

Professional Development

At Dykema, we want our associates to set and achieve professional development goals and thrive in their careers. Our associates receive challenging work, direct client contact and a high level of responsibility early in their careers. From the outset, they share fully in our flexible working environment, support systems and other resources we provide for honing their legal skills in their chosen practice areas.

Associates join a practice group when they join the Firm. Each practice group distributes individual work assignments on a largely ad hoc basis, with some supervision to ensure even workloads. An associate typically works with many members in their practice area. We do not assign associates to a particular member, nor do we require that associates rotate from one practice group to another.

We work with each associate to help them set annual practice and professional development goals that encourage a wide variety of experiences, yet are tailored to the individual associate's desires and interests. Training our associates is also a high priority. On-the-job training occurs in daily interaction between members and associates, and the hands-on performance of assignments. This decentralized, practice focused approach for developing our associates in the manner best suited to their needs and areas of concentration.

Through its Professional Development Programs (PDP), Dykema sponsors in-house training programs, workshops and retreats. Some of our programs relate to a specific practice area, while others target associates at a certain seniority level. We also offer client service and business development programs for all associates. Biennially, we host a Mid-Level Associates' Retreat to provide information on managing others, the Firm's finances, the promotion process, career planning and other topics of interest. In alternating years, Senior Attorneys come together for an in-depth Business Development Workshop for information and tools to support them as they increase their focus on business development as they approach consideration for advancement. Finally, we encourage participation in continuing legal education programs outside the Firm.

Our entry-level lawyers participate in a formal development program to make sure they get off to a good start. We invite them to come together at a New Associates' Retreat shortly after they join us to meet each other, hear about Dykema history, management, pro bono opportunities and spend some time with junior and mid-level associates to learn about their experiences. Also, first-year lawyers participate as a group in ongoing professional development meetings during their first year at the Firm. New Associate Programming topics include Professionalism, Time Management for Lawyers, Working with an Administrative Assistant and other matters helpful to new lawyers.

To provide context and focus for the work experiences, training opportunities, and external activities, we provide our associates with a career planning framework and tools beginning when they are mid-level associates. Through an evolving Individual Development Plan and internal and external career planning coaches, all associates are encouraged to set and exceed their personal career goals.

Pro Bono is an important part of being a lawyer at Dykema. Besides fulfilling the professional obligation to give back to society, it can provide skill development opportunities sooner for junior lawyers. For example, the Dykema Trial Institute culminates each year with the Pro Bono Litigation Skills Project, a pro bono project that provides significant oral advocacy opportunity for new litigators to add to their skill development.

Each practice group, team and office has its own practice development budget to support our associates in their marketing efforts. The positive comments we receive from our associates confirm the excellence of our various in-house programs and their contribution to our practice group structure.

Besides providing regular feedback on assignments as they occur, we formally evaluate associates each year. Members and senior associates submit a written review of each associate with whom they have worked, evaluating the associate's work, professional development and long-term prospects with the Firm. These reviews, along with each associate's self-evaluation, are carefully analyzed by the Professional Personnel Committee, and they provide the basis for awarding bonuses and setting compensation. The reviews are then candidly discussed with each associate by members of the Committee in a formal interview. This process gives each associate a realistic, constructive assessment of his or her strengths and weaknesses, suggestions for improvement and guidance on progress toward membership.