

# **The Culturally Savvy Associate: Top Three Tips for Moving Up in a Global Economy**

**By Janet H. Moore**

Transactions across time zones and cultures are commonplace—and not just for experienced international lawyers. So how does an associate prepare to thrive in this increasingly global environment? Here are three tips for how to propel your career forward amidst globalization.

## **1. Develop Flexibility and Versatility**

As globalization spreads, law firms will increasingly prize associates who are adaptable and flexible enough to work in many areas. As David Morley, worldwide managing partner of Allen & Overy, told *TheLawyer.com* last October, "[W]e need to develop versatile lawyers capable of working in more than one discipline."

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't develop a specialty. It's still important to develop an area of expertise in which you can become your firm's "go-to" person, making yourself indispensable. It does mean, though, that you should develop a broad enough skills set to be able to accept assignments across disciplines—cross-training, if you like. This will allow you to adapt better to market fluctuations. It will also give you a broader understanding of legal issues and help you devise more creative and effective legal solutions.

## **2. Become a Generalist in International Issues**

The best-equipped lawyers in a global economy have an understanding of what is happening around the world—including current events, business trends and legal issues—while still cultivating a special practice niche. To start, regularly reading publications like the *Economist*, the *Financial Times* and the *International Herald Tribune* will help you deepen your global perspective.

Globally sophisticated associates also understand enough about different areas of the law—both domestic and foreign—to be able to spot relevant issues and call in support from a specialist when needed. While this may seem a daunting task, you can glean a lot by working (directly or indirectly) on matters with international aspects—and those legal matters are rapidly increasing in number.

Associates wanting to succeed amidst globalization also become familiar with foreign legal concepts. For example, if you were trained in the common law system, you need an overview of civil law principles. Reading law school textbooks or articles on

international business transactions, international arbitration and litigation, international trade and the like will introduce you to some basic concepts. You might also attend some continuing legal education conferences on these topics. Remember, the goal is to understand enough to spot relevant issues—not to become an expert in every area.

### **3. Practice Cross-Cultural Client Development**

Culturally savvy associates also become adept at client development across cultures. Many seasoned lawyers never bother to cultivate these skills. As our economy (and the resulting legal work) becomes more global, however, cross-cultural acumen will increasingly be prized.

Learn to develop good rapport with people from different cultures. Opportunities to do this abound—whether through alumni groups, intercultural organizations or everyday life. There are many good books and resources on cross-cultural communication (including the resources listed at [www.internationallawyercoach.com](http://www.internationallawyercoach.com)).

Personal branding also impacts rainmaking success when building connections with people from other cultures. How you dress, talk, communicate with clients, and produce work product all contribute to your personal brand. For the sake of all your rainmaking efforts, try to eradicate negative traits (such as habitual tardiness) that tarnish your brand. Instead, showcase attributes that strengthen your brand—especially those that make you more marketable in a global environment. For example, perhaps you speak—but rarely use—a foreign language. Polish your language skills and let clients and co-workers know about your proficiency.

Culturally savvy associates are best positioned to rise in our global economy. Implement these strategies and watch your star rise.