



Davis, Polk & Wardwell

[Jefferson Byrd]

Built on a sturdy foundation of prominence and tradition, this collegial firm seeks out only America's most amicable attorneys.

As one of the oldest law firms in the United States, Davis, Polk & Wardwell maintains the prestige of being responsible for incorporating General Electric and overseeing J.P. Morgan's international expansion, but Davis Polk also prides itself on being New York's friendliest firm.

Good grades from a top-tier school might be enough to get an attorney an interview with Davis Polk, but stellar credentials are not enough to secure a position. A candidate's personality is the most significant factor in whether or not her or she can find a home with Davis Polk. The firm takes its standing as a friendly law firm seriously, only considering attorneys who fit the high standards of cordiality the firm has set. Strong communication skills are a prerequisite. At some New York firms, an attorney might expect to be offered a position when the firm calls them back in after the initial interview. Prospective Davis Polk attorneys go through a series of interviews with partners and lunch dates with associates before a decision is reached.

Although the firm has offices in Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London, Paris, and Tokyo, their foreign offices are staffed by American attorneys. It is generally lawyers from the firm's New York headquarters that are sent abroad, with junior associates typically spending six months in a foreign office. Consequently, foreign language skills are a definite bonus for an applicant. Once onboard as an associate, many find it difficult to make partner. Most, however, do not seem to mind, since the firm has enviable exit options. Training is an important aspect of life at Davis Polk, with

top-notch training programs available, even for mid- and senior-level associates.

For the last three years, the firm has ranked number one on *The American Lawyer's* A-list of elite U.S. firms, which rates financial performance, pro bono activity, associate satisfaction and lawyer diversity. In 2003, Davis Polk handled \$130 billion in M&A transactions, making it one of the top three M&A firms in the world. Representing Comcast, Davis Polk managed the \$53 billion acquisition of AT&T. The firm also assisted in the \$45 billion Chevron/Texaco and \$81 billion Exxon/Mobil mergers. Davis Polk was behind Chase Manhattan's acquisition of J.P. Morgan, which created the world's second biggest bank, with over \$650 billion in assets.

The firm's litigation practice, which includes securities litigation, antitrust law and products liability, is equally impressive. Most of the firm's litigators clerked for state and federal judges, and eleven clerked for the Supreme Court. Voted *The American Lawyer's* best litigation practice in 2002, Davis Polk's white collar criminal practice is home to some of the most notable defense attorneys in America. They represented Arthur Andersen in the government's Enron investigation, along with ImClone and Martha Stewart in their insider trading trials.

Repeatedly singled out in recognition of their considerable pro bono work, Davis Polk averages 39,000 hours of pro bono activity a year, 63 hours per attorney. Dedicated to improving schools in low-income communities, the firm mentors high school kids and sponsors

the Public School Reform Project. They fund a permanent fellowship for battered women's legal service and offer counsel to the families of firefighters who perished on September 11th. Davis Polk has received awards from the Minority Corporate Counsel Association for its work increasing racial diversity in the profession, and Columbia University for its efforts in political asylum law. Davis Polk also launched probono.net, which provides information for lawyers seeking pro bono work. Furthermore, any fees acquired from pro bono work are donated to charity.

Davis Polk's culture is undeniably traditional, which does not always translate as stuffy. The environment can be relaxed when the workload is light. Since they have a large concentration of pro bono work, the firm has no minimum billable hours requirements. Attorneys work between 45 and 65 hours a week on average, and partners usually respect the associates' weekend freedom. Although proud of their staid reputation, the firm is thoroughly modern. Since 1995, the firm has followed the trend of asking associates to contribute to the partners' compensation reviews. Associates write reviews of partner performances, which are used in determining partner bonuses. On every other floor of their New York headquarters is a Starbucks, furnishing free coffee. Staying abreast of technology, all Davis Polk attorneys get a Blackberry for wireless email.

Jobs

Davis, Polk & Wardwell currently has several openings in New York, including opportuni-



ties for experienced corporate, tax, and trusts and estates associates. More information regarding attorney positions at Davis, Polk & Wardwell can be found in the LawCrossing job database.