

I WISH I'D KNOWN



Without full engagement, you won't learn all that there is to learn.



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I wish I'd known that sometimes there's only so far you can get observing or studying by yourself; you must engage. Without full engagement, you won't learn all that there is to learn or contribute all that you have to contribute. I always knew that if I didn't show up to try new experiences, I might miss opportunities to see things that I might want to see, learn things that I might want to learn, do things that I might enjoy doing. So I showed up whenever I could, but it took me some time to learn what was required beyond knowing my stuff once I arrived.

Engagement is as much about learning how to ask the right questions as it is about getting to the right result. After you have accepted a tough new assignment or job, seek out those who have gone before you and ask them: "What do you wish you knew the first time you did this job?" "What mistakes did you make?" "What are the different interests that we need to address?" "What do think we could have done better?"

You also need to understand your strengths and be comfortable enough with your value to articulate your concerns and point of view. I wish I'd spent time examining my own strengths and learning that they were not to be found on the checklist of grades,

extracurricular activities, or first jobs that I believed to be so important when I was a law student. You'll spend significant amounts of time in school and beyond examining others' opinions and strengths; you owe it to yourself to spend as much time refining your own.

Finally, I wish I had known to relax, that the road to mastery is a long one. While you are expected to fully prepare and competently handle your assignments, you are rarely expected to know everything (not many people do). You are going to keep learning, adjusting, and improving. Your value lies in the unique set of strengths that you bring to each project. The sooner you engage in preparation beyond the traditional studying that school will teach you, the sooner you'll find yourself ready for new challenges.

