



## Training & Development

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The firm has a dynamic program with multiple resources and tools to help attorneys manage their professional development. Through formal mentoring, assignment review partners, practice group leaders, and other informal mentors, each associate has, in effect, a board of advisors. These advisors assist associates in getting the work and experience they need to develop and also provide insight into their career development.

### Continuing Education

Legal education is an ongoing process at Neal Gerber Eisenberg. Associates and partners alike participate in a program of continuing education that couples practice-specific training with general sessions in areas such as legal ethics, business development and practice management. Topics are as varied as the interests and needs of program participants: negotiation training, writing and drafting seminars, innovative "One Day MBA" programs and "Bridging the Generation Gap" workshops taught by preeminent experts.

Formal training programming for first-year associates begins with the Basic Skills Training mandated by the Illinois Bar. The firm provides this training in-house so that we can tailor the training to the practices and culture of the firm. The Basic Skills Training also provides first years with an opportunity to get to know each other and colleagues throughout the firm.

### Mentoring

Mentoring is cultivated at every level of the firm to introduce associates to the firm's unique culture and the way we practice law. Incoming associates are paired with both an associate mentor and a partner mentor. Together, they serve as "go to" people at the firm, available to act as a sounding board, to provide introductions, to give informal feedback and to help strategize about career goals.

### Competency Based Framework

The firm uses a competency based framework made up of practice specific benchmarks and firm-wide core competencies to provide associates with a roadmap for successful professional development. The core competencies focus on the key drivers for success at the firm, including communication and analytical skills, professional judgment, client service, professional development and firm citizenship. Meanwhile, specific practice group benchmarks specify the technical legal skills to be mastered in each field. In addition to mentors, associates are assigned an Assignment Review Partner as part of the competency framework. The final piece of the framework is the Professional Development Plan used by associates.



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## Assignment Review Partners

With the implementation of the competency framework, partners and associates are more cognizant of the need to diversify work assignments and spread work equitably to provide all associates opportunities for growth. Each practice group has Assignment Review Partners who are responsible for 3-4 associates. The competency system allows us to focus on assignments as a way to develop skills and create opportunities, rather than just distribute hours.

Assignment Review Partners meet with each associate at least quarterly to ensure that developmental needs are being met by the projects and matters assigned, including pro bono opportunities and non-billable projects. They receive hours reports from our finance department each month, detailing the hours of the associates in their practice groups. They examine the hours focusing on key issues, such as:

- *Number of hours* – Does the associate have sufficient work? Are the hours distributed equitably throughout the group?
- *Type of Work* – Does the associate have the mix of work needed to build core competencies and meet benchmarks? Are certain associates being pigeon-holed at the expense of their development? Are stretch assignments equitably distributed?
- *Non-billable* – Is the associate engaged in productive non-billable activities? Are non-billable opportunities, such as working on pitches, being distributed equitably? Is the associate making connections and strengthening their reputation through non-billable work?
- *Key clients and partners* – Is the associate getting the opportunity to work with key partners in the group? Are they getting the opportunity to work with top clients in that group?

## Professional Development Plans (PDP)

Through this living document, associates are empowered to articulate their professional goals and ambitions and outline the steps necessary to achieve those goals. In the early stages of practice, a PDP will likely focus on developing substantive legal knowledge and skills such as strong writing skills. As associates develop, their PDP will broaden to include items such as practice management skills and developing a professional identity.

At Neal Gerber Eisenberg we want you to succeed and we will do everything in our power to make it happen. Because in the end, your success is our success.