



Episode 124: Don't Be a Jerk at Work (with Sadie Jones)

Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today we're talking with ex-recruiter, Sadie Jones, about how not to be a jerk at work. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess -- that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website, [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a [review](#) on iTunes, and if you have any questions don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form on lawschooltoolbox.com](#), and we'd love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today we are talking about how not to be a jerk in your law firm office environment with our special guest, Sadie Jones, who's a former BigLaw recruiter. Hi, Sadie. Thanks for joining us.

Sadie Jones: Hi, thanks for having me back.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, it kind of seems like a funny thing to talk about when I was trying to come with the title for this episode, and that's pretty much as good as it got, but lawyers do have a terrible reputation when it comes to being nice and considerate in the office both to people they work with and also people outside of the office. Lawyers often have reputations of being jerks to other lawyers. Is this something you saw in your BigLaw life?

Sadie Jones: I have to say it is, and some of it just seems like common sense stuff, and I would be surprised at some of the behavior. I think that probably the reason is because people are stressed out, and I think that they're taking things out on people. They're spending most of their time with people at work and in the office, and I think sometimes they act differently than they would at home or to other people. I think that you should just be mindful when you're in the office that these are your colleagues, some of them are your friends, they're people that work for you, they're your bosses and they are seeing your behavior, and it all kind of is something that they're taking in.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's so hard because I've worked in two kind of corporate environments that are similar to each other. Before law school, I was a consultant at Accenture, and then after law school I had a big firm job, and these work environments are somewhat similar. You often have folks who are working crazy hours. At Accenture, we also traveled together, which totally changed the work environment as well, and these folks were basically the people we spent all of our time with. It can be hard to remember that you have a professional

relationship when you are spending most of your social outings together, if you're traveling together for work. I know folks talk about being on trial teams where you can be relocated for a long period of time. So, you want to be nice and kind to these folks for many reasons, but one is they become a large part of your life and they're meaningful relationships. You have to balance that with the requirements to stay professional because those relationships still have boundaries, because they are professional relationships.

Sadie Jones: I think you should keep in mind ... 'cause there's always a hierarchy in law firms. Do people work for you? Do you work for other people even if you're friends with them? So, I think even if you're friends with let's say a junior associate and you're more senior, they can take what you're saying and think that it has more meaning than it might.

Lee Burgess: That's a good point.

Sadie Jones: So, I would always keep that in mind ... or even your secretary, legal assistant -- something like that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. All right, well, let's start it, then, to the beginning of this process -- this like entry into the law firm world -- which is really the interview process. So, I'm sure that you saw some jerk-like behaviors during the interview process.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Lee Burgess: But a few that I have seen is this idea of being too pushy. There's that fine line between confidence and wanting the job, but then crossing over to pushy, maybe even slightly annoying, so where do you think that line is? What do folks need to consider in that?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think I would see it a lot of times with follow-up, 'cause they hadn't heard back, or even trying to get an interview in the first place, let's say like at a hospitality suite. So, I think you want to express your interest. You want to make sure that it's clear you really like this firm. If you haven't heard back, I think an email, a phone call, a follow-up is fine. I think leave it there. Let's say two or three weeks go by, maybe another email, but I wouldn't be following up very often. They probably are busy. They haven't forgotten about you. They're probably trying to figure things out. So, I think once you feel confident that you've expressed your interest just back off.

Lee Burgess: I think that's such a good point, and I really didn't fully appreciate this until owning my own company and going through hiring is this idea that sometimes hiring is not the only thing you have going on, and you're trying to do hiring, you're trying to stay on top of the resumes, you're trying to get back to people quickly because you know that people are considering next choices in their life. But sometimes fire drills happen, or other things come up and then you find yourself dropping the ball. I now appreciate that that can happen really

unintentionally. So, it's not that you're not thinking about the hiring process, that you're not trying to move it forward, but everybody's super busy, and I think keeping that idea that it's probably not about you, it's more about whatever they have going on, can help you just moderate your excitement about getting more information, I guess.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I also think the part of it that you don't really know is who else is involved in the process, even though the person you're dealing with ... you don't know that they're waiting to hear back from a hiring partner about something, or they have another candidate and they're trying to interview them and compare you. When people don't get jobs, I always say, "You don't know what the other person's qualifications were, and maybe they were a better fit." It's kind of the unknown, and it can be hard for people. So, I think ... Yeah, I think the advice is it's not usually about you, even though for you this job might be the most important thing going on right now.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, which we totally get, but it is really hard. Hiring is a lot harder than I thought it was until I ended up doing it I guess.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. It's just a lot of different things to balance.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and you're often balancing multiple people's schedules. I think that that is something that I didn't fully realize until I worked in a busy office environment. Even if you've already done all your interviewing, sometimes somebody's trying to get on a more important, busier person's schedule to even talk to them about your interview, you know?

Sadie Jones: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Exactly.

Lee Burgess: So, that can be even part of it, is it's not about you, it's literally trying to get a half hour in front of somebody who's traveling, or busy, or cancels meetings all the time. So, it's just something to keep in mind and make sure that in your responses or your follow-ups that you're just respectful, that you appreciate that they have a lot going on, but you're just checking in and you're still excited about the opportunity.

Sadie Jones: Because I do think this also a situation where you can become an issue for yourself if you're following up too much 'cause maybe they're not sure, or maybe they are trying to do that. It could end up making you look bad and you lose the opportunity because of your behavior after, so just keep that in mind.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's a good point. But we still like a good thank you note, right? Thank you notes are always welcome.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I would say be careful. I would read it over a few times. I think people don't always think to proof thank you notes 'cause that is also something

that can be a ding. I know we almost passed on someone because her thank you note was so poorly written.

Lee Burgess: Oh, interesting.

Sadie Jones: I don't really know what happened.

Lee Burgess: Oh, and double-check the spelling of people's names. That is also a big one.

Sadie Jones: Definitely.

Lee Burgess: Yes, especially ... We have a company where we have Alison with one "L", so if you were writing a thank you note to Alison and me, you would want to make sure that her name had one "L" in it, and don't spell my name, L-E-I-G-H because-

Sadie Jones: I was just going to say Lee can probably be spelt a few different ways.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. It's important to double-check because if you're that interested in the job, you have googled and confirmed how to spell my name.

Sadie Jones: I also think that something that's important in the whole interviewing process is to send thank you's to everyone that you talked to. Even if you're doing a mock interview, or a courtesy interview, or somebody has coffee with you, follow-up. Tell them you appreciate their time if they're just doing you a favor. I think really think about everyone you deal with, not just the people in the office who you're directly getting a job with.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's a really good piece of advice. Oh, other things not to comment on ... going back to this idea of googling people to make sure you know who they are, I am not a huge fan when I get emails or I get on a call with somebody, and they say something like, "Oh, I didn't expect you to be a woman," which I realize I have a gender ambiguous name and I get that, but google me. Just google me before a phone call. If you're talking about how interested you are in my business and how impressed you are by the work that I do, that means that you've probably seen my face, which is all over my website, or you have listened to the podcast, which I realize that you can't always tell gender from a voice, but I think we've talked about the fact that we're women mostly on this podcast.

But it kind of can dilute your message, right, because if I get an email from somebody who says he's so excited ... It's oftentimes a man, but some ... Yes, it's only happened to me from men, I'll be honest, who talks about how surprised he is that I'm a woman, then it's clear to me that you haven't invested literally the two seconds on your phone before you sent the email to google my name. If you google my name, I come up and then there's like a photographer or musician or something in Atlanta who I recognize is a gentlemen, but we're very different people. I'm sure you can figure it out.

Sadie Jones: I'm surprised anyone would make that comment regardless.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I mean, I got it when I was interviewing for jobs and I was much younger, and that was pre-Google. People would get my resume, and then they would be surprised when I walked in the door, which was always a unique moment. You're like, "I'm not exactly sure how to take that. Good surprise, bad surprise? I don't know."

Sadie Jones: And I agree that just doing some basic background info on anyone who could impact you is important. You should never walk into a law firm interview and not know what practice areas they have or with the person, unless they sprung it on you last minute and there was a change you didn't know. You should know what they've done, are there any recent, big cases in the news. Really, there's no excuse for not doing a little bit of research.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. If you want the job that badly, show them you want the job.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: Now, the next thing I think to watch out is to not be too cocky in the interview, that confidence and cockiness ... fine line, fine line to not cross over.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think it is one of those things you sort of know it when you see it on our side of things where somebody has crossed that line.

Lee Burgess: I did have someone once try to accept a job that I hadn't offered yet. That was an interesting interview moment. I was like, "Wow. I'm really glad you're so interested in this position, but we have a few more steps to go in this interview process," so that was interesting. You do just have to make sure that the way that you're communicating your excitement is humbly, I guess.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think along those lines, I have seen people say things like, "When I'm a summer associate," or, "When I work here," ... I would always be careful, just saying, "If."

Lee Burgess: Right.

Sadie Jones: Keep it ... You don't know that you're going to get this position, and I think that just goes along with just being respectful and not asking for too much, and not ... We had some people who ... the NALP guidelines say that you get X, Y, or Z covered in your expenses, and I think I have people who kind of go beyond that and ask for other things or try to charge things to the firm that they're not allowed to, even on hotel bills -- crazy amounts of room service -- all that kind of stuff. I feel like that all goes with, "Shouldn't you want me and pay for all this," and what not. So, I think you always just want to keep in mind ... I would say kind of lie a little under the radar.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and that doesn't mean that you can't be confident about your own qualifications. I would say that in some interviews, I was very confident about previous experience, if they challenged me on something to try and turn ... I remember I was in one interview, as an example, where they were trying to bait me and do a dialogue about why I had changed jobs a few times since college, and it was like a litigation firm, so they were baiting me in a rude way. The hiring room was a whole panel of people in a "U" shape, and then they sat you in a seat at the end. It was all very bizarrely constructed to make you feel weak, and in an environment like that I was always very confident in my answers, and so I think you don't want to say, "Oh, well, I need to play down my accomplishments." I think it's more just like you are accomplished, but you are also humbled to have this opportunity. It's kind of like those things together.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think some of it depends on your experience level, too. I had somebody recently ask me, who had just finished his first year of practice, he was interviewing ... "What should I talk about?" And I said, "I feel like there's a fine line between 'I've work on this this year. I've learned things, but I realize I'm a junior associate and I have a lot to learn,'" and I don't think that makes you look bad. So, I think kind of don't overplay your role on things, just be honest.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think being honest is another really good point through your entire career is not lying about your accomplishments or taking credit for other people's things. Definitely a good policy to have.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Lee Burgess: All right, so now you've made-

Sadie Jones: Also-

Lee Burgess: Oh, go ahead.

Sadie Jones: Oh, I was just going to say you also don't want to get in over your head. If you say that you're able to do something, and then they put you in front of it, you're going to be stuck.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah. Okay, so, now you're a summer associate or a young associate, and you're now the bottom of the food chain in the law firm. I think there are a few different ways that you can fall into some pitfalls at work, and one if often, especially with folks who don't have a lot of work experience, is how they interact with support staff, with legal assistants, with receptionists, with paralegals, all of which who might know a lot more about the practice of law at that law firm than you do because you just got there.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and so you really want to make sure that you're coming off as respectful of their experience, and oftentimes you want to make friends with them because they can really help you. There were many times when I was a young associate that I went up to my legal assistant and was like, "Hi. I was given this assignment to do this, and I have no idea what I'm actually supposed to do as far as creating this document, so is that something that you help me with?" And she's like, "If you write the text, I will finish it." I'm like, "You're amazing. Thank you, because I didn't know the next part. I needed that," and so being nice to support staff, bonding with them. They are likely also going to help you in your career if you feel like you're all on the same team, so a cup of coffee with support staff can go a long way.

A nice little trinket around the holidays for folks that you work with can also be really nice, but you do want to make sure that you are interacting with the staff that work at that firm in a positive way because they also oftentimes have the ears of the partners and the folks that have been there a long time, and you want them saying nice things about you and how great you are to work with, not the alternative.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think some of the more senior partners would be upset to find out that a new associate or a new summer associate was not treating a secretary right or a legal assistant, and that really could hurt you. I think people aren't aware of that, that the people who have been there a long time know who's important and who's going to help you. So, I think, yeah, just come in humbly, and a lot of the legal assistants maybe have been doing this for 20 or 30 years, and they know just as much as a junior associate about how to do some of these tasks. They might even have more information about how to get something done. I think the other thing is you may be working late with these people. You're going to be spending a lot of time together. You don't want to be the person that people are talking about.

Lee Burgess: No, and they do talk to each other because I actually also had support staff tell me about something nice they said about me, which was very sweet, but then you kind of have that moment of like, "Oh, so you all have been talking about us." We were all like associate ... actually, I think we were summers, but clearly, they were all just chatting about the summers and ...

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I know that at least at one of the firms that I worked at, we would solicit feedback just generally about summer associates before offers at the end. Not all firms do that, but we really did take it into account, and I did have people tell me negative things, and some things we wouldn't have known, you know?

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: So, I think keep that in mind. Everyone there is watching you and this is a job interview if you're a summer associate.

Lee Burgess: It is, and you have to think about a lot of things that you do and the persona that you're putting together. So, for instance, it's possible that I have a bit of a potty mouth for most of my life, except around my kid -- I really try and dial it back. So, it's not as bad as it used to be, but at work you want to choose your words carefully because some language can be offensive to those at work, especially when you're a summer, you want to maybe dial it back because ... unless you have a partner that is dropping F-bombs all over the place, that could be offensive and that is something that could be shared with folks that could get back to the hiring committee 'cause they might be concerned that you might do something offensive to a client. So, as much as I enjoy a good F-bomb here and there, I think it might be something you want to really temper at the office until you figure out the lay of the land, so to speak.

Sadie Jones: That's what I was going to say. Once you kind of get to know people and you see different personalities and what's okay with this person or that person, you might get a little more comfortable, but I think absolutely at the beginning you don't want to stand out for things like that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You also want to be nice to your other associates or summer associates even if you feel like you're in direct competition because it gets weird if people feel like someone's talking behind their back, or, like you mentioned, taking credit for work that wasn't theirs, or is trying to be the most impressive over somebody else. Not good. You want to be the team player. I don't think that kind of competition is going to get rewarded.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I know not all firms do this, but sometimes we would have group projects. It's hard to evaluate a group project, which is why we didn't do it, but occasionally we would. I think if you're in that situation, really think about, what am I contributing? Am I doing half the work?" Make sure you're not slacking off in a situation like that. I also think ultimately, you're not really in competition against the other people. Most firms, unless they tell you at the beginning there's like "X" number of offers, which is pretty unusual these days, I would say everyone starts with an offer. You can lose it. So, it's not like that person getting an offer hurts you, you know? Keep your eyes on your own paper.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that's a good point. Yeah, there's enough to worry about your own performance, let alone trying to worry about anybody else's performance.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Speaking of performances, please do not make your performance at the social events for the firm as a summer or a young associate -- things that are also discussed by everyone at the firm -- which means you got to watch the drinking. Drinking is a really tough one, and I think you have to know a lot about yourself and how you handle alcohol to make sure that you're able to navigate drinking at social work functions in a positive way.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I had someone say you really shouldn't have more than two drinks at a work event, especially when you're a summer associate. I think that is a pretty good rule.

Lee Burgess: Isn't that a matchmaker rule, too? That you're not supposed to have more than two drinks on a first date.

Sadie Jones: Yes. I might have heard of that there also, like "Millionaire Matchmaker".

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Not that we spend a lot of time watching Bravo or something.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think it's a good rule because ... You know what? I get it. It's free alcohol, and sometimes you're friends with people and you're having a good time. You know what? Do it later. Do it another time. You don't need to do it there.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: The other advice I have is that a lot of these events you can bring a guest or a date, be careful of them also.

Lee Burgess: True.

Sadie Jones: Because they're there, too, and I can tell you that I had somebody's date once tell me that they didn't really want to work at the firm.

Lee Burgess: Ooh, brutal.

Sadie Jones: They shared that with me without me soliciting the information, and it really was an issue because ... I mean, yeah, this person had drunk too much and I think didn't realize that I was really part of this process of hiring. But, yeah, think about, one, who you're bringing, their behavior, things they're saying. Remind them that this is your potential employer. Or it might be a Christmas party when you're an associate, so that person is a reflection on you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think that that's a really good point. You can still have a lot of fun without getting sloshed, so just save it for the after party without the rest of your work peers.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: But I know, as a summer, it can get really hard and you're going to a lot of events, and a lot of those events can really be about alcohol, so it can be hard to moderate, but I think for almost all of us it's a good idea to just set ... I find it really easy to just set rules for yourself. I like this idea, it's like just have two drinks, or if you're a big drinker just have three drinks. Whatever is your limit of where you think before you speak, you don't say silly thing, I think that should

be where your line is drawn, and then you can use other times to party and have a good time.

Sadie Jones: Well, and I think ... and these social events are important, so I definitely suggest that you go to all of them, or as many as you possibly can because it is their chance to kind of get to know you as a person, which is nice, but you don't want their impression to be, "She drinks too much."

Lee Burgess: Right. "She drinks too much and says inappropriate things."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Exactly. "She doesn't really want to work here."

Lee Burgess: Right. I hadn't thought about the significant other saying something inappropriate, but now I'm like oh.

Sadie Jones: It's happened a lot actually.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I bet it could.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, actually ... I was at a work event for another friend who didn't ... He doesn't practice law. He's an investment banker, hedge fund person. I was in Manhattan at something else, and they invited me to this thing that was at the firm because it was overlooking Central Park. They're just like, "Come over. Eat some free food. Have a couple of glasses of wine," and I'm talking to his wife and we're just chatting because we're friends back from San Francisco, and I'm like, "Oh, so you guys were talking about moving back. Are you planning on moving back?" And then she literally was like, "You realize we're at my husband's work function. I cannot talk about this right now," and I was like, "Oh, I'm such a jerk. I'm so sorry," but it didn't even dawn on me 'cause you're just having a glass of wine looking out over Central Park, and it wasn't my work function. But I'm like, "Whoops. Party foul," and that was probably glass of wine number one, so just throwing that out there.

Sadie Jones: So, maybe that's your limit.

Lee Burgess: Maybe. Oh, yeah. I think another thing that people often forget, especially when they feel like they're on this kind of interview, which could be the summer associate time or even as a young associate, is that it's not always about what you say, it's also about kind of listening to other people and not just being the person who talks about themselves all the time. I think you can come off as a jerk if you do that.

Sadie Jones: Yes. I do think ... I mean, it's a stereotype, but I've noticed that lawyers sometimes can spend a lot of time kind of talking about themselves, especially if you're used to doing a lot of interviews and having to give your story, I think,

over and over again. But I think people really do appreciate when you ask questions and really listen to the answer, you know? People notice that. "Oh, she's interested," you know?

Lee Burgess: Right. Not checking your phone, looking at somebody. I have a friend who's the most incredible listener ever. She currently has been working as a Chaplin in a hospital, doing spiritual guidance for people in crisis, which is amazing work. But even before she was doing that work, when you go out to dinner with her, I feel like I'm the only person she's talking to in the world.

Sadie Jones: It's amazing.

Lee Burgess: It's amazing, and I'm like we should all be so focused. She's just one of these people that is right there. You don't necessarily have to be that intensely focused, but it does make you as the talker feel so kind of warm and connected when somebody's really paying attention to what you're talking about.

Sadie Jones: Yep. I think the other thing people sometimes do is kind of ... Someone tells a story, and then you try to tell a story that either tops it or is like your thing. Keep it about them if they're talking.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Sadie Jones: I think it's human nature that we do that. The other thing is the phone. People ... it's just the way it is right now, but be really careful when you're a summer associate, a young associate. You're in training, don't keep your phone on the desk. You're getting an assignment from someone ... I had someone actually who was let go from a job because that was one of the issues, that he was on his phone literally getting an assignment from a partner.

Lee Burgess: Wow. Yeah, that's bad.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I mean, it wasn't the only reason, but I think people notice that stuff that builds up, like, "You're not listening to me."

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's interesting, I recently got this phone case for my phone that has one of the flaps that protects from radiation 'cause I'm kind of freaked out about that, but it's one that ... it's got a cover, like a flap on it, and what's shocking to me is when I got this cover and I couldn't see my phone all the time because it was behind this cover. I touched it less. It was so bizarre. I just realized how doing something simple like putting it in a bag or covering it up ... it could still be there if somebody's ringing 'cause there's an emergency -- you will still be reached -- but you're not just constantly touching it all the time. It was really such a small thing that made a big difference, so maybe get a new phone case. It could change your life. Who knows?

Sadie Jones: We're all a little addicted, I think.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think we are.

Sadie Jones: Also, no one's that important they need to be checking their email every five minutes.

Lee Burgess: That is true. That is absolutely true. All right, what about work email and Messenger at the office? I feel like this can be a place where a lot of pitfalls can happen.

Sadie Jones: Yes. I would be careful. So, this is what I think that, most likely, no one is checking your emails, and no one is checking your Messenger, and no one ever will, right?

Lee Burgess: Right.

Sadie Jones: But there are situations where something could come up where they will go back and check all your emails, like there's an issue and they have the right to do that. So, I think the best rule is just don't use it for personal stuff. Don't use it for gossiping. I think it's easy to do that especially with Messenger, if that's what you're on. You can do it with your personal. You can do it in another form.

Lee Burgess: Text.

Sadie Jones: I think like ... Yeah. Keep that off of your work stuff because-

Lee Burgess: WhatsApp.

Sadie Jones: Yes. Or, yeah, G-Chat, like something else. But I think that you have to keep in mind that legally they can check it at some time, and do you really want someone going through your emails and finding bad things in there, negative things about other people at the office, things that are inappropriate. It's just a good rule to keep it separate.

Lee Burgess: And really what drives this home is the first time you do a document review of somebody's email because ... I remember sitting at my first doc review, and you're reading emails that somebody wrote to the person they were having an affair with, you're reading emails about people searching for their homes to buy, to get a new home, you're reading discussions between spouses about things all on work email that was discoverable in a case and that a team of attorneys has to go through and decide what is relevant. Granted, that stuff is going to be combed through by the lawyers, they're not going to go to the opposite side if it's not relevant, but the problem is ... it really dawned on me, like, oh my gosh, what if my work computer, or my work email, got discoverable for something, and then everyone's going to read every single thing that I wrote, or some people are going to read it?

I actually had a partner at the firm that I worked at ... or was it the firm I worked at or another? Anyway, I met this partner at a networking event, and she said about doc review that she had had a very messy divorce play out while she worked at a law firm, and it ended up going in and needing discovery, and then her work emails ended up getting discovered. Staff from her firm had to go through the emails because they were representing part of it. I can't remember if the litigation was actually about her divorce or something else, but young attorneys at her firm had to go through emails as part of doc review, which included reading all of these emails about her divorce with her ex-husband. She was like, "So, just don't use work email for private things."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. It's really not that hard because you can have them on the same phone, you know?

Lee Burgess: Right.

Sadie Jones: There's lots of ways to keep yourself connected, but just really make a rule that you're just not giving that out to people unless it's about work. So, I think it's like social media. You have to assume that someone can see it at some point. Don't put it out there.

Lee Burgess: Right. Social media's another good thing because it can also come back to haunt you what you post on social media if you're talking about work, or if you've called in sick to work and then you're posting pictures of your vacation in Cabo, or the mistake I made, which I made a complaint about doing document review on my Facebook page, and my document review manager was one of my friends. Wouldn't recommend that.

Sadie Jones: Wow.

Lee Burgess: I mean, I backpedaled my way out of that. That was early Facebook days, to date myself, but still I was like, "Maybe I shouldn't post about work," and I just made a blatant, like, "I will not post anything about my job on social media at that point ever again." But I think you have to be careful when you start working somewhere and people start adding you on social media, and you have to think about the audience, you know?

Sadie Jones: I agree. I think sometimes it's good just to make a blanket rule -- I either am going to be friends with people at work, or I'm not going to be friends with anyone at work. It's easier, also ... Let's say that there's someone who tries to friend you, who's like a partner. You can just say, "Oh, I don't really do social media with work people," and I think that's totally acceptable and fine. Usually, if someone's senior to you, they'd probably wait for you to friend them anyway, but I do think if you're going to have people at work then you kind of have to keep it open, and you have to always keep in mind that someone could read something like complaining or talking about something that really should be confidential -- all of that can get you in trouble. I know someone told me about

someone who's on disability for an injury and then posted a surfing picture of herself, which may go beyond just work, getting into like insurance fraud.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's bad. I feel like that's straight out of an episode of "The Good Wife" or something like that.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and it was true. So, I think all that stuff ... I agree like everyone sometimes takes a mental health day and stays at home. Don't post that you're at the beach getting a tan. Not a good idea.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: So, I think just keep that in mind. But I also think that so many people are on social media and using it as a way to express themselves, that it's okay if you want work people on it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, just remember your audience. I mean, it was that moment when everybody's parents and grandparents joined Facebook and it changed the social media experience for most people when they realized that family members were watching their Facebook feeds, and it's the same thing if your boss is on your Facebook feed, remember the audience.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I also think people sometimes use different accounts. You know, like on Facebook, they won't really post that stuff, but maybe they'll tweet about it or the other way around.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, or use Instagram, and say you have a lot more people on Facebook and you do an Instagram -- things like that.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. Or just talk to your friends about your issues, you don't need to post about it.

Lee Burgess: That's a good point. Or just using group messaging. It's fantastic, you know?

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. But not on your work Messenger.

Lee Burgess: That's true. Not ... Yes. Use that cellphone you never put down, use that to communicate with your friends.

Sadie Jones: Another thing just along that line and just kind of things that can get you in trouble, when you have email, and let's say you're forwarding something or replying to something or whatnot ... Everyone, I think, has a story about a mistake they've made along those lines.

Lee Burgess: Oh, yes. I do.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and so I think that always keep that in mind. I know the first time something like that happened to me, and I think there was a typo and I sent it out to the whole firm, and it wasn't the end of the world, but I know it never happened again. I even had other people check things when they were going to the whole firm. Or you forward, you don't realize there's something on the bottom of the chain.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: Always read through an email chain. I'm so careful about that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I definitely have seen things where somebody will write an email, let's say saying something critical about a partner higher up, and those are two, say, associate level people talking, and then that chain eventually gets forwarded to the partner.

Sadie Jones: Ah.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, whoops, you know?

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: So, you just have to be careful. Anything you put into email ... it's just one of these things that you just have to keep in mind that it could be forwarded to somebody else. I mean, it's the bummer about email -- there's a trace. You can trace everything back to the written word, and so you just have to be conscious about that. If you are going to say something critical in an email, just make sure that ... maybe start a new chain, or go old school. You can even ... There's this thing called a telephone. It's probably on your desk. You have one on your body at all times -- it also functions as a phone. But you actually have one on your desk, too, and you can pick it up and there's these numbers that you type and you can call somebody and talk to them about the issue you're having with your door shut.

Sadie Jones: And then there's no record of it.

Lee Burgess: And then there's no record of it. In fact, I just picked up the phone and called somebody on our team yesterday, and she was so surprised that I called her. I'm like, "I'm going old school because this will be faster to deal with on the phone," and I realized how seldom I do that. But if it's something that you're-

Sadie Jones: I was just listening ... Someone was saying that some people take it as a sign of aggression if you call someone and leave them a voicemail.

Lee Burgess: Really? Oh, my god. I don't think ...

Sadie Jones: 'Cause they're so used to texting. But I agree, sometimes a phone call also is easier, and quicker, and better.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Sometimes it can be. If you're brainstorming a solution, or you have a technical problem, or sometimes ... I mean, this always happens with email communications, it just gets confusing, and a two second phone call can solve the confusion, but you can email back and forth a thousand times.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and tone and things like that. The other thing that I think you could turn off, and I think people have trouble with, is ... I think it's mostly in Outlook where something gets auto-populated when you're typing in someone's name and the wrong name goes in.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Sadie Jones: That's something to be super careful about. A lot of people have similar names.

Lee Burgess: Yes. Or say ... My husband's name and somebody I work with are the same, and if you're using one email account and you're writing emails to your husband, and then accidentally you're writing husband emails to somebody else. I have not done this, but it's definitely wrongly populated -- the names on the forward -- and you're like, "Oops. Delete."

Sadie Jones: Yup. Exactly. It's just easy to get yourself in trouble.

Lee Burgess: It is. Well, given the current political environment -- I guess is what you would call it -- I definitely think we need to just take a second to talk about sexual misconduct and sexual harassment allegations that can happen in the workplace. I think this is such a difficult thing to talk about because with the #metoo social media campaign I think most women would all say that at one time or another something inappropriate has happened to them at the workplace or outside of the workplace. How do you make sure that you're steering clear of those pitfalls, again, when the lines between work and social life can start to become somewhat blurred -- when you are partying together, or traveling together, spending all your time together, working late together? So, I do think that it's a good idea to really be conscious about your actions, make sure that you are careful if you're considering entering into a romantic relationship with somebody at the office because that can create sticky situations, especially if it does go south. I mean, I know people who married out of the firm. I'm sure that you do, too.

Sadie Jones: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lee Burgess: But you want to just be thoughtful and careful that your actions hopefully won't be taken another way. This doesn't mean that you don't want to connect with people and interact with them, but I think the situations that we're hearing a lot in the news right now are things that most people would be like, "Yeah, that's

pretty messed up. You should never do that at work," so hopefully nobody listening to this podcast would ever consider doing any of the things we're hearing on the news right now, but I do think it's just important to be very conscious about interaction that could be taken poorly. We don't-

Sadie Jones: I think ... I would just really consider it before you're starting to date someone at work. I think you have to think, "Is this worth it because what will it be like if this doesn't last? I'll have to see the person every day." I don't know they are in a position where they are more senior to you, or you're more senior to them, which is a whole other issue. I think you're going out with people ... like you said, I think keeping the drinking in check and doing things that maybe you will regret, doing them with people at work is definitely a bigger consequence than someone you wouldn't have to see every day.

So, I would keep that in mind. I also think, from an HR perspective, especially at law firms, I don't know if people feel comfortable reporting incidents, but I do know that HR absolutely takes them seriously and hopefully there's somebody at the firm you feel comfortable with. I worked at places where, aside from HR, there's like a partner who you can go to with anonymous stuff, and usually they pick someone who's easy to talk to and everyone likes, and all that kind of stuff. I think, again, because of the hierarchy, some people don't feel comfortable because maybe that person is a rainmaker, a senior who's been around a long time, but the firm wants to know if there's an issue. They don't want it to turn into a lawsuit, they want to know what's going on.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and you wouldn't deserve to suffer in silence, so you should be able to talk about what's happening to you in the workplace if it's inappropriate.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Lee Burgess: But I think it's something that now is very openly being discussed, which I think is a great thing because I think it will make people feel hopefully a little more sensitive to what their actions could be perceived as, but also so folks feel like that they can go and utilize the resources at their workplace if they need to. But just be cautious and careful, and I think dating in the workplace is just one of those things that can go south and maybe create some awkward situations.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, absolutely. I would really think about the consequences of your actions.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. One thing I will link to in the show notes is ... [Alison did a post a few years back about sexual harassment](#) in some of the firms that she was a part of that I think would be interesting to read for folks that are more interested in this topic. It's probably not the last time we're going to mention this on the podcast, but we did just want to bring it up because it is something that is very current and I think very important to everybody. I know, especially as a woman doing business, we feel like women should be able to be in the workplace without being sexually harassed. I realize it happens to men, too, but I feel like most of

the stories coming out are that women are being sexually harassed. So, there's that. Okay, so, what about some final tips? What do you think are kind of the most important things for folks to remember when they're thinking about their persona at work?

Sadie Jones:

I think treat people how you want to be treated -- kind of the golden rule. I think that doesn't mean that you shouldn't be yourself, you should be yourself. You should be honest; you don't need to be just like everybody else or doing the right thing all the time. We all say things that we didn't mean to say. I think being able to apologize is also really helpful if you do make a mistake because, obviously, it can be hard to always be on your best behavior. But I think, especially when you're a summer associate, just keep in mind that every day you're there is a job interview, and I know that that can be hard and that it's a long job interview, but this is potentially a job you could have for a long time.

It's a high salary. They expect a lot out of you. They really want to know that you can handle it and treat people with respect. Then if you're a junior associate, I think know that there are people that know more than you, and that you can learn from them. So, I think just be kind, be courteous, be somebody that, like you said -- the secretary you're talking about and saying like, "Oh, don't you really like that person?" That's what I would keep in mind, you know?

Lee Burgess:

Yeah, and that your legal reputation is really starting in law school, with your summer positions, with your early associate positions. You're creating the reputation that you're going to have through the rest of your legal career, and oftentimes people stay in one location for a really long time. So, it's not uncommon for people to have known each other for 20 or 30 years in the same profession, so I think that's important to keep in mind, too. You can be authentic, but be nice and authentic because that's how you want people to remember you. One thing that we were talking about before the podcast that I think is important to mention is also what to do with politics in the workplace because I think this, in this current ... we keep going back to this current political environment, but politics in the workplace is a bit of a powder keg right now. I think we're in a very divided country.

I think we can all appreciate that, and so when you are a young associate, or a summer associate, really or higher up, you want to be very careful about talking politics with folks until you figure out the lay of the land because you should never assume that you know someone else's politics just based on where they live, or their gender, or whatever it might be, and you don't want to misstep by offending someone or having folks make judgment calls based on your own political beliefs. So, probably something to play a little bit close to the vest until somebody higher up than you mentions a thing and you decide to agree with them -- that's one thing -- but maybe don't come in and say, "Hey, did you hear the indictments just came down from Mueller?" That's probably ... Unless you are 100% sure that the person that you're talking to was also listening to-

Sadie Jones: Agrees with you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, agrees with you, or was listening to Pod Saves America, and they were just talking about it or whatever it might be. So, just be cautious because I think leading into these large national campaigns of 2018 and 2020, there's going to be a lot of political stuff that's going to be very charged happening in the world, and you just want to make sure that that doesn't change how people perceive you in the workplace. It doesn't mean that you should kind of eat disrespectful things or things like that, but just think about how you're presenting your political viewpoints and whether or not it's the appropriate place to do that.

Sadie Jones: Well, and I also think in places like San Francisco or a place that is very liberal, some people do have a tendency to just think everyone thinks exactly the way they do, and that's not necessarily the case. I also think there's a way to say how you feel and not be disrespectful to the other side.

Lee Burgess: True.

Sadie Jones: Not just assume because I think this, it's right, or it's the only way. There is a way to kind of be like, "This is what I support," but you're still open if someone says that they have different political views, and it goes with religion -- all those hot button issues.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's good to talk about travel, it's good to talk about-

Sadie Jones: What you ate.

Lee Burgess: What you ate for lunch, what's your favorite food. Okay. All right, well, with that, we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox Podcast, please take a second to [leave a review and rating](#) on iTunes. We'd really appreciate it. Be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Alison at Lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or Alison@lawschooltoolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our [website contact form at LawSchoolToolbox.com](#). I just answered a few listener questions today, so, believe me, we really write back. I promise. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.

Resources:

- [Alison Monahan, "What No One Tells You Before You Go to Law School: You're Entering a Sexist Profession."](#)