



INSTITUTE for the ADVANCEMENT
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SURVEY SAYS: EXPERIENCE MATTERS WHEN HIRING NEW LAWYERS

New IAALS Report Offers Insights for Legal Employers and Aims to Close the Employment Gap

DENVER— Many legal employers still rely on criteria like class rank, law school prestige, and law review participation to inform hiring decisions, but how effective are those criteria in making good hires? A study released today by [IAALS](#), the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, finds that when it comes to hiring “the whole lawyer,” experience matters. IAALS’ latest report, [*Hiring the Whole Lawyer: Experience Matters*](#), continues to share insights from a study of more than 24,000 lawyers that promises to inform the way new lawyers are educated and hired.

Last summer, IAALS released the study’s first report, [*The Whole Lawyer and the Character Quotient*](#), which found that the profession values in new lawyers a blend of personal characteristics, professional competencies, and legal skills. This new report reveals the hiring criteria employers believe they could use to identify new lawyers who fit the bill.

“When it comes to hiring, our respondents believe that the best way to hire lawyers with the skills, competencies, and characteristics they desire is to hire based on experience,” explained Alli Gerkman, Director of [*Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers*](#), who manages the project. “This gives legal employers an opportunity to improve their hiring outcomes and suggests that law schools should continue to create experience-based opportunities for their students.”

“Clients are clamoring for excellence in their lawyers. Today, the ‘whole lawyer’ is our pursuit—demonstrating excellence in academics and in real world experience” says [Mark A. Nadeau](#), Phoenix Managing Partner and National Chair for the Business and Commercial Litigation Group of [DLA Piper](#), a firm that provides financial support to IAALS and contributed expertise to the development of Foundations for Practice. “IAALS’ latest Foundations for Practice report offers every legal employer a competitive advantage in understanding and invoking a system to seek out the whole lawyer.”

IAALS’ nationwide survey of more than 24,000 lawyers suggests that hiring practices should concentrate more specifically on criteria rooted in experience, including legal employment, recommendations from practitioners or judges, legal externships, participation in law school clinics, and other experiential education to ensure new hires have the competencies that legal employers say that they actually value.

With support from [The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#) and [Access Group](#), and in partnership with state bar organizations, IAALS administered the survey and collected a treasure trove of data that tell countless stories about what lawyers think new graduates need to be successful hires. All of the data is publicly searchable through the [project's website](#).

Only 23% of practicing lawyers believe new lawyers have sufficient skills to practice. The Foundations for Practice project was designed to identify the foundations entry-level lawyers need, to identify models of legal education that work toward those outcomes, and to align hiring practices with market needs. The survey we distributed in 37 states resulted in more than 24,000 valid responses from lawyers across the country. Foundations for Practice aims to close the gap between school and career; between credentials and capabilities; and between thinking like a lawyer and becoming one.

Hiring the Whole Lawyer: Experience Matters follows the mid-2016 release of *The Whole Lawyer and the Character Quotient*, which revealed that new lawyers succeed when they are “whole lawyers” and possess a combination of characteristics, competencies, and legal skills (collectively, “foundations”).

About IAALS’ Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers Initiative

The legal market is changing, and legal employers and members of the profession are increasingly calling on law schools to change the way they educate lawyers. Meanwhile, more information, data, and resources are being developed to help law schools and legal educators improve their programs and demonstrate greater value to students and to the profession. *Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers* is at that intersection, bringing the profession and law schools together to solve the challenges before us.

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