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Partner perspectives Path to partnership

A guide from our Taylor Root experts

Introduction

The legal profession has evolved in many ways, and today's lawyers are expected to be well-rounded professionals with a blend of technical skills and business acumen.

Pursuing a partnership at a law firm is a fantastic opportunity, but it's not for everyone, and that's okay! To achieve success at partner level, you need to have a strong understanding of business development and client relationship management, as well as a solid foundation in your area of expertise.

If you're looking to take your career to the next level, start by taking a step back and evaluating your strengths and the unique value you can bring to a firm. Remember, even if you're not on the path to partnership at your current firm, you can always explore opportunities elsewhere, if your goal is to become a partner.

The interview process can be a crucial moment in your journey, so make sure to put your best foot forward. Prepare yourself well, highlight your strengths, and showcase how you can add value to the firm.

We're here to help and support you along the way. Our resources and tips are designed to help you organise your business plan and make a lasting impression during the interview. Embrace the challenge and believe in yourself, success is just around the corner!



Client relationships

You may be surprised by the number of client relationships you have when you take the time to reflect and document them.

It will be important to keep track of your billings with each client, the type of work you have done for them, and your role in each matter (second seat or lead role). This information can provide valuable insights for potential law firms and demonstrate the impact you have had on past clients.

It's important to be honest about the level of your relationships when documenting them. Remember, a potential law firm may reach out to these clients as part of their due diligence, so accuracy is key. Embrace this exercise as an opportunity to reflect on your past achievements and see the value you bring to your clients.



Our expert tip

To get the most out of this exercise, we suggest categorising your clients into three groups listed below:

1

Clients you have a strong relationship with, and feel confident in potentially bringing in new business opportunities.

2

Clients you have a more casual relationship with, but see potential for building a deeper connection over time.

3

Clients you have met briefly, but see potential for reconnecting.

Business development

Reflecting on your business development skills is a valuable exercise that can help you grow and succeed in the legal profession.

Take some time to consider your past experiences and successes in business development, and think about what you can bring to a new law firm.

Think about the type of law firm platform that would be best suited to your needs and capabilities to help you establish a strong business case. Consider your future business development strategy and the specific areas of your practice you feel confident in pursuing.

Remember that specialised and niche sector knowledge can be a great asset in attracting clients. Identify the specific area(s) you would like to focus on and consider why clients would choose you over their current law firm.

Think about the specific clients you would like to target and estimate the fee income you could generate in the first two years. Also consider whether your client contacts could generate work for other teams outside of your area of specialisation.

Finally, don't be afraid to reach out to your clients and ask for their input. Ask them which law firms they would be happy to work with if you were to move, and which firms they would prefer to avoid. This information can help you make a more informed decision about your next move. Embrace this exercise as an opportunity to gain valuable insights and chart a clear path towards success.



Partnership presentation

As you embark on the exciting path to partnership, it's important to showcase your skills and strengths in the best possible light.

Preparation is key, and that starts with being confident in your business development strategies, client relationships, and your ability to confidently manage the work you introduce to the firm. In your interview, you have the opportunity to share your unique strengths, experiences, and vision for the future. Be ready to talk about your journey so far and why you want to take the next step in your career. The firm is likely to want to know what sets you apart from others, so be ready to highlight your strengths and accomplishments.

It's also important to be mindful of potential questions that may arise during the interview, such as why you want to leave your current firm, how your clients and colleagues view you, and what you think your current firm may think if you were to resign.

Do your research on the interview panel and take the time to understand their backgrounds, interests,

and preferences. This will help you tailor your presentation and make a lasting impression.

Embrace the interview process as a chance to showcase your skills, passions, and for the firm to see the potential in you to be successful at partner level. With preparation and the right mindset, you can make a confident and compelling case for why you're the ideal candidate.

Examples

- What distinguishes you as a candidate and sets you apart from the existing senior associates/special counsels?
- Please highlight your key strengths and areas for improvement.
- Can you share your experience in leading a matter and discuss the most significant challenges and accomplishments you faced during the process?
- What is the reason for not being offered partnership at your current firm?
- What motivated you to seek partnership opportunities?
- If we were to reach out to your clients for feedback, what do you believe their impression of you would be?
- What is the general perception of you among your colleagues?
- How do you anticipate your current firm would respond if you were to resign from your position?





Other matters to consider

Reflect on your aspirations for your career and consider your management and technical skills.

What level of support do you require from additional team members to achieve the desired results and fees?

Taking a long-term view, consider the potential benefits of waiting one or two years to achieve partnership with a new firm. Most firms will want to evaluate your performance and compatibility before making you a partner, which is not an unreasonable expectation. Why would the new firm consider elevating you when your current firm won't ?

Think about your goals and what kind of firm would align with them, if you are never going to be elevated at your current firm then you should have some flexibility in the timing elsewhere. Consider whether your target is a larger and potentially more demanding firm with higher profits and remuneration or a smaller, less demanding firm with more modest remuneration to reach your goal to become a Partner.



Next steps

When exploring potential law firms to join, it's important to have a clear understanding of your business goals and strategy.

This includes identifying and developing valuable client relationships, and having a practical and honest plan in place.

Taking the time to thoughtfully plan out your business strategy and prepare for interview questions can greatly increase your chances of success. And, remember to remain flexible and open to all opportunities that align with your goals.

Be realistic regarding timing and if in doubt, keep doors open as you never know how interviews pan out. A role with an excellent firm with a two year run into partnership could well be a better bet than an immediate partnership with a lesser quality firm.



How Taylor Root can help

At Taylor Root Partners, we have the expertise to assist in your business planning phase and to work with you to identify the right target firms and opportunities in the market.

If you are interested in looking at your path to partnership, please contact Brad Booth or Aaron Mathieson who specialise in Partner level recruitment.



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About Taylor Root

Taylor Root is a global legal, risk and compliance search and recruitment consultancy.

Forming lasting partnerships with our clients and candidates, we are constantly evolving and continue to shape the world's legal, risk and compliance markets.

We have been shaping the world's legal, risk and compliance markets since 1989.

Wherever we operate we have made an impact, from Düsseldorf to Dubai, New York to Shanghai or Milan to Melbourne. From pioneering specialist recruitment in particular locations, to shaping how our clients have approached hiring, our influence is evident everywhere.

Today, we have 13 international offices – a truly global network of recruitment experts.

Put simply, no one can match our global reach, or our history.



