

## THE NEW YORK CITY BAR ASSOCIATION

### IT'S THE ASSIGNMENT

Work assignments are the lifeblood of your career, and getting staffed on the choice ones is *key* to your success.

So WHAT are the *choice* assignments? And HOW do *you* get to work on them? Choice assignments are the ones that *you choose*, and getting staffed on them is *within your control*.

Assignments are generally made by the Assigning Partner in your area and assignments are often based on immediate pressures, including the pressure exerted by the partner on the matter. So how can *you* influence this process? By setting your goals, and by establishing relationships with the decision-makers and informing their choices.

**Take these 3 steps, and take control of your assignments and you career:**

1. Identify your choice assignments;
2. Be on the radar of the Assigning Partner when one of your choice assignments comes up; and
3. Develop independent relationships with the partners with whom you'd like to work.

### Identify Your Choice Assignment

Your "choice assignment" has all or some of the following elements – in this order:

**Partner of Choice** – The assignment is on a matter being run by a *Partner of Choice*. A Partner of Choice can be a *high profile* partner at the firm, a *rising star* partner in your Practice of Choice, or any other partner with whom you'd like to work because he/she can further your career goals – the key is for *you to choose*.

**Professional Development** – The work gives you an opportunity to advance your skills set.

**Client Contact** – The assignment presents an opportunity to for you to develop your business development skills.

**Interest** - The matter is interesting to you, whether due to complexity, subject, industry, or otherwise.

### Be The Go-To Associate

The Assigning Partner should think of you when your choice assignment comes up. Here's how you can make this happen:

**Say YES** - Say "yes" often, make yourself available and have a *can-do* attitude.

**It's A Conversation** - Have an ongoing conversation with the Assigning Partner about your goals and skills, and work with him/her on getting staffed on your choice assignments. Express your preference for working with your Partner of Choice, and explain why you offer "value added"—whether due to your educational background, prior work experience, or otherwise.

**Quid Pro Quo** - Whenever you say YES to the Assigning Partner to work on a particularly unattractive matter (think holiday weekend, difficult partner or deadly assignment), mention again your desire to work with your Partner of Choice.

## **Be Known To Your Partner of Choice**

You want your Partner of Choice to choose to work with you, or to at least agree to have you staffed on their matter. These are concrete steps that you can take:

**Talk to Your Partner of Choice** – Establish an independent relationship with your Partner of Choice. Express your interest to him/her in working together, and stay in contact.

**Use Firm Programs** - If your firm has a "shadowing program," ask to shadow your partner. If your firm has a "mentoring program," ask that the partner be your mentor. Caution: no stalking!

**Be Visible** – Offer to write articles or client alerts, participate in seminars, or otherwise gain exposure to your Partner of Choice and develop your own *high profile* in your Practice of Choice.

Yes you CAN manage your career, and you SHOULD!

Article by Eve D. Birnbaum of Eve Birnbaum Associates and Member of the Career Advancement and Management Committee, June 2010.