be impressed, because that might not be the case.

Kristin made a really, really good point, too about the role of a junior associate. And one of the big things, the most important thing that you have, is you are the owner of the facts. You are the person who is supposed to know the most about the facts. You're not supposed to know the most about the law. You don't have 10, 15, 20, 30 years of experience in the space, but you can have a really good mastery of the facts.

And I actually feel like the virtual setup can be really advantageous for that. So whether that's between having key documents and things pulled, so that you can share a screen and pop back over, or just being paying attention, or to Kristin's point, maybe you're auditing things and just sort of taking notes. But I actually think there's a lot of ways in which you can augment that role as being the owner of the facts, in a digital environment better than others.

And then one other thought, and I think, Jennifer, you kind of this as well. Serena, you were talking about the different subgroups, interest groups that might speak to you. If there isn't one that fits something, you can also start it, right? Like if you really like whiskey, and you found two others, you know, an attorney and a paralegal, who also like whiskey, start doing a weekly whiskey tasting.

Get creative, and use this as an opportunity to find ways to connect with people. Not in a way that's kind of overwhelming, be cognizant of how people want to have their own time. But you can use those sort of interests as ways of connecting with others, too.

SERENA RWEJUNA: So--

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Definitely. Oh, go ahead, Serena.

SERENA RWEJUNA: I want to ask a quick question of the partner and the deputy general counsel on the call. So say the tables are [INAUDIBLE], are the associate who is getting emails at 3:00 in the morning, 4:00 in the morning. How do you suggest that new attorneys deal with that? Do they say, you know, when you email me at 3:00 AM, are you expecting me to reply now? Are you just sending it because that's when it's on your mind? Do you feel the urge to reply at 3:00 AM when the phone goes off, and you hear that the notification sounds of horror? What advice do you have if you are not the one who is sending the emails around the clock, but you're the one who's receiving those emails around the clock.

LAUREN LINDER: I'm so glad you asked. I feel like there's what I did, back in the day, when-- I am dating myself-- blackberries were actually relatively new. And I was like respond, respond, respond, answer, answer, answer. I actually, with my new boss, he did a couple of these late night emails, and I deliberated. Like, I had the answer, I knew it. I was actually working on something else, and I deliberately didn't respond until next morning, because I wanted to early on establish the boundaries that I'm not working around the clock.

Granted, I'm in a little more of a position of comfort now, so it's easier said than done. But I would say to the degree that you can, I would say, unless it is urgent-- and I've gotten those. I've gotten the like, 6:00 AM, oh my gosh, we've been hacked. Like you need to get down, you know, everything is on fire. But unless it's that, I would say fight the urge to respond.

You can even draft the response. Get it ready to go if you just happen to be paying attention, and then don't send it until the morning. Because, like in a relationship, you have to start establishing how you want to be treated. That's what I would recommend. I'd be curious to hear what Kristin thinks. That's such a good question, Serena.

KRISTIN SEEGER: Yeah, it is a good question. And I just wanted to tell Lauren, I miss my BlackBerry. I held onto it until the last possible minute.

So I agree with Lauren. I think that you need to establish your boundaries upfront. Because if you start replying at 3:00 in the morning, the partner is going to start to expect the reply at 3:00 in the morning. I had an associate I was mentoring a couple of years ago who would constantly send emails saying, these are the times I'm unavailable on Saturday. And I said, stop sending those emails, because you're now setting an expectation that, first of all, you're always going to send those emails. And second of all, if you don't send an email, then you're fully available.

So don't give people that kind of access to your schedule and times that really are not work hours. But I would say that the best thing to do is use your judgment. I agree with Lauren, if it is something that is an emergency, you should probably reply. I mean, I do a lot of cross-border M&A. I'm doing a deal right now, one in Japan and one in Paris. And I get emails all time of the night.

And so sometimes, those emails that I get in the middle of the night are things I actually have to reply to. So I think you just have to use your judgment there. And you can't be too rigid. I think if you're too rigid, then it's going to-- if I have an associate that tells well, I absolutely don't do anything within these hours, that can be problematic for staffing.

And just remember, if you're kind of coming up with that rigidity, you're putting it on somebody else, right? So you need to be a team player. Because sometimes when I hear that I just say, well, OK, now you're putting it on me to do it. So that's not really fair either, and we need to have some kind of push pull here, in terms of a team. So I would just say you just have to use your judgment on when is it appropriate and not appropriate to reply to those emails.

And I think it's also perfectly reasonable to have a conversation with that partner. I mean, I know that as a partner, I hated that when I was an associate. And so when I send emails late at night to associates, I often write "I don't need a response." Maybe that's just when I'm working.

I tend to work later at night, that's just my style. Because I know that I'm not an early morning person. And so I will often tell the associate that. But I think it's perfectly fine to even reply if you get an email and say, thanks, got it. Do you need a reply tonight, or would tomorrow be OK? That's a perfectly reasonable response. It also shows I got it, I hear you, I'm being responsive, but I'm not necessarily sending the response.

And I think that also, there is something to be said that thinking about your response, I think that with email, especially in the pandemic, there's this tendency that you feel like you need to reply so quickly. I felt like that as a junior, oh my gosh, I need to reply to these emails so quickly. But maybe sometimes the flurry of email isn't the best way to reply. Maybe it's a phone call. Maybe it's something more written out that you need to think about. Maybe there needs to be a group conversation about the email, is going to be the most efficient way to do it.

I often propose that, if a client sends me an email and I go OK, well if I reply, this is going to result in 25 emails back and forth. Why don't we just have a 30 minute phone call? So I think that there's just, take a minute. Take a breath. Think about what the best way to reply is, because sometimes replying by email isn't even the best way to reply, because you get too much of a flurry.

And I think, to go along with that point I would also say there is this tendency, during the pandemic, for like a lot of casual different ways of communication. I have a lot of clients that will now text me, which was never something that really happened before. And there's this tendency to get drawn in, especially as a junior, to that casual communication versus, I like to always reply by email.

Oftentimes if a client texts me and asks me a question, I'll reply to it by email. Dear so and so, I got your question regarding the following. Here's my answer. Then not only do I have a record of my answer, but you're also setting that boundary where I'm not just going to haphazardly text you, especially legal advice, which gives me some heartburn.

But setting up that formal communication and really thinking about that, so think about not getting sucked into that, too. If you have a partner that is constantly texting you stuff, it's like, what is appropriate to respond by text and what is not appropriate to respond by text. Or, do I need to be sending all these emails that are three word replies? Should it be set up more formally?

Think about how the more senior people on your team are replying to emails, and what that looks like. And try to copy that approach. But I would just say, again, use your judgment. And think about, just like in any relationship, like Lauren was saying, you know, if certain friends sent you certain text messages you might say, oh gosh, well this really requires a phone call. I'm not going to send like all those long text messages.

So think about that, too. You don't necessarily need to reply in the style that somebody reaches out to you. And I think just be careful about that casual communication that can start to come about, especially during the pandemic. And the way that your organization, your law firm, would want you to be documenting replies, et cetera. And what the most appropriate way is to reply. And giving yourself a minute to think about that, as opposed to kind of feeling like you need to constantly reply with it in five minutes.

LAUREN LINDER: That's perfect. Everything that Kristin said was perfect.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Absolutely, absolutely. That was fantastic. I'm really excited that we're recording this, because I think everyone should hear all the advice that you three are offering. I'm even thinking about the email flurries that come about. It's so easy to just go down this rabbit hole of emailing, and it's not efficient, and you really need to focus on efficiency, of course, when you start practicing.

I'm curious if any of you have used other types of technology for more efficient communication. For example, I've been using Slack a lot, like just with colleagues. Obviously it's not something that I would suggest with clients, or in my case, with students. But in terms of conversations, is there maybe a more efficient way to kind of keep these going, without feeling like you have to get on a call, so people can still respond at their convenience? Or have you not necessarily looked in that direction yet?

LAUREN LINDER: Yeah, we have a few. So we use Microsoft Teams chat a bunch. I've used Slack before. I think there are some [INAUDIBLE] disappearing apps, which are kind of nice sometimes. Where the messages are encrypted and secured, and they go away.

Once, when I was dealing with a merger situation, we weren't really sure where the messages were sitting on whose servers. And we had potential issues. It was kind of nice to have something that our core executive team could communicate on confidentially. I do find that you have that problem with the chat, where you've kind of got the constant barrage of things coming through. So it's good to set parameters there.

One thing, when Kristin was talking, the text reminded me of. You can also have conversations about, I think you can have them casually or formally, but about your technology use. So you can say, OK, after 9:00, I tend to wind down. So if it is important, here's my personal cell, and feel free to draw my attention to something.

I think that's a good way to use texts, is to say, here's a way for you to communicate with me when my phone is on "Do not disturb" mode. And then you can also use technology to your advantage to actually decide when you want messages to come through or not. So I would just be really cognizant of ways to use technology in sort of the dark and live times, as well.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: And that reminds me of a point you all made earlier, which was, it's been very interesting to see, over the years, when I keep in touch with alumni, people at the same firms, even in the same practice groups, tend to have very different schedules. I think, of course, it can be really challenging to draw those boundaries, to figure out what works best for you. I know different offices, different locations, may operate on different times.

I've also seen people go a long time without taking any breaks. I've seen people take regular breaks. And I've just found so much of it is something that we all have to learn to do ourselves. It's wonderful when you have a supervisor who tells you it's time for a break. But it often doesn't work that way.

So just keep that in mind. I would love to kind of walk through the scenario with each of you. And I love that Kristin brought up ways to get work, to show your interest in a certain practice area, or working with a certain person. Like sitting in on a conversation, and not billing the time for it.

Say you get your first project with a new supervisor, and you ask the questions about what they're looking for. How do you navigate that conversation, in terms of how long do you think this will take, which is always completely off, of course. It's not anything close to that. When do you go back to that person? How do you ask for feedback? Just sort of like, that first experience of doing a project for a supervisor.

I'd love to hear feedback on how to negotiate that. Because, of course, we can't just kind of peek in and say like, oh, that person's door is open. They look free to chat right now. So any thoughts would be really welcome, whoever wants to jump in.

KRISTIN SEEGER: I'm happy to go.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Thanks.

KRISTIN SEEGER: So like we were saying before, I mean, I think that the mid-level and senior associates can really be an eye into that partner. So if you get a project from a partner, call up those mid-level and senior associates, and ask them about particularities of that partner. And I would say always ask about what the work product should look like.

I find, especially, and I had this tendency as a first year, you come out of law school and you think about briefs, and you think about memos, and this very formalized type of communication. But I can't remember the last time I wrote a memo, and I can tell you I have zero idea how do you get on to Westlaw. So ask the partner upfront, what do you want the work product to look like? Because that's really going to drive what you're going to do, in terms of going through the project.

And a couple other tips. I would say just ask upfront, is it OK if I check in with you in 24 hours and let you know how it's going? I would also say there's this tendency, I find, it always bugs me, a pet peeve of mine is when people ask me one off questions over and over and over. And I think sometimes people think it means they look like they're being proactive. But I have a lot of things going on during my day.

And so it helps me more if you just gather your thoughts into one place, one set of questions. And maybe come to me once a day, or we have a phone call to go over that, as opposed to kind of like peppering me throughout the day with your thought process or questions as they come up. So those would be my suggestions.

I would also say that oftentimes, there's a tendency, especially with partners who are busy, where I have a transactional practice. But I would often draft stuff for somebody, and then they would just revise it on their own and send it to the client. And I would often never see what those revisions were, or get the chance to revise it. And I would actually take my own time to go run a red line against what they sent out, and what I sent them, to look at their changes so that I could understand what it was that they did to my work.

And then I would actually often use that as a way to go back to the partner and say, hey, I noticed that you made this change here. Can you explain that change to me? And people are really open to that. And it gives you a way to actually get more direct feedback that's really useful for you going forward, as opposed to just going and saying, how did I do? And the person being like, oh, you did good.

Because it's hard for them to think back specifically, versus if you give them specific examples that you noticed, for them to respond to. It actually will give you a more substantive conversation with that person about the legal analysis, or the change that they made. Or maybe it's a pet peeve that gets revealed, or they say, oh, that wasn't the commercial deal, or this client always likes the following.

And it'll actually give you much more direct information if you do that. Again, it's something you have to kind of do on your own. And it was something that I found that was really useful.

But think about those ways that you can help yourself, as opposed to waiting for somebody to come tell you something. I always kind of hear, oh, well, I wasn't told xyz. Well, you had the materials there to figure it out yourself and maybe ask the questions. So think about those ways where you can approach the person and ask a more direct question, where you're going to get more direct feedback.

SERENA RWEJUNA: So I love everything Kristin just said. The other thing I'll add is don't feel like you have to recreate the wheel. When I'm preparing to give a junior associate an assignment, and I think because I'm really close to being the junior associate receiving assignments, I've been very intentional about trying to think through what do I wish supervising attorneys had provided me when I was learning. So I will set up a call with the junior associate to talk through what it is I want, if there are any resources that I already have offhand that I can give them that will help them be more efficient in getting started. Versus them spending hours that we're going to have to write off for the client anyway, because they don't want to pay for the junior to search aimlessly for things that are should be right at their fingertips.

If I have any forms or formats that I know that I like, if I know that this client really likes for filings, do you have this type of styling, then I will give them an example of like, this is the last filing we've prepared for the client. This is the last memo, this is the last deal doc that we used, so they have that as a starting point.

And then I'll also say, I'd love for us to check back in after this many days or that many days. And I will say to them, and I think the further you are from being the junior associate on the team, the more you forget how long things actually take. I will say, look, I think I remember how long doing this took the first time I did it, but if you find it's taking longer than I've estimated it, come back. Let me know, let's talk through it. Maybe there's something that I forgot to tell you, because it's so wrote to me right now that I just assume it. Or maybe this issue is more complicated than even I appreciate.

So Let's touch base, and if my estimate is off, let's talk through that. Because maybe it means that I need to go back and tell the partner or the client directly, if I'm working directly with the client, we thought this would take 10 hours but it turns out it's more complicated. It's going to be 20, are we OK with this? Do we need to rethink how we're staffing it? Or maybe my estimate was off. Or maybe this is something that we need multiple people on, if we have a fast turnaround and it's going to take one individual longer to do it.

The other thing I would say is, DM your document management system. If you know you're working for a particular client or in a particular type of, filing and the firm or the group has done one of those before, use that. Don't start from scratch if you don't have to. It makes you more efficient so you have more opportunities to work on more projects, and perhaps work with more clients and partners. And also, it will show your clients, internal and external, that you are efficient if you're not taking time to come up with something that you can easily find on the system.

And I think it also helps with some of those pet peeves. If you look and you see that every single draft that is for this particular client is done this way, then that will clue you in to, OK, this is how I need to do it this time. And unfortunately, it might be that the next time you're drafting it for a different client or different partner, it needs to be a different way. But going through that history and that document system, or, for me, working at a regulatory practice at times, going through past filings that were submitted to the commission can be helpful in answering some of those questions that you can quickly find the answers to on your own, without perhaps needing to go to the partner and ask every single in the weed detail.

But also will help you kind of learn and have a set of examples, so you can decide, to the extent that you have some flexibility in drafting your own kind of like style, and putting your own flair to something. You know, where there's room for flexibility, and what things should be a certain way, based on client preferences or court or agency requirements, as well.

LAUREN LINDER: Sorry to be annoying, but I know sometimes it's helpful to hear things twice. And Serena and Kristin said two things that were just so on point that I think it's really worth saying again. Which is the document management system is your best friend. There is decades of work product in there. Figure out how to search it, and use it. And if you don't have one, the internet is your friend, right?

Is this an EDGAR [INAUDIBLE] for public filings, like it exists, it's out there. The worst thing in the world, and I've done this before, is to spend like 15 hours creating something from scratch, when there was a template that was there that existed already, and all they wanted you to do is like plug-in the factual changes. And you just spent 15 hours that nobody can bill.

So the combination of the document management system and using red lines. Like, red line, red line, red line, red line, red line. That will really help you get information in a way that doesn't require pulling too much from somebody. And it was said before, but the admins and the paralegals are just really wonderful resources. They, at this point, know how to practice law better than you, period.

So just keep that in mind. And be humble and be willing to ask questions of them and be really, really, really nice to them, because they can really help put you in a good position.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Absolutely, and just learn who's available for support. Like what kind of research support is there, what kind of tech support is there, who does what, who do the mid-level attorneys that you're working for find to be useful. And the document management system, that could be said three times, because it's so vital.

I also think it's really important-- And maybe this is something you all could touch on, and I'd also love to open it for questions after that-- but having your own system of staying organized. So what are the documents I've used, what are red lines I've used, how do I want to keep them organized. I've got these different projects, so some of this is time management, in terms of this question. And some of it is just, I've got these different matters, different things are happening, I've got different documents in process. Things that I want to save for later, things that I can kind of put a little bit more on the back burner.

How are you all keeping organized? And what do you do when you feel overwhelmed? As we all know that entry level attorneys will feel that way. There was a lot in that question. But feel free to jump in on any portion you want to. Kristin.

KRISTIN SEEGER: I'm happy to go. So I would say, I mean, I'm happy to talk about how I organize things. But I guess the way I would answer the question is, find something that works for you. Because if you copy somebody else's style and it's not natural for you, it's not going to work.

So when I first started working, I asked a couple of different people how they did things, and I tried out a couple different ways. And I found a way that worked for me. So I would say just think about a way that works for you.

I organize my emails by folders that are client and matter, because, obviously, working at a firm, you have a whole bunch of different clients and different matters that I'm working on. So I can organize it that way. So when I search I'm actually searching within a certain realm.

But I would say as a junior attorney, the other thing I did was I kept a bunch of forms on my desktop just in a file. Here's an example of a non foreign certificate. Here's an example of so-and-so's markup of this type of document.

So that when I was doing a bunch of financing work, when I was a junior, every single time somebody asked me to mark up a security agreement, I wasn't sitting there going, OK, what's the last one I did? And if I got a really good first markup of something from a partner, I would keep that in my form file. And so the next time I marked up a security agreement for that partner, I was like, oh, OK, here's their markup of my last markup. I now know how to, copy that.

And I know it just sounds like you're just kind of copying stuff over and over. But that's how you learn. And so think about ways to kind of make your life easier as you start to learn and see the same documents over and over, so that you're not constantly mentally rolodexing back through the last time that you did it. And I will tell you now, even after 13 years, I have a form file on my desktop of things I refer to all the time. Here's this type of provision that I know I really like, and so I can easily pull from it.

And so thinking about those ways as you start to go through your practice, and you start to see the same thing over and over. How can I kind of put that stuff easily at my fingertips?

SERENA RWEJUNA: I love all of that. And I have the same thing. I have examples, my go bys, you know. I drafted this type of filing really well, and the client loved it, the partner loved it. I got the commission pulled word for word from what I had, I keep that in my folder. Because I know that this works. And you update those over time.

Another thing I do, and this is maybe for more of the regulatory side of my practice is, major orders, or commission guidance, or changes in the law that come around, I have a folder on my desktop as well for those. So that if a client says, oh, I remember we used to have to do this, but wasn't there a commission order that came out that slightly changed that? I've got it right on my desktop. I can go and pull it very easily. If I can answer the question really quickly, then I become invaluable to my clients, internal and external.

The other thing I'll add is just physically and logistically, have everything you need. During our women's lawyers call the other day, the partners encouraged all the associates to have the office send you what you need to make your home workspace as functional as your in office workspace. I'm a very visual person. In my home office, I have a big whiteboard, where I actually chart out specific deadlines and matters I'm working on.

People joke I'm big on data visualization. So I asked my assistant to have the office supply team send me things that I need. So I got printer paper, and I got all of my highlighters, and my sticky notes, and I have my whiteboard. And ask, the firm may be able to send you those things. If not, you know that it will help you be more efficient, determine whether or not you want to come out of pocket for that.

But I have even now been working on making sure that I physically have everything in my home space that will make me as efficient and effective as I could be in my physical office space.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: I know we're kind of pushing up against two o'clock here, it's been amazing how much you three have covered in this last hour. I would love to see if there's any '20 grads that have questions. Feel free to raise your hand or message me, or anything like that. Definitely love to hear from you.

And I will keep a lookout for hands, but I'd love to just ask one more question in the meantime. Oh good, Dani. I knew you'd to have a question, please chime in.

DANI BEMBRY: Great, thank you so much, everyone. This has been really helpful.

I wanted to follow up on a point that Kristin made earlier about shadowing. So I've been at my firm for about a month now, and I've noticed that opportunities to shadow calls have been just a bit more limited in a virtual environment. I think there was a time when someone would just say, hey, so-and-so just called, pop in my office. But it seems like it's now a little bit more complicated to set up a conference line, or there is a bit more reluctance to have the visibility of more ears on the line.

And I was just curious if, as you're thinking about providing opportunities for people to shadow, are these actually factors that you consider? And if you have any advice about how to overcome some of these challenges.

SERENA RWEJUNA: I think you made a great point about the visibility of more folks on the line. Exactly like you said, in an in-person setting you could just kind of sit in the corner of the office and the client might not know that you're listening in. But now, with Zoom, they'll see so many folks on the call.

I think talking through, and figuring out, I mean, maybe it's a situation where you say to the partner or the senior associate, I'd really love to sit-in. And maybe we can let the client know that I'm not going to bill, if there is a billing concern for it. The other thing I would say is, don't forget about pro bono opportunities. So maybe because of the visibility of not being able to have you, really, in the shadow with client matters, if there is a pro bono matter where there is maybe less concern about billing, that might be an opportunity to get that experience and that exposure.

And as you're ramping up, if you don't have client billable work, do not forget about those other types of non billable opportunities to develop skill sets. I know a lot of attorneys, particularly on the litigation side, said that they got a lot of their first year experience from pro bono matters. So to the extent your firm allows you to take on pro bono work and you don't have client billable work.

Don't forget the learning opportunities and opportunities to lead cases yourself. But I would maybe just be upfront and ask the questions. And maybe it might put the onus more on the senior attorneys you're working with to either say to the client, look, ordinarily this person might sit-in and I just want you to know that this is happening. But that's it's a real issue.

I'm curious, Kristin, what your thoughts are, and how you've handled that. I know I've had juniors sit-in, and I've had to say to the client, this is an associate, she's going to be joining. We'll be mindful of the billing, but this is a really helpful experience. And she's going to be a valuable part of the team moving forward. So I want her to get integrated into the matter sooner, rather than later.

KRISTIN SEEGER: Yeah, and apologies, my Zoom crashed there for a minute. But I would say that I would try and focus on the larger, more strategic calls. So for example, the large negotiation calls, or term sheet discussions, which you can off often see coming down the pipe, because either you'll see emails about trying to organize setting them up. As opposed to trying to shadow the more me talking to the general counsel type call, where both myself and the general counsel are probably going to be more sensitive to somebody sitting in on it. Versus I'm going to be less sensitive to a 20 person merger agreement negotiation, somebody sitting in.

And I agree with Serena. I am totally open to just telling the client so-and-so is sitting in, and they're not billing. And the client loves it. I mean, Lauren, as outside counsel, I'm sure you're like, hey, if I'm getting free additional ears on the line, I'm not going to turn that down.

And those are honestly going to be the calls that are the most valuable to you, is the one where you can actually see the partner negotiating, or you can actually see the commercial deal being cut. As opposed to trying to sit-in on kind of, oh, you know, so-and-so called me, let me patch in the junior associate type phone calls. So try to focus more on those really strategic phone calls would be my suggestion.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: It's a great question. Thank you. Do we have any other questions from our grads? From our '20 grads, I should say.

I have a question in the chat. So a grad is saying that their firm has seen a lot of partner departures this year, including a managing partner, and it looks like there may be more. How do you navigate situations like this in your workplace? It can be, obviously, very tricky for employers to have conversations about why people are departing, what the situation was, sort of their loyalty to the employer, and things like that.

If you're in a workplace, let's say, that has been impacted, maybe it's just economics, maybe it's just COVID having people re-prioritizing, or maybe it's just people making a change. If there's something in flux in your workplace. Some suggestions on navigating maybe the discomfort that comes along with that.

LAUREN LINDER: I mean, I'll go first. I think if you lead everything with a little bit of compassion, and just remember that everybody there are people, I think that's the best thing. So, Jennifer, to your point, who knows what happened exactly? But I think it's a good opportunity to reach out to someone who already left on LinkedIn, connect with them, let them know that either you enjoyed interviewing with them, when you interviewed them and you're sad you didn't get to work with them, or all the time you had together.

I would say make sure you keep those connections. Because you don't know in the future when those people might be future employers, or future clients, or just friends. And so I would just recommend that you at least try to keep the relationship alive. And just know that's a big part of law firms. People are going to come and go, on occasions en masse. You have whole groups just up and leave the firm.

But I would encourage you to take it as an opportunity to still connect with people. Do be cognizant of being really professional. And hopefully they will be as well, they won't be trash talking the firm or the company. But if anybody engages in that, you want to make sure you don't get involved in any of that at any level. Don't burn any bridges. But I think it's always nice to reach out to people on a personal level, and try to keep those connections alive.

KRISTIN SEEGER: I absolutely agree with Lauren, do not engage with that if anybody does that. But I would also say I totally agree with Lauren with keeping those connections. So like I said in my intro, I was at a firm that went bankrupt in 2008. And the reason I went over to Orrick is because I actually went with partners that had departed from that firm, and partners that I had worked with.

And they took me as a first year and it was like the scariest transition, because I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. But they were forming what became the energy group on the West Coast for Orrick. And they took me with them, because I had worked with them. And I kept that connection with them.

And I would just say, if you do have a partner mentor, or a senior associate mentor, or somebody that you can go ask, I would go ask. I would be very polite about it. Just say, hey, I'm concerned, I'm curious. What's going on? And see what they say.

But I think it's fine to ask those kind of folks, or if there's somebody that you found that you have a little bit of trust with, maybe asking them. But I agree with Lauren. Everyone has their personal stuff going on, and so just be careful about how you do that. But things do come and go.

And like I said, for me, there was all those departures. But it ended up making my career. So you've got to look at it both ways, I guess, and be flexible. If I hadn't been flexible and open to that opportunity, I mean, who knows?

JENNIFER CAPLAN: Thank you, I think that's really helpful. And I know something that we were talking about as we were all getting started with this program, which is graduating at other times where we faced economic challenges. And I had been talking about graduating in '02 and going out to Palo Alto just in time for the .com bust. And I just remember this feeling of like, why are why are people leaving, are the people that are staying have a lot of work to do, who seems to need help right now, who's busy, who seems like they're here for the longer haul that I should build relationships with?

And then there was just this feeling of nerves amongst my peers, of like, is there enough work for all of us to do? So there's that panic that just kind of keeps, I think we get used to it early on, in law school. Like, what is everyone else doing? What should I be doing?

Any tips for just sort of navigating that situation? Even in terms of keeping yourself focused on yourself, I think that's one of the hardest pieces.

LAUREN LINDER: I would recommend just take a moment to breathe, and remember that this is just a moment in time. I mean, when you started talking about that, Jennifer, I remember all of my feelings during '07, when everything was falling around me. And ultimately my job was fine, but part of it was that I wasn't a jerk. I wasn't overly competitive about the work. I didn't throw other people under the bridge.

And I feel like making sure you keep your integrity, remember this is just a moment in time, that this too shall pass, I think is really, really helpful. It feels like it could be the end of the world. And I don't know if people still read Above the Law. I used to read it like every minute to see if I could figure out when the layoffs were going to come, and what was happening. And now it's just like a blip in my memory that I don't even think about anymore.

And so I think, to the degree that you can, sort of find some centering energy around it, and don't over stress out about it. You might get laid off, that could very well happen. But being laid off might be a really good thing for you. Your boss might get fired, but that might be a good thing for you, and trying to keep a little perspective. I realize it's really hard to say when we're in the middle of it. But I think that will be huge.

SERENA RWEJUNA: I would add, just being flexible. If you've been working with a particular person and they leave the firm or the company, I think that could be very jarring. But I think that can emphasize the value of relationships and people. And people matter so much. Like Kristin said, when her firm went bankrupt, the partners that she worked with took her with them. You know, relationships matter.

I try to work in every environment with the idea that if something happened and I could no longer have this job, who do I have relationships with that I could go to who would look out for me, and who I know would have my back. And I feel pretty comfortable that, if anything were to happen today at Jones Day I was no longer employable there, there are people who I could call from my Duke alumni network from other aspects of life, and I could go to them.

I have that, I call it my personal board of directors. And I constantly check in with them, and I talk to them about what's going on. Where am I now? Where do I think I want to be a year from now, three years from now, five years from now? And having that flexibility, but also knowing that you're building relationships that you can rely on. Because life can come at you fast, but if you know that you've built solid relationships, you can take some comfort in that. And then also, especially while you're junior, to the extent you can be flexible, I think that can be really helpful.

I found myself doing energy work about six weeks in, because the senior associate left the firm and the partner who I had my very first assignment with said, my right hand person left. If you're willing to jump in and learn this, I'll train you. And so that's how I ended up in energy, and now I love it. And eight years later, I'm still doing it.

So that flexibility and that willingness to take risks when they're presented to you, like I was a little concerned. I said, oh, well the senior associate left, who do I rely on now? But it actually turned into a great opportunity for me to become that right hand woman for the partner who really found herself needing someone. So just try to be mindful of seeing things as opportunities, and remain flexible and agile.

And don't forget that people matter. That is the number one thing I can say is people matter, relationships matter.

KRISTIN SEEGER: Yeah, and I would just add, remember the positive of starting in a pandemic. I think that I have been able to appreciate the really, really good years in my career because I started at a time when things were really, really down in 2008. And I was worried every day I was going to get fired. And I think that there is really a benefit to understanding that there are going to be those swings.

I feel like I've actually been very calm during this whole COVID, because I went through 2008. And I'm like, yep, this is how it's going to go. It's always going to come in a wave. And there's going to be the dot com, and then It's going to go up. And then there's going to be 2008, and then it's going to go up. And then there's going to be COVID, and that's going to happen.

And if you talk to people about the cycles of their career, I mean, it does go in a wave. And so I would just think about that, and appreciate that, so that you can really appreciate when things are good. And appreciate the really good years of your career, when things are really high. As opposed to starting at that high, and then having the shock of the drop. So having started in a pandemic, that's the one personal piece of advice I would give.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: There's one way to go. So I mean I think that is the perfect note to wrap up on. I think all the advice you gave is just fantastic.

At the end of the day, it's about learning as much as you can, building relationships with people, and also just keeping in mind that-- it felt like there was so much drama when I was at the firm. It just felt like there was so much that was happening that was hard to wrap my mind around. And I just realized, over time, that people do make moves all the time, they do make changes. They keep in touch with other people, opportunities open up.

So if there are moves and changes that feel like they're having a big impact on you, keep in mind that actually that can be quite normal in this business, even in an uptime. So just keep learning what you can, keep note of the things that you are learning so you remember-- OK, I'm sounding like your career counselor again-- but what those highlights are, so you can talk about them in the future.

And please do keep in touch with us. If you ever need anything, or have questions, we would all love to keep in touch with you. Thank you, Serena, for putting that in the chat. Thanks for all of you on the alumnae leadership council, and alumni in development, Caitlin for putting this together.

And we are definitely here to help you with whatever we can. And it was great to see all of you. Take care and keep in touch.

CAITLIN SHAW: Thanks everyone, and thank you, too, to all of our speakers for a really great program. It was wonderful to see everyone.

JENNIFER CAPLAN: It was.