

How Do I Learn the Ropes without a Good Mentor?

By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office

Question: I recently joined a new firm as a lateral and I don't know anyone! My firm assigned me a mentor but he is unresponsive and unavailable. How do I learn the ropes?

Answer: Formal mentoring programs can seem forced and awkward. The best mentoring relationships form over time when two people have shared interests and are like-minded. To find a mentor who is a better fit, you are going to need to take matters into your own hands.

Do your due diligence to determine who the "connected" senior associates and partners are. Start by finding out who the partners are in charge of the associate review process, handle new business generation, or sit on the firm management committee. You need at least one "power player" on your side.

Do good work and try to work with a variety of people. People will take an interest in you and will support you if you are reliable, hard-working and can make their lives a bit easier.

Don't be afraid to knock on doors. Talk to everyone and anyone on your floor and smile often. Be approachable and introduce yourself to people you haven't met.

You will be in charge of your own destiny when you choose your own mentors and build relationships with people who can help you succeed in your new environment. Remember, you are your biggest advocate!

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