

Talented Litigation Associate with Solid Foundation Jumps to Boutique Firm to Focus on More Complex Matters

While insurance defense firms may not be viewed as the most prestigious jobs, these firms do have a reputation of training their litigation attorneys well. Some may say it is baptism by fire, but most insurance defense attorneys are able to get way more hands-on experience than their colleagues at Big Law firms. From my experience, young associates at insurance defense firms are given a lot more responsibility early on. For example, junior associates are able to take and defend depositions (both party expert depositions), they are able to argue motions in court, and will even sit and second chair a trial, which is something some Big Law associates will never have the opportunity to do.

This candidate was an example of this. There is no doubt this candidate is extremely smart. She is a double Georgetown graduate, having received her law degree and her bachelor's degree at Georgetown. She excelled tremendously in both the undergraduate and graduate levels. She majored in government and minored in philosophy and graduated in the top 7% of her class and was on the Dean's List every semester.

Her performance in law school was no less impressive. She was the Managing Editor of the Georgetown International Environmental Law Review and participated in the Honors Law Clerk Program, where top law students were selected to work with attorneys at EPA headquarters. She was also judicial intern at the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, handling claims under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program.

After law school, this candidate clerked for a year for a Superior Court Judge in New Jersey. After her clerkship she joined a small firm in New York City where she handled litigation matters related to general liability defense, premises liability, and the New York State Labor Law. In this role, she hit the ground running and received some quality hands-on experience, drafting and arguing motions, attending court conferences, handling discovery, negotiating settlement agreements, drafting appellate briefs, and taking and defending depositions.

After a couple of years she was recruited to another high volume firm, where she was responsible for handling 30+ New York and New Jersey litigation matters on the Complex Tort and General Casualty team. She represented premises owners, hospitals, and financial institutions in matters related to general liability defense, premises liability, wrongful death, property damage, and labor law.

Feeling confident in her premises liability litigation experience, this candidate decided to broaden the scope of her litigation practice and joined another litigation boutique where she met some great attorneys and worked on some interesting cases. Unfortunately for her though, the firm's insurance coverage practice was growing faster than its litigation and arbitration practice, and while she loved the people at the firm, she did not want to focus her practice on coverage litigation. She was looking for an opportunity to join a firm where she could handle a diverse and sophisticated array of litigation matters.

Not only was this candidate super smart, but she was well spoken, ambitious, and had a very positive outlook on her career and what she could contribute to a firm. Although she had already been at 3 firms in her career, which can be seen as a lot of movement for an associate, I was still very excited to present her to firms in both New York and New Jersey. I introduced her to about 25 firms, and she received one interview. But that one interview is all it took. The firm is a full service law firm with many accolades including a commitment to diversity and work life balance. Her first round of interview went extremely well, and she was invited back for a second round, which sealed the deal. She received a competitive offer and accepted shortly thereafter.

I'm very happy for this candidate, and I have a feeling that she will be at this firm for a long time and that partnership is in her future. Working with candidates like this goes to show that substantive experience can be just as valuable as working at a prestigious firm. It also proves that candidates have to be willing to approach many firms to find the right one at the right time. The broader the outreach the better the chances that they will find the right home!