

# Creating a Career at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton: What You Need to Know

By *Angelie Ala* from *Los Angeles Office*

## SUMMARY:

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton (CGSH) provides an unparalleled opportunity for legal professionals to build successful careers. The firm offers robust training programs, structured feedback and evaluation, clear career advancement paths, work-life balance support, competitive compensation, and substantial benefits. With its commitment to excellence, client service, diversity and inclusion, and professional development, CGSH is a premier destination for legal talent worldwide. Here, associates can thrive professionally and personally while learning from some of the world's most accomplished legal professionals.

## QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN THIS ARTICLE

### 1. What professional development opportunities does CGSH offer to its associates?

CGSH offers its associates robust training programs covering various areas, including legal skills, professional development, and business acumen. Additionally, the firm provides resources to support learning and development outside the firm's internal programs, such as support for attending conferences, seminars, and other professional development events.

### 2. How has CGSH established clear paths for career growth?

At CGSH, there are clear paths for career advancement. Associates can progress to senior associate roles, counsel positions, and, eventually, partnerships. The firm's transparent progression framework allows associates to understand what is required at each stage and to set their career goals accordingly.

### 3. What kind of feedback and evaluation does CGSH provide?

CGSH provides structured feedback to its associates through formal evaluations, assessing their legal work and collaboration skills, client management, and contribution to the firm's culture and values. These evaluations are constructive, aiming to highlight strengths and identify improvement opportunities.

### 4. How does CGSH promote work-life balance?

CGSH supports flexible working arrangements and promotes a culture that respects personal time. This balanced approach ensures that associates can thrive professionally without neglecting their well-being.

### 5. What kind of career path can I pursue at CGSH?

Through mentorship, training, feedback, opportunities for advancement, and a supportive work environment, CGSH ensures that its associates can build fulfilling and successful careers. Whether you are a law student seeking a challenging summer associate role or an experienced attorney aspiring to partner, CGSH offers a rewarding, engaging path aligned with your career goals. With its competitive

With a robust international presence and expertise in various legal practice areas, [Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton \(CGSH\)](#) offers unparalleled opportunities for legal professionals. The firm's reputation for excellence has made it a highly sought-after destination for law students and attorneys alike. This article delves into what you need to know when considering a career at this prestigious firm.

## Understanding Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, fondly known as CGSH, stands as a paragon of legal excellence on the global stage. Established in 1946 in New York, the firm has evolved into a legal giant with a significant global footprint. Employing over 1,200 attorneys worldwide, CGSH operates from 16 strategically positioned offices,

including key locations in New York, London, Paris, and Hong Kong.

### **Practice Areas**

The firm's international scope is mirrored in the breadth of its expertise. CGSH serves clients in many legal practice areas, reinforcing its standing as a full-service law firm. These core practice areas encompass [Antitrust & Competition](#), [Bankruptcy & Restructuring](#), [Capital Markets](#), [Corporate Governance](#), [Litigation & Arbitration](#), [Tax](#), Private Funds, Mergers & Acquisitions, and more.

Each practice area is staffed by accomplished attorneys boasting deep industry knowledge and a keen understanding of the global legal landscape. By this, CGSH is a trusted advisor to multinational corporations, governmental entities, and financial institutions.

### **Clientele and Cases**

The diversity of CGSH's clientele is a testament to its capacity to handle various legal challenges. Its portfolio includes Fortune 500 companies, emerging startups, governments, and nonprofit organizations. This wide-ranging client base provides the firm's associates with opportunities to work on diverse, high-profile cases. For example, the firm played a significant role in restructuring sovereign debt for Greece and Argentina, highlighting its ability to tackle complex, multinational legal challenges.

### **Reputation and Rankings**

CGSH regularly garners high rankings in esteemed legal publications as a testament to its professional prowess. In 2023, it was recognized by Chambers Global as a leading firm in multiple categories, including Capital Markets and Corporate/M&A. Similarly, the firm features prominently in The Legal 500's rankings, showcasing its high esteem in the industry.

### **Thought Leadership**

CGSH is not just a participant in the global legal landscape but also a thought leader. The firm's attorneys regularly contribute to industry publications and engage in forums, sharing insights on legal trends, evolving regulatory landscapes, and industry-specific challenges. This continuous contribution to the field's intellectual discourse illustrates the firm's commitment to shaping the future of law.

Understanding CGSH is crucial for any aspiring lawyer seeking to join the firm. It requires an appreciation for the firm's global standing, diverse practice areas, and unwavering commitment to legal excellence. Indeed, a career at CGSH provides a unique opportunity to work on high-stakes, complex matters across borders, making it a premier choice for ambitious legal professionals.

## **The Firm's Culture and Values**

The culture and values of a law firm play a pivotal role in defining the working environment, shaping its lawyers' professional growth, and impacting its overall success. CGSH has established a unique culture and values that underscore its commitment to professional excellence, client service, diversity, and community engagement.

### **A Collegial and Respectful Environment**

One of the hallmarks of CGSH's culture is its collegial atmosphere. The firm's lawyers, regardless of rank, are encouraged to work together, share ideas, and learn from each other. This collaborative ethos fosters a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect, making CGSH a workplace and a community.

### **A Focus on Excellence**

CGSH maintains a relentless focus on excellence. This commitment extends beyond the firm's legal work to every facet of its operation. Lawyers at the firm are expected to have a comprehensive understanding of the law and to exhibit strategic thinking, effective communication, and strong ethical standards. This commitment to excellence enables CGSH to consistently deliver high-quality legal services to its clients.

### **Valuing Diversity and Inclusion**

At CGSH, diversity and inclusion are not just buzzwords but integral values. The firm acknowledges and respects its staff's diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. CGSH proactively creates an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and heard. It has numerous programs and initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion, such as its affinity groups, which offer support and community for underrepresented minorities.

## A Commitment to Pro Bono Work and Community Service

CGSH is deeply committed to giving back to the community through pro bono work and community service. The firm encourages its attorneys to devote a portion of their time to pro bono cases and community engagement initiatives. This commitment impacts the lives of individuals and communities who may not otherwise have access to legal services and provides valuable experiences for the firm's lawyers.

## A Focus on Work-Life Balance

In an industry often associated with long hours and high pressure, CGSH makes conscious efforts to promote work-life balance. The firm offers flexible working arrangements, wellness programs, and supportive policies that enable its lawyers to manage their professional commitments without sacrificing personal well-being.

In essence, the culture and values of CGSH are woven into the very fabric of the firm. They foster an environment of mutual respect, intellectual growth, and professional excellence, making CGSH an appealing destination for law students and attorneys eager to make a difference in law.

# Opportunities for Law Students

The early stages of a legal career can significantly impact one's professional trajectory, making it crucial for law students to choose a firm that provides comprehensive opportunities for growth and learning. CGSH is committed to nurturing the next generation of legal talent, offering a range of opportunities for law students.

## Summer Associate Program

At the forefront of these opportunities is CGSH's summer associate program. This program offers law students a realistic glimpse into the life of a full-time associate at the firm. Participants work on substantial legal matters alongside seasoned attorneys, receiving a practical experience that extends beyond the classroom.

The summer program is not just about work; it's also about mentorship and networking. Each summer associate is assigned a mentor who provides guidance and support. Additionally, various social events allow summer associates to network with lawyers across the firm and build relationships that often last beyond their summer stint.

## Fellowships

CGSH also provides fellowships that offer unique experiences for law students. These fellowships, often targeted towards specific fields or diversity initiatives, allow students to delve deeper into areas of interest and gain specialized experience.

## Clerkships

Clerkships at CGSH allow law students and recent graduates to gain significant legal experience before transitioning to full-time associate positions. Clerks at the firm work closely with attorneys on complex legal matters, enhancing their legal research and writing skills and understanding the inner workings of a global law firm.

## Interviewing and On-Campus Recruitment

CGSH actively participates in on-campus recruitment at many law schools nationwide and internationally. Additionally, the firm accepts applications and conducts interviews throughout the year. CGSH looks for candidates who excel academically and demonstrate a commitment to the firm's values and a genuine interest in its practice areas.

By offering these comprehensive opportunities for law students, CGSH ensures that aspiring legal professionals gain valuable experience, develop critical skills, and build a solid foundation for their legal careers. Whether through a summer associate program, a fellowship, or a clerkship, law students at CGSH can experience the exhilarating pace of a top-tier law firm while receiving mentorship and support from some of the industry's most accomplished professionals.

# Path to Partnership

At Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, becoming a partner is a significant achievement that signifies an attorney's commitment to the firm and the law profession. The path to partnership at CGSH is marked by

professional growth, demonstrated expertise, and alignment with the firm's core values.

### **An Overview of the Partnership Track**

Generally, the timeline to partnership at CGSH spans eight to ten years of associate tenure, although this can vary depending on individual circumstances. The firm operates under a "one-tier" partnership system, meaning all partners have an equity stake. This partnership model ensures shared responsibility and aligned interests among partners.

### **Building Legal Expertise**

The first step on the path to partnership involves developing a strong foundation of legal expertise. Associates at CGSH are given opportunities to work on complex, high-profile cases across various practice areas, enabling them to build substantive legal knowledge and hone their lawyering skills. The firm encourages associates to explore different areas and gradually develop a specialty that aligns with their interests and the firm's needs.

### **Demonstrating Commitment to the Firm's Values**

Becoming a partner at CGSH requires more than legal insight; it also necessitates a deep-seated alignment with the firm's values. Prospective partners should demonstrate a commitment to excellence, client service, and ethical practice. Furthermore, the firm values a collaborative spirit, as CGSH prides itself on its collegial and inclusive environment.

### **Developing Client Relationships**

An essential aspect of the path to partnership involves building and maintaining strong client relationships. Associates are encouraged to cultivate client relationships, understand their needs, and provide effective legal solutions. Demonstrating an ability to attract and retain clients signals readiness for partnership, as it shows business acumen and an understanding of the firm's client-centric approach.

### **Leadership and Mentorship**

Leadership and mentorship are crucial elements on the path to partnership. Associates willing to mentor younger colleagues, contribute to the firm's initiatives, and assume leadership roles are more likely to be considered for partnership. These qualities indicate a commitment to the firm's future, shared knowledge, and support culture.

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

Throughout their journey at the firm, associates receive regular feedback and evaluations. These evaluations assess their legal work and consider factors like teamwork, communication skills, and alignment with the firm's values. This constructive feedback guides associates in their career progression and prepares them for the rigors and responsibilities of partnership.

The path to partnership at CGSH is a personal and professional growth journey. It demands dedication, the development of legal expertise, the cultivation of client relationships, and a steadfast commitment to the firm's values. It's a challenging journey that leads to a rewarding destination - becoming part of an esteemed partnership at one of the world's leading law firms.

## **Compensation and Benefits**

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton offers a competitive compensation structure that aligns with the best in the global legal market, coupled with a comprehensive benefits package designed to support the overall well-being of its employees.

### **Competitive Compensation**

As of 2023, CGSH's compensation structure is competitive with top-tier law firms. First-year associates start with a base salary of \$205,000, which can increase with each subsequent year of service.

In addition to the base salary, associates can also earn discretionary bonuses based on individual performance and billable hours. The firm's approach to compensation reflects its commitment to rewarding hard work and fostering a high-performance culture.

### **Benefits Package**

CGSH understands that compensation is just one aspect of a rewarding work environment. Therefore, the firm offers a wide-ranging benefits package to support associates' health, financial security, and work-life

balance.

### **Health and Wellness**

The firm provides comprehensive health insurance, which includes medical, dental, and vision coverage. Additionally, CGSH offers wellness programs aimed at promoting healthy living. These programs include fitness reimbursement, mental health resources, and preventive health screenings.

### **Retirement Plans**

To support long-term financial security, CGSH offers retirement plans, including a 401(k) plan with firm matching contributions, helping associates prepare for their financial future.

### **Parental Leave Policies**

Recognizing the importance of family, CGSH provides generous parental leave policies. The firm offers paid maternity and paternity leave, allowing new parents to spend precious time with their newborns without worrying about financial burdens.

### **Flexible Work Arrangements**

CGSH supports flexible work arrangements, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work in today's dynamic environment. The firm is open to remote work, part-time schedules, and other accommodations that help associates maintain a healthy work-life balance.

### **Professional Development**

In addition to traditional benefits, CGSH invests in its associates' professional development. The firm provides training programs, mentorship opportunities, and resources to support career growth. This investment enhances associates' skills and improves job satisfaction and retention.

CGSH's compensation and benefits package is a testament to its commitment to attracting, supporting, and retaining top legal talent. By offering competitive compensation, comprehensive benefits, and professional development opportunities, CGSH ensures its associates feel valued, leading to a productive and content workforce.

## **Pro Bono and Community Involvement**

[Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton](#) firmly believes in law as a force for good and is committed to providing pro bono legal services and engaging in community initiatives. This dedication is deeply ingrained in the firm's culture and is reflected in its attorneys' wide array of pro bono and community involvement activities.

### **Pro Bono Commitment**

CGSH encourages all of its attorneys, from junior associates to senior partners, to participate in pro bono work. The firm takes on diverse pro bono cases, including immigration, civil rights, criminal justice, and nonprofit law. These initiatives allow the firm's attorneys to use their skills to make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and communities that might otherwise lack access to quality legal representation.

The firm's commitment to pro bono work extends beyond its home country. CGSH has worked on numerous international pro bono cases, reflecting its global footprint and the global nature of justice.

### **Community Involvement**

Beyond pro bono legal services, CGSH is actively involved in community service. The firm's attorneys and staff volunteer their time and resources to support various charitable causes. From participating in local charity events to raising funds for humanitarian crises, the firm is dedicated to contributing positively to the communities it is part of.

### **Social Impact Initiatives**

CGSH is also a participant in various social impact initiatives. For example, the firm has been actively promoting environmental sustainability and has committed to reducing its carbon footprint. Furthermore, the firm supports initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and society.

### **Recognition for Pro Bono Work**

Several esteemed legal and community organizations have recognized CGSH's commitment to pro bono work and community involvement. For instance, The American Lawyer consistently ranks the firm among the top for pro bono commitment in its annual pro bono survey.



A career at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton provides more than an opportunity to work at a prestigious

law firm. It also offers a chance to make a meaningful impact through pro bono work and community involvement. For those passionate about making a difference and using law as a tool for positive change, CGSH is indeed an ideal place to build a fulfilling and impactful career.

## Diversity and Inclusion at CGSH

Diversity and inclusion are core values at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton. The firm is committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment that values the diverse perspectives of all its staff. This commitment goes beyond words, manifesting in the firm's practices, policies, and initiatives.

### A Diverse Workforce

CGSH believes that a diverse workforce enriches the quality of its service and the strength of its ideas. The firm, therefore, actively seeks to recruit, retain, and promote individuals of diverse backgrounds. This includes people of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, and abilities.

The firm's diversity is also reflected in its leadership. CGSH strives to ensure diverse representation at all levels, including partner positions and management roles. The firm's leadership recognizes that it must lead by example to champion diversity.

### Inclusive Policies and Practices

CGSH is not just focused on diversity but also inclusion. The firm ensures that its policies and practices create an environment where everyone feels valued and heard. This includes promoting a culture of respect, providing equal opportunities, and avoiding any form of discrimination.

CGSH also supports flexible work arrangements and parental leave policies, recognizing that everyone has unique personal circumstances and needs. These inclusive policies enable all individuals to thrive professionally without compromising their well-being or family responsibilities.

### Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

CGSH implements several initiatives aimed at fostering diversity and inclusion. For instance, the firm hosts diversity awareness programs, conducts unconscious bias training, and supports affinity groups. These affinity groups provide a platform for individuals from underrepresented groups to connect, share experiences, and support each other.

The firm also partners with various organizations that promote diversity within the legal profession. These partnerships involve initiatives such as scholarships for law students from diverse backgrounds, mentorship programs, and diversity recruiting events.

### Recognition for Diversity and Inclusion

Various organizations have recognized CGSH's commitment to diversity and inclusion. The firm has received numerous awards for its diversity efforts, reflecting its leadership in this field.

At Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, diversity and inclusion are more than just corporate jargon. They are ingrained in the firm's culture, workforce, leadership, and work. This commitment to diversity and inclusion creates a welcoming environment for all and enhances the firm's ability to deliver top-notch legal service by harnessing the power of diverse perspectives.

## Career Growth and Development

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton supports its associates' professional growth and development. The firm provides numerous resources and opportunities for its attorneys to refine their skills, deepen their legal expertise, and progress in their careers.

### Mentoring and Guidance

CGSH associates are paired with a mentor who provides guidance and support throughout their career at the firm. These mentor-mentee relationships help new associates navigate the firm, understand its culture, and get the most out of their CGSH experience.

Furthermore, the firm's senior attorneys are readily accessible and willing to share their expertise. Associates often have the opportunity to work closely with partners, which allows them to learn directly from some of the best legal minds in the industry.

### **Training Programs**

CGSH offers robust training programs to its associates. These programs cover various areas, including legal skills, professional development, and business acumen. The firm's training curriculum is continuously updated to reflect changes in the legal landscape and to ensure that its attorneys are equipped to handle the complex needs of their clients.

Additionally, the firm provides resources to support learning and development outside the firm's internal programs. This includes support for attending conferences, seminars, and other professional development events.

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

Regular feedback and evaluation are integral to career growth and development at CGSH. The firm provides structured feedback to its associates through formal evaluations, assessing their legal work and collaboration skills, client management, and contribution to the firm's culture and values.

These evaluations are constructive, aiming to highlight strengths and identify improvement opportunities. They serve as valuable tools for associates to understand their performance and chart their career progression.

### **Opportunities for Advancement**

At CGSH, there are clear paths for career advancement. Associates can progress to senior associate roles, counsel positions, and, eventually, partnerships. The firm's transparent progression framework allows associates to understand what is required at each stage and to set their career goals accordingly.

### **Work-Life Balance**

While career growth and development are important, CGSH also understands the importance of work-life balance. The firm supports flexible working arrangements and promotes a culture that respects personal time. This balanced approach ensures that associates can thrive professionally without neglecting their well-being.

A career at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton means more than having a prestigious job. It's about continuous growth, learning, and development. Through mentorship, training, feedback, opportunities for advancement, and a supportive work environment, CGSH ensures that its associates can build fulfilling and successful careers.

## **Conclusion**

Building a career at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton offers an unparalleled opportunity to work with and learn from some of the world's most accomplished legal professionals. The firm's dedication to excellence, client service, community involvement, and commitment to diversity, inclusion, and professional development provides a supportive and stimulating environment for career growth.

Whether you are a law student seeking a challenging summer associate role or an experienced attorney aspiring to partner, CGSH offers a rewarding, engaging path aligned with your career goals. With its competitive compensation, substantial benefits, and firm-wide respect and collaboration culture, CGSH stands out as a premier destination for legal talent worldwide.