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## Summer Associates Get Legal Business Boot Camp at Montgomery McCracken

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*Of the Legal Staff*

**M**ara Smith, an aspiring lawyer who just took the bar exam, said her summer associate experience set her apart from classmates. But it wasn't the legal work that did so.

"Everybody at every law school knows how to write a memo, knows how to do basic research, knows how to file a motion," said Smith, a graduate of Drexel University's Thomas R. Kline School of Law. "It's that exposure to the business development portion of it that I think shocks a lot of people when they get into firms."

Smith was part of the first class of summer associates at Montgomery McCracken Walker & Rhoads to complete a business development project, where they learn how to reach new clients and cross-sell their firm's services. The program was in its second year this summer.

The firm wanted a way to impress upon young lawyers the importance of business development



Courtesy photo

Montgomery McCracken Walker & Rhoads 2017 Summer Associates.

and networking, said Michael Epstein, chair of its hiring committee, and "the sooner, the better." The marketing department and librarians played a major role in shaping the program, he said.

Each summer associate is assigned to a potential client to research thoroughly—their business model, leadership, outside counsel, prospective legal needs and who at Montgomery McCracken could fulfill those needs.

"At the conclusion of the research, we knew these companies, their litigation histories, deal flow, law firms they were using, key board members, who general counsel were," Epstein said. "It certainly led to follow-up meetings and follow-up discussions internally and externally."

This summer, Montgomery McCracken had six summer associates, and their presentations were opened up to the entire firm. More than 50 of its 100-plus lawyers attended, Epstein said.

“This is the first time they really had to think like a lawyer,” Epstein said. “This is part of our overall process with summer associates is to try to give them a realistic look at what it’s going to look like when they start working in a law firm.”

## FILLING A SKILL GAP

Matthew Olesh, senior counsel at Chamberlain Hrdlicka and chairman of the Philadelphia Bar Association’s Young Lawyers Division, said it makes sense to start learning about business development before entering the legal profession.

“I don’t think I’ve heard of anything quite like that for summer associates,” he said. “Whether your firm offers this skill training or not, it’s something young lawyers should be doing.”

Young lawyers are often too consumed with the challenges of navigating a new job and getting enough billable hours to think about it, Olesh said, but law schools generally haven’t addressed the need.

“Law students come out of law school not knowing anything about business development,” said



marketing consultant Stacy Clark. “You get zero training in thinking this way, let alone doing it.”

Clark said she hasn’t seen programs like Montgomery McCracken’s elsewhere in Philadelphia. It’s a good investment for the firm, she noted, as summer associates who return for full-time positions will be able to bring in business sooner than they typically would without training.

“It’s one of the smartest moves any law firm has done,” Clark said.

Smith, who is planning to re-join Montgomery McCracken as a

full-time associate in September, said the program taught her about “the social network of lawyering,” by forcing her to interact with so many attorneys at the firm and encouraging her to find “opportunities for business development in everyday life.”

“It changed the framework from which I view lawyering,” she said.

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