



## Lauren Prevost: Doing one's homework and the myth of a "calling"

[by Teresa Talerico]

In the age of the Internet and information overload, there's no excuse for job seekers to be unprepared. Candidates who don't do their homework about potential employers stick out like a sore thumb. Lauren Prevost, partner in charge of law school recruiting at Morris, Manning and Martin in Atlanta, advises applicants to take advantage of all the resources available to them.

"There's really no reason why law students can't have a fairly good understanding of a law firm and the people they're meeting," Ms. Prevost said. "Most students do that. Most students come in very well-prepared. So when you have one or two that don't, it really shows."

A 1991 graduate of the University of North Carolina Law School, Ms. Prevost specializes in securities and corporate financing with a real estate emphasis.

**Q: What's one thing law schools don't teach, but should?**

A: They don't teach law students that even if they may have worked hard and had great accomplishments in the three years of law school, they really enter the practice cold, novices. For a lot of folks, the first year of practicing is actually kind of depressing. They feel like they worked very hard in their law school years and then they don't have much to show for it because they have such a steep learning curve in the very beginning. If I could, I would ask all of our law schools to prepare students for that learning curve. Certainly in years 1 to 3 right out of law school, there's a great deal of learning that needs to be done.

**Q: When you were in law school, did you already know you wanted to do corporate finance and securities law?**

A: Not at all. When I was in law school, I was sure I was going to be a litigator. Like many people, once I got out in the practice of law, I

found there were several areas that interested me, that there were a number of things I could do with my degree.

Most law schools do a very good job preparing young litigators. It's a little more difficult to prepare transactional lawyers or non-litigator lawyers just because of the nature of what we do. The Socratic method of teaching is very much geared toward a litigation-advocacy kind of practice. It's impossible for people in the law school environment to really get a taste for how broad our practice really is.

That's why I think summer associate programs are helpful if students can find a position in a firm that has a variety of practice areas. Then they have an opportunity to sample and observe and they might find they have interests a lot broader than they originally thought.

**Q: Is that typical for most lawyers? Your interests evolve after law school?**

A: I think that's exactly right. A lot of our law students, when they're clerking for us, find their path through trial and error. Very few people have a "calling" and know exactly what they want to do while they're in school. Some people think you're supposed to know what you want to do before you step into law school. I think it's really more of a process of elimination, seeing how your skills and interests align with the different practice areas a law firm might offer.

A lot of people find that they select certain

courses in law school because they really like the law professor. It might not be an area they would initially think they have a great interest in, but because they had the professor in another class and really liked him or her, they signed up for other classes because of the personality of that teacher. That can be a similar experience once a student is in a law firm and gravitates towards an area of practice because they really enjoy or admire the people they're working with.

**Q: Did anyone inspire you to become an attorney?**

I think I was inspired by my grandfather who was a gentleman lawyer in North Carolina many years ago. He was a tax attorney. It seemed to me like a genteel profession seeing my grandfather do it.

**Q: Any advice for new associates?**

Don't be afraid to let somebody know if you are struggling. If you've taken on a project and you feel like you're in over your head, the lawyer (in charge of) the project would much rather have the person come to them and have a dialogue rather than having the person spinning their wheels and wasting all kinds of time and energy heading down a path that wasn't originally requested. Asking questions and feeling confident that you can get further clarity on what you're being asked to do can go a long way.