



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking with ex-BigLaw recruiter, Sadie Jones, about the top mistakes summer associates make so that you can avoid making them. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer that you can be. Together, we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website, [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please a review or a rating on your favorite listening app, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form](#) on [lawschooltoolbox.com](#), and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

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Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking with ex-big law recruiter, Sadie Jones, about the top mistakes summer associates make so you can avoid making them or fix them if you happen to make them. So, welcome Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: Our pleasure. So I'm sure that you have seen a lot of summer associate mistakes in your time coordinating summer programs because you did this for a while, so what's the very worst thing that you've seen?

Sadie Jones: I've seen a lot of smaller mistakes, I haven't seen a ton of really huge mistakes. We did have a summer associate that got very inebriated at a work function and threw up on a partner's wife.

Alison Monahan: That's not good.

Sadie Jones: And I believe got kicked out of a practice group.

Alison Monahan: Wow. Yeah, that's typically not going to be a conversation you want to have the next morning. "So, do you remember what happened last night?"

Sadie Jones: Just horribly embarrassing, I'm sure, for everyone.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I summered with a girl that jumped in the Hudson River, so it happens.

Sadie Jones: Wow. Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, a famous aqua girl.



Sadie Jones: There's always those famous stories, but I'd say there's always a lot of smaller ones. The other really big mistake that I saw was a summer associate who, somewhere about halfway through, told us that his understanding was that you got credit for doing the most assignments, and that we were keeping track of how many assignments everyone was doing, and he actually had thirteen assignments going at the same time, but had made very little progress on any of them, and was completely underwater, and was behind on deadlines, and when we finally pieced this together, because we kept hearing from people on the assignments that he wasn't finished, that was his answer.

Alison Monahan: Wow, how would he have gotten that impression?

Sadie Jones: I couldn't understand it because I knew from the beginning that we would always say, it's really quality over quantity, which I think is true, I just don't know. I think he just got into this mess, and honestly, he never really got himself out of it.

Alison Monahan: How could you? I think the average summer probably does a handful of assignments, not thirteen.

Sadie Jones: And it was like halfway through, so I kept like oh, he was going to take on more.

Alison Monahan: That's so crazy. I don't know. I've summered a lot of places, I don't know that anyone ever had that impression, but hey, that's why it's a mistake, right? So if you're listening, FYI, probably not in your best interest to take on as many assignments as you possibly think you could because it's probably more than you actually can.

Sadie Jones: And trust me, there are no firms that do that.

Alison Monahan: No, no one would ever do that. It's crazy.

Sadie Jones: So those are my two sort of worse on the social side or work side.

Alison Monahan: What are some common maybe not quite as terrible things that you see a lot?

Sadie Jones: I think similar to the second person I was saying, I do see a lot of people that either take on too much, can't finish things, get into trouble with an assignment or their workload generally. I think it's hard for summer associates when they're starting to know how much to take on and how long things should be taking, so I think that's a common mistake, and I think other common mistakes are kind of not remembering that you're always at work when you're a summer associate, so the social side ... maybe not as extreme as that example, but kind of maybe drinking a little too much or saying something you shouldn't have said or saying



something to the wrong person or not remembering that you're not all just friends, and that it's really work.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's right. I also worked some place where a summer, I think, not only didn't get an offer, but managed to get himself fired by hitting on too many people, and it's just one of those things you're like, "Really? Come on."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And it takes a lot to get fired as a summer associate.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think it was one of those things where multiple people had gone independently and complained about similar behavior, and the firm was just like, "We can't have this person here. This isn't going to work out."

Sadie Jones: No, I think that's huge.

Alison Monahan: No, you don't want to be that person who they're thinking could be a liability later on, that's not going to get you an offer.

Sadie Jones: And especially, also, in those kind of situations, maybe it's happened once and they talked to you about it, and then you don't take that to heart and change your behavior.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's probably not going to go over very well either.

Sadie Jones: Usually this starts slow, and usually someone will talk to you about it.

Alison Monahan: Right. All right, well we're going to talk about some common problems in a minute, and scenarios, but before we get there, what kind of mindset do you think new summer associates should go into the summer with to try to avoid some of these problems? You mentioned earlier thinking you're always at work. Tell me more about that.

Sadie Jones: So that's really my top piece of advice for a summer associate, and it doesn't mean that you can't be yourself and you can't have real conversations with people, or even that you can't talk to them about things outside of work, I think that's fine, but you are ... it's an eight, nine, ten, twelve week job interview, and that means when you're in the office, when you're at social events with people from work, if you're at an outside meeting, whatever it is, these people are watching you to see how you're doing to decide whether they're going to give you a job offer. And it's an unusual process compared to lots of other industries, but it really is a chance for everyone to get to know each other, so you want to put your best foot forward all the time.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. I think you want to [be a professional](#). You might think of yourself as a student, maybe this is actually your first real grown-up, full-time



job, but you're basically auditioning to be a real lawyer, so you need to [be that professional self](#), and that comes down to [what you wear to the office](#), how you behave, how you behave at events, how you treat your work product, all of these things. They're looking for you to be a grown-up, and-

- Sadie Jones: Right, and I think that means, in these social situations, I think it can be kind of hard, and some people almost kind of feel like it's a trap, like they're serving alcohol, they're encouraging us to get relaxed and all that stuff, but I think most people can find a balance between doing that, having a good time and trying to get to know people, and also remembering that you need to be professional and you have to cap it somewhere. I know a lot of people would say they don't have more than two drinks.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly, you're not at a frat party, you're not hanging out with your friends at a bar. I think, yeah, having some sort of guidelines for yourself, particularly if you know that this has been an issue for you or could be an issue for you, either you say, "I'm just going to have one drink." Or, "I'm going to alternate drinks with water and stop at two." Or, "Maybe I'm not going to drink at all." And I think that makes people a little bit uncomfortable, the idea that people are going to know if I'm not drinking. That's not really true. You can basically ask any bartender to make you something like soda water with a lime in it. No one else knows what that is.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. I actually think if you ... let's say you don't drink normally or you've decided not to drink for this, I also think, don't make it a big deal. I think that's kind of ... I know a lot of people who would come in and not be drinkers, and they would tell everyone over and over again, and I think that's what makes it uncomfortable. Don't make it into a thing and nobody else is going to make it into a thing.
- Alison Monahan: And if somebody does try to make it into a thing, that person is being a jerk, and it's not about you.
- Sadie Jones: Yes. Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: If you're ... people have all sorts of reasons to decline alcohol, and there are plenty of things, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm taking antibiotics. My doctor says I can't drink." No big deal. Or just, "Hey, I don't drink." Leave it alone.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think most people wouldn't push you on any of this. There's plenty of legal reasons not to.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's not something people really want to push on you if you say that you don't want it for all kinds of reasons, but I think if you do think that's an issue for



you or could be an issue for you, I think it might even be better off just saying from the start of the summer, "Hey, I don't drink. I'll have a soda."

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And I think the other thing to keep in mind when you're at these social events is that anyone you bring is also a reflection of you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's a good one.

Sadie Jones: Because I was going to say another example was somebody who brought a guest to a social event who drank too much and started blabbing about the person to everybody, and told me that this person didn't really want to work at the firm.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Sadie Jones: They were just there ... they wanted to do public interest, they were just there to make some money.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, probably not going to end well.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, it didn't. But I would say that you're responsible for the person that you bring and their behavior, so think carefully.

Alison Monahan: Absolutely, and I think you might need to brief that person too, on, "Don't tell them I don't want to work here." That should be pretty obvious, but, "Hey, this is a professional setting. I'm not going to be drinking a lot. It probably could be a little boring, but let's try not to offend anyone."

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think bring somebody who you think makes sense in that environment and that sort of thing, and can be social and be a positive reflection.

Alison Monahan: You want everyone to be like, "Oh wow, that person you brought was so nice. I really enjoyed talking to them."

Sadie Jones: And I've had lots of those experiences too, where people are like, "Oh, I love this person's significant other."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, they seem great.

Sadie Jones: I think that's what I mean by you're always at work is, even when you're in a social situation, people are trying to see who you are, how you behave, your professionalism, that sort of thing.



- Alison Monahan: On that note, do you think it's a problem if people are invited to bring a guest and they don't feel like they have anyone they can bring and maybe they're summering in a different city, they don't really have friends there or significant others?
- Sadie Jones: No, I really don't, and I think that you might get yourself in trouble by really struggling to find somebody to bring that you don't know that well, or it could be awkward between you and that person-
- Alison Monahan: Like, "Oh, how do you guys know each other?" "We just met on Tinder last week."
- Sadie Jones: I actually had someone do that, also.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, fine, maybe not the best judgment. Again, there you might want to brief the person, "Hey, let's not mention ... here's our story for how we met."
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, it's just ... keep it short, but I would say, I've always had summer classes where some people never brought guests, some people always brought somebody, and I don't think it matters so much.
- Alison Monahan: I don't think it matters at all. I feel like if you're-
- Sadie Jones: It just matters that you're bringing someone that's going to be okay in that situation.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think if you have any doubts, just go alone. You're not going to be the only person who is without a guest, and it's a pretty easy answer, "Oh yeah, I'm new in town and I don't really know too many people."
- Sadie Jones: The other thing I would say is that you don't want to bring someone where you have to worry about them or you feel like they're not going to be comfortable talking to people, you should be focused on that you need to talk to people and what you're doing, so I wouldn't do something that's going to take your focus off of that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, probably not a great second date.
- Sadie Jones: Wait until the end of the summer.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, if it's still going well two months later, you can bring them to the finale party.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly.



- Alison Monahan: That's usually at a nice partner's house or something, so they'll be really impressed.
- Sadie Jones: I would also say that these events kind of get looser and people get more comfortable as they go, so keep that in mind.
- Alison Monahan: All right. Let's talk now about some common scenarios and how people can avoid them or recover from them if, unfortunately, they happen to find themselves in this scenario. We talked a little about this earlier, but what if you make some type of error in your work product?
- Sadie Jones: I would say that, don't ever try to hide it. If you know you made an error, you need to go to the person you're working with, or if you're not sure about them, I think you could start with your mentor or an associate you're comfortable with and explain what happened, and then you could get some advice first, but I would make sure that you bring it to someone's attention as soon as possible because something like that, if they knew that you knew it was a mistake or this mistake could affect the work or somebody else, you don't want that happening.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think you've kind of got to own it. What if they come to you and you have no idea you've made this mistake and somebody comes to you and says, "Oh you know what? Actually, this case is not good law. We just filed this brief."?
- Sadie Jones: So I would not panic.
- Alison Monahan: Which is probably going to be your first response.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I understand why people would, and maybe it's hard to take this advice, but I think panicking could get you into a worse situation where you're continuing to say the wrong thing or ... I think that everyone knows that freaking out about something like this isn't going to help, so I would say, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Can you tell me more?" Or, "Could I look into this more?" Try to see if there's anything that you can do to alleviate the situation. I also think you need to learn what the mistake was for your-
- Alison Monahan: How it happened.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly, because everyone makes mistakes.
- Alison Monahan: Everyone makes mistakes. I remember once, I prepared some document as a summer associate, and I was really proud of it and I thought I'd done a really great job on this analysis, and then I get a call the next morning from the



associate I gave it to, who's like, "Do you realize you misspelled our client's name?"

Sadie Jones: Oh my gosh.

Alison Monahan: Obviously, it hadn't gone anywhere up to that point, but he was like, "You need to come talk to me about this." And he just basically was like, "I don't care how amazing the rest of this is, you cannot do something like this. You have to double check, triple check people's names. Everyone is going to see that their own name is misspelled, and you cannot send that out like this." So that was a good lesson, and hopefully I've never misspelled anyone major's name again, but it happens, and I owned it.

Sadie Jones: I think the thing is, is it the first time it happened or is it like the fifth time it happened? Because I think everyone gets that one dumb mistake that they made, but it's like, "Did you learn from it?" And really check things, and not let something like that happen again.

Alison Monahan: Right, and what he said to me at the time too, that I remember is, "Look, I've never worked with you before, so now I wonder if I can trust you. What else did you screw up here?" And then he finally read the rest of it, and he was like, "Actually, it's really good." But he still had that doubt about, "I'm not really sure if I can trust this person."

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and that goes along with the advice that ... another thing to remember is, every time you give someone something, it shouldn't be just a draft.

Alison Monahan: Right, there's no such thing as a rough draft in the law firm world.

Sadie Jones: And it really bothers people if you say that's what it is.

Alison Monahan: Well, I think there are things that can be not finalized, obviously there may be questions where you've gotten to a fork in the legal path, and you're like, "I don't know if we want to go this way or that way." But you just phrase that in whatever you're writing as the actual question. Like, "Hey, I need some input on this." Not, "Oh, I don't know what to do here." And the same thing, like citations, maybe they don't have to be totally perfect on that first draft, but you have to make it clear that you're using some sort of format and you're going to put them in later or whatever. I don't think it's necessarily the case that you need to fully cite check something as a draft, but again, you might also want to ask about that.

Sadie Jones: And I think typos or things like that are never acceptable. You can't expect, "Oh, well I thought you were going to proofread the whole thing."



Alison Monahan: Right. I think that's the key to take away here, is you have to assume, as a summer, that you are the last person who is going to see this before it goes out.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I know that's a lot of pressure, and it's scary.

Alison Monahan: It is. It's scary, but it's also a mindset that I think will serve people well in a legal career, is not assuming that somebody else is going to do the work after them.

Sadie Jones: Well, I would also keep in mind, I think summers don't think about, especially if they're working on client work, that the clients are paying for that work at a fairly high rate, and I think-

Alison Monahan: A lot.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think they have to go in with some confidence, I think is good to. Like, "I worked on this. I feel confident that it's good." And that you're a professional. Not overly, but I think you should see it like they trusted you with something they thought you could do.

Alison Monahan: Right, I think having pride in your work product is a good approach to things. Is this something you would be proud of if it went out like this? And if not, then keep working on it.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: All right. Well that actually leads into another common problem. What if you start down a path on an assignment and realize you either don't understand it, or it's taking way too long, or in some cases, maybe you're being too much of a perfectionist and you just can't let it go?

Sadie Jones: This is another situation where I think a mentor is helpful, and hopefully people do have those associate or partner mentors. Or it could be somebody that you're working on the assignment with, but I would say that if you feel like that's happening, I would deal with it sooner rather than later. So the other thing I've seen people do is, I think they kind of knew that was happening, and they just kept going. And they would tell me, "It snowballed." And you could see this look of horror on their face.

Alison Monahan: Right because it was supposed to be like a two day assignment and suddenly it's two weeks and they still haven't finished it. They've burned tons of research money, and it's just like, where is this piece of information that someone needs? Why haven't you finished this?

Sadie Jones: Yeah, we won't be able to bail you out for that, and it kind of just ... it's not a good look. So I would say, you probably knew way before it got to that point



that it maybe was this kind of thing, and I think that's the time to bring it up with somebody and just talk about it before you see it getting out of control because some things, sometimes, they give you an assignment and maybe they gave you a rough timeline of how long they thought it was going to take. I know on our assignment systems, there would always be an hour estimate, and maybe they were wrong, maybe it was going to take a lot longer, and that's okay, and you can talk to them about it. So it's not ... sometimes, it is just a bigger assignment than a person realized, but sometimes, you might need someone to help you scale it back and focus, and I do think summer associates are supposed to be learning, and most of the attorneys know that.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think a lot of this goes back to a podcast we did earlier about how to [set yourself up for success on an assignment](#), and a lot of it starts with getting that information you need in that first meeting, and one piece of that information is probably, "Well, do you have a sense of how long this ought to take?" And if you're way, way ... if you're getting way beyond that, I think you're absolutely right. You've got to talk to someone who can give you advice about, "Okay, well I don't think you need to be doing this." Or, "This line of research doesn't seem to be productive." Or, "Yeah, you're right. This actually is more complicated." And then they can help you figure out how to go back to the person who gave you the work and say, "Hey, here's the situation. What do you want me to do about it?"

Sadie Jones: And I think the issue here for some people is that some people have the natural inclination that if they've made a mistake or if they feel like something's wrong, they try to bury it, hide it. I think there are definitely people who do that, and we all do it sometimes, but in this situation, don't do that.

Alison Monahan: No. You've got to get out ahead of something like this and basically make it someone else's problem, like, "Hey, here's the situation. How do you want me to handle it?"

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Because you're not supposed to know how to handle every situation, you've just started working there.

Sadie Jones: And I promise you, they're going to appreciate that more, even if you've wasted a little bit of time, or it's wrong, or whatever, they're going to appreciate that more than the two weeks later situation.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's just a disaster for everyone because if someone's been waiting for this and you still don't have it, it's just not going to go well.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.



- Alison Monahan: All right. Let's switch gears a little bit out of the work context. What if you, perhaps unintentionally, upset someone who is employed by the firm, whether it's a partner, an associate, a paralegal, a secretary, another summer, they're mad at you?
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, that's hard. It definitely happens. I would say ... I think there's different scenarios with this. There's the situation where you realize right away that you upset them, like the words come out of your mouth and you know they weren't right.
- Alison Monahan: Maybe you're saying something racist, sexist, homophobic, take your pick, and you immediately realize, "Oh my gosh. That was totally inappropriate."
- Sadie Jones: Yes, and this is something that if you were with your friends, they would understand that you didn't mean it that way, that happens, they don't think you're a terrible person, but I think in most situations-
- Alison Monahan: They might be. I don't know. Let's be honest. Maybe you are.
- Sadie Jones: You might be, and then you probably don't even realize-
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's true. Then you probably wouldn't even realize this is wildly inappropriate.
- Sadie Jones: And we've all met people like that. I would say, if you see it in the moment, I would say it in the moment. I would say, "Oh, I'm sorry." Or, "Did I offend you?" Or, "I didn't mean that. I didn't mean that that way."
- Alison Monahan: "Oh my gosh, I realize that must have sounded really terrible."
- Sadie Jones: I think people really appreciate someone saying that out loud right away. Some people might still be offended, but I don't know if there's much more you can do in that moment other than say that and mean it. And I think most people appreciate that everyone makes mistakes. I also think there's a situation where you have no idea what happened, and either someone comes to talk to you later, or it becomes obvious to you that someone is ignoring you or ... everyone knows signs when someone is upset. So I would say, if someone approaches you about it, I would ask, "What did I say?" Try to understand it, again, I would apologize, because even if you didn't mean it that way, you should apologize that the person felt bad, or felt offended, or was upset. I think, kind of like the other things we were saying, it's just best to bring it out in the open and own it. Some things are harder than others.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it really depends on how bad this is.



- Sadie Jones: Right. I'm assuming it's not ... I can't even think of something that would be ... I haven't experienced anything that I felt was-
- Alison Monahan: Right. But I think sometimes people ... I think there is a particular type of law student, as well, who maybe thinks that, "We're just having a friendly argument about this topic." And other people really don't take it that way, they take it much more personally, so again, I think this is a scenario where you just want to be careful, and think carefully about, "Do I want to wade into this area?"
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. It's what people say about dinner parties or things like that. Leave politics and religion and certain topics out of this situation.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, there are plenty of other things you can talk about. If you're at a party, at a firm event and you don't know what to talk about, just say, "Oh, what are you working on these days? What type of work do you do?" Keep it work focused, and you're probably on pretty safe ground. If you start talking about the latest political news or something, I think people could pretty quickly go into areas that might be a little dodgy.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I mean, I think sometimes, it's hard, especially in today's environment, everybody is talking about a lot of this stuff, but I think, to the best that you can, I would try to stay away from it. And if it happens, I would apologize.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. Perhaps repeatedly to multiple people.
- Sadie Jones: The thing about being a summer associate, though, is if somebody does say something or is offended and then tells somebody else, you probably are going to hear about it from the head of the summer committee, or your partner mentor, somebody is probably going to come talk to you about it, at least in any of the summer programs I worked at. So if someone does that, I would try to be genuine with them, and try to understand what happened and not get really defensive.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And what if you're on the flip side of this? What if you are a summer associate who's at an event and someone, let's say a partner or an associate says something really offensive to you?
- Sadie Jones: I guess you have to decide how bad it is, and what you want to do with it. I think if they say something that's sexual harassment that you should tell somebody. I think people would want to know at the firm, so you can tell any of the people I'm saying. You could tell your mentor, you could tell the recruiter, you could tell the head of the summer committee, you could talk to HR. And I have had summers do that before, and they really do investigate and it does open something.



- Alison Monahan: Right. All right. Let's switch gears a little bit. Let's talk a little bit about time management type of problems, because I know those are things that we see a lot, so for example, someone blows a work deadline and they just don't get something done, or you're showing up late to meetings, maybe to the office, to events repeatedly, you accept a calendar invite, or you RSVP to something and then you don't show up, how can people handle these things? Maybe they're overworked, maybe they have personal stuff going on, what's going on here?
- Sadie Jones: I would say, actually, these are kind of big deals to law firms, and I think some of the stuff summer associates don't necessarily realize are a big deal, but I would say, first of all, you should be keeping your calendar, you should make sure it has alerts that warn you in increments so you know something is coming up. If you have a deadline, I would give yourself a deadline of earlier than the deadline. Because the other thing is, even if it's not late, I don't ... and somebody said something's due on a certain day, turning it in at like 11 pm isn't a great idea either.
- Alison Monahan: No, it just looks bad.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, so it's not really late, but it's not really on time.
- Alison Monahan: And also, the person is wondering, "Where is this?" And that's not a sensation you want the person who gave you work to have.
- Sadie Jones: So the other thing is, I kind of think there's no excuse for it being late and you not having talked to the person somewhere before it was late to tell them. And I think most people are kind of okay with extending a deadline if it's possible, and if you explain yourself, so I think that's okay, but you really have to have brought it up, and have reason, and ... I think that's really important with work assignments. And with events or meetings or things like that, something that you might want to even clarify at the beginning, I know I've had issues with this with summers, at some places, if someone sends you a calendar invite for a meeting and you accept it, they take that as an RSVP, like you're going. Other people think, "Oh, I'm just putting it on my calendar because I might go."
- So I would clarify what's expected of you in terms of that kind of thing. We had an issue one summer, where actually the whole summer class didn't show up for this training. It was like explaining what the corporate group was, and it was going to be at like 8 am, and we had a small summer class, and it was firm wide, so it was going to be on video, but everyone was going to be in different offices, and no one showed up in our office. And partners had prepared a presentation and were there early. We had ordered food, and the partner who was doing it was also someone on the hiring committee, she was a hiring partner, and she was very, very upset.



- Alison Monahan: Understandably.
- Sadie Jones: And we asked them what happened, someone basically told me they had an exercise class and invited other people, and yeah. Like, "Oh, they didn't think this was required. They thought it was come if you want to."
- Alison Monahan: Probably not a great assumption to make. I feel like, again, you need to be a grown-up here. Okay, fine, you don't really want to be in the office at 8 am, but question, what is it that's happening at 8 am that they're asking me to be here for? Is that a person that I might want to have on my side? Is that a person that I would like to offend? And get out of bed early.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, it was totally crazy, so I actually decided to have a meeting with all the summers to talk to them generally about coming to things and RSVP-ing, because I also said if things are optional, it's fine if you don't go and you tell them you're not going, but you can't say you're going and not show up.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I feel like that's a good overall thing to take away from this. If you say you're going to something, you need to be there, and you need to be there basically on time, smiling, ready to go, happy, happy. That's your job.
- Sadie Jones: And the other thing I'd say is that even the stuff that's "optional", they're paying you for a pretty good gig to be a summer associate, you should really be trying to go.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think that's a good point. Let's talk about that a little bit. What if somebody, for whatever reason, really can't make it, or just doesn't want to go to a bunch of these social events, is that going to be a real problem for them?
- Sadie Jones: I think if it's a bunch, it is a problem. I would say ... I think most firms do about one social event a week, so I think it's fine to miss one or even two, especially if you have a specific reason, but I would say that you really shouldn't be missing more than that unless you have a reason, and if you do, you need to tell them what the reason is or explain it in some form because they're putting on these events to get to know you, and they're not just for fun, they actually are part of the whole process. There's a reason that they do it. It's kind of the same way that when you're doing an interview to be a summer associate, you go to lunch, so it's like a lunch interview, but it's a way to kind of get to know people in a more casual setting, so I do really think it's important, and I think that you missing a lot of events is not putting your best foot forward.
- Alison Monahan: Right. You want to make sure that people have an understanding of, "Oh, this seems like a good, decent person. I kind of like them from what I know." You don't want to be a black box, and I think sometimes, too, if they're doing volunteer events and things like that, you don't want to miss those events



because you think you don't need to go to them. That's an opportunity for you to take one for the team, be a community-minded person. These are things that firms are interested in, so definitely don't skip those because you don't think they sound very fun.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think a lot of times, those kind of things also are on a weekend. We would usually do one weekend thing. I don't think most firms are doing a lot, but even if it is a weekend, I don't think it's asking that much to go to one ... like we did a Habitat for Humanity kind of thing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I remember once, my firm had a weekend event out in the Hamptons or something, and I'd literally just come back from six weeks in London, and had the worst cold ever, and I was just like, "You know what? I just can't do it. I'm jet lagged, I'm sick, I have to go to work on Monday. I cannot possibly go there for the weekend." But people still gave me a hassle about it, like, "Oh, we really missed you. You weren't there."

Sadie Jones: I would never give someone a hassle about that, especially if they explained it, but I imagine that some people do. I also think sometimes it matters about how big your summer class is-

Alison Monahan: This was huge. There was like 100 people. I'm like, "Who even knows if I'm there?" But they did.

Sadie Jones: But I think if you're in a summer class of five people, they're going to know if you're not there.

Alison Monahan: For sure, and people will notice. All right. Let's talk a little bit about people who just behave badly. We mentioned earlier getting really drunk at a firm event, doing something stupid, I've heard about people hitting on people who aren't receptive to their advances, that kind of stuff. What can people do here?

Sadie Jones: Don't do it.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. Don't do ... don't be that person.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And my advice about hitting on people or dating other summers, or dating other people at the firm is, don't do it.

Alison Monahan: I agree. I just think it's a terrible idea.

Sadie Jones: You can do it later if you really want to, I don't know if it's ever that good of an idea, but don't do it while you're a summer associate, please. And I would say in terms of getting too drunk or embarrassing yourself, I really would just take into account what we said about it being a job interview, you shouldn't really act



very different at that event than you do in the office. Let's say that you make a mistake, I also think, like we've talked about, you need to own it and apologize, and if you offended anyone or did anything wrong-

Alison Monahan: If you threw up on their wife.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, oh my gosh. That person did get an offer, just want to say. But I think that was a long shot, and I think if you do something like that, you can't drink at any other events.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you definitely, definitely, definitely need to be clean living for the rest of the summer. And I think in that case, you could actually make a bigger deal of, "Oh, no thank you. I'm not drinking, thanks."

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Make sure everyone here knows, "I'm not drinking. Thank you."

Sadie Jones: I do think, depending on the scenario, people do get second chances. The firm wants to give you an offer, that's another thing to keep in mind. They don't want anything to happen. They don't want anyone to not get an offer, so don't give them reasons to not give you an offer.

Alison Monahan: I agree. Let's talk a little bit about this. What if people ... some firms, I know, do mid-summer reviews. What if somebody gets a bad review, either at mid-summer or at the final? The final one, obviously, they can't do a lot, but say you get a mid-summer review, and it's not that great.

Sadie Jones: I really think you have a chance to turn it around by the mid-summer. Like you said, it's a lot harder if it's right at the end or something, but the whole idea of a mid-summer review is to let everyone know where they are, and if they're having some type of big issues, that they do have a chance to turn it around, so listen to what the issues are. And I would say, if it's not clear from the review what the problem was, I think you should ask. You should ask the person you worked with or whoever is giving you the review, and I think you need to actively figure out steps to change things.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think you, again, you've got to be a grown-up and own this, and say, "Thanks a lot for this feedback." Maybe it's the first time you're hearing about it, "I didn't realize that that was a problem with this piece of work product that I turned in. I'll definitely go and speak with whoever it is, get their feedback." Or, "Do you have any suggestions for me immediately about things that I can do?" Basically, just be receptive and open to feedback, and obviously, if somebody suggests that you do something, you probably ought to do it.



- Sadie Jones: Well, and I think it can be hard, this whole review situation at law firms, because lawyers actually are really bad at giving direct feedback and even filling out written reviews, and so I do think it's kind of ... it's on the firm's part if you had no idea there was anything wrong and no one had given you feedback-
- Alison Monahan: Right. It's a little passive aggressive.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. And I find that the people that seem the most straightforward, sometimes are the people who are the worst with that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, or they just don't tell you anything and you assume everything went fine, and then it turns out that they gave you this scathing review of your work product that you had no idea about.
- Sadie Jones: On the other hand, I think sometimes summer associates aren't listening when they're actually being given feedback, and they don't realize it's feedback. So I know that I would always encourage attorneys to use the word "feedback" as much as possible. At the beginning and end of their talk because sometimes feedback really is like, "Great job." And that's fine, and sometimes feedback is something negative, and the summer associate didn't really pick up on what they were saying because maybe it wasn't as direct or maybe it wasn't in the form that they were expecting, it wasn't a formal sit down meeting, so I would say it also could be on you to solicit feedback and to ask how things are going.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and sometimes someone might give you a redlined copy of something somebody worked on. I think it's great to go back to them and say, "Hey, I got your comments on this. I picked them up. Is there anything else that you want to talk about? How do you think I did?" Or whatever. To really be a little more proactive, I think, is not going to hurt you one bit.
- Sadie Jones: And I also think that you know if you're blowing deadlines, because the feedback might be that your work product is great, but they don't want to work with you anymore because it's not on time.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, which sounds harsh, but time is everything in the legal profession.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I really think that the mid-summer review is a chance to turn it around, so even if you have one that's pretty bad, all is not lost.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and I think you can go to someone with a plan after hearing this. Maybe you think about it for a couple days, and you come back and say ... Okay. I don't know who this person would be. Would this person be the head of the summer program? Who would you talk to at this point if you're like, "Okay, here's what I want to do differently."



- Sadie Jones: So I think the recruiter could actually be a good person to talk to about who you should talk to because it's kind of different everywhere, but usually it would be the head of the summer committee, or like a partner mentor.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Maybe you've gotten feedback that your research wasn't strong, and you're like, "Oh, I'm going to take an online class offered by West Law or Lexus or whoever," but having something where you're like, "Okay, I recognize this problem, and here's how I'm going to address it." I think can be very effective.
- Sadie Jones: Even, I'll say, we have somebody who got an offer at the end of the summer, but with the caveat that these were things that this person needed to work on, and I really was impressed because they came back and said, "I'm taking these courses this semester." Or, "I'm going to" ... if it was like, "I need to work on my writing." It's like, "I plan to do this." And even though they already had the offer, it really started everything off on a better note, that they were so receptive and really proactive about it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think people like that. They like it that, "Okay, you heard this, and you have a reasonable plan for dealing with it. We assume you're going to execute on that plan, and then when you come back, this is not going to be an issue." Which is really what the goal is.
- Sadie Jones: And I will say that most of the problems that I've seen with summer associates, it's less of the actual, they couldn't do the work or they didn't understand it, and more of the other stuff we're talking about.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.
- Sadie Jones: Deadlines, or appropriateness, or things like that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, just generally not being an idiot goes a long way. Well, we're out of time. Any final thoughts on how people can avoid making mistakes this summer or recover if they do?
- Sadie Jones: Well, I would say that really, like we've said about it being a job interview, that you should take it seriously. There is a lot of fun stuff with being a summer associate. They're taking you out for lunches, you're going to events, it's probably not a ton of work, but I would say that you should be taking the stuff you're doing seriously, whether it's in the office, outside the office, and you really want to be making a good impression. So really, the best way to handle a mistake is to really think about what you're doing going into it and not get into any of these situations, but if you do, my number one advice is to not hide anything, and to own it and not be defensive.



Alison Monahan: I think that's all fantastic advice. Thank you so much for joining us, Sadie, we really appreciate it.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: Our pleasure. 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 your favorite listening app, we would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Allison at Lee@LawSchoolToolbox.com or Allison@LawSchoolToolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our [website contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. And if you're looking for career help, check out our career sub site, [CareerDicta](#). We even offer [career coaching](#). Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.

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