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Experience-Focused 3L Year Could Help New Lawyers in Their Careers

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The Young Lawyer Editorial Board of *The American Lawyer* [recently called out](#) a growing disconnect between the skills and training law students are receiving and the tasks new lawyers are asked to complete in practice.

For example, new lawyers today are often asked to manage both teams and deadline schedules. They are expected to be financially and technologically literate and also constantly networking. New lawyers also expected to take the lead on important documents and matters early in their careers. However, the Board argues that today's typical law school curriculum does not always cover all these important areas.



(Our [Foundations for Practice](#) study, which surveyed 24,000 lawyers across the country, also found the following [skills necessary for new lawyers](#) upon entering the profession: [working cooperatively and collaboratively as a team](#); [learning and using relevant technologies correctly](#); [documenting and organizing a case](#); and [drafting pleadings, motions, and briefs](#). However, understanding accounting and financial principles/arrangements was identified as an advantageous skill new lawyers can learn over time).

The Board recommends some changes at the law school level to help fill these knowledge and experience gaps. In direct opposition to calls to eliminate the third year of law school, the Board calls for schools to make the 3L year more meaningful by increasing the amount of group work and clinical experiences. Some of its recommendations for the third year include more collaborative clinic experiences; required practical skills classes, such as accounting and software training; grades that are earned in part by demonstrating group work; and an emphasis on mentorship in law school and beyond. It acknowledges some schools that are already making progress in these areas.

And, there are more ways that new lawyers can help themselves meet employer expectations as they begin their careers. The Board encourages new lawyers to make mindful employment decisions in the first few years of their careers so that they are learning the practical skills they need to land their dream job. New lawyers should also choose CLEs and other classes based on the skills and knowledge they will learn, not the convenience of the class' hours or location. Finding a mentor and opportunities to shadow more senior coworkers are also key to a new lawyer's success.

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