



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about dealing with mistakes, whether in the workplace or in the job application process. 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 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 leave a review or 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.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about dealing with mistakes in the workplace and the job application process. So welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. I think this will be a fun topic. Well, law students and sometimes lawyers, they like to think that they're perfect. But sadly, that's not true. We make mistakes just like everyone else. So, let's talk about how to handle those, whether it's in the job search process or in the workplace. Let's start with the job search context. What are some mistakes that you have commonly seen, or I guess not so commonly, in the job search context?

Sadie Jones: Well, definitely with your resume typos, which I think we've talked about before.

Alison Monahan: All the time.

Sadie Jones: And weird formatting things, where the dates don't line up on the right side of it, or there're extra spaces, or something just looks weird, spelled wrong, that kind of thing. And then with the cover letters, if you address it to the wrong person, you spell their name wrong, you address it to the wrong law firm, I've seen. I worked somewhere where the name of the firm had changed and they were using an outdated name. So, you just want to make sure that all of that stuff is correct, you've double-checked it, you're sending it to the right person, it doesn't have any mistakes. In terms of just the basic first level way that you're introducing yourself.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I got yelled at once when I was working as a summer associate for writing someone's name wrong – the client, I think. Yeah, I had drafted a letter and sent it off to the senior associate, and the next day he called me and he said, "Well,



the letter itself was pretty good. However, if it were up to me, I'd fire you because you spelled the client's name wrong. Don't ever do that again."

Sadie Jones:                   Whoa!

Alison Monahan:               Yeah, he was kind of not the nicest person, but he did have a point. His point was we always know how own name is spelled, and we do notice when people misspell it. And I think the firms or other organizations changing names is really key too, because people don't realize these law firms just kind of switch out their named partners, a lot of them constantly, so you want to make sure that you've actually got that right.

Sadie Jones:                   Correct. And also, with people's first names – I know yours, for example, can be spelled many different ways. So you really want to make sure you've looked it up.

Alison Monahan:               And people do misspell it. Yeah, people misspell my name all the time. For the record, it has one L, it does not have two Ls. It has an I, it does not have a Y. It's on the website, it's in my email. You can find it. But yeah, this is the sort of thing that seems trivial, but people do notice.

Sadie Jones:                   Especially when it's something like that, sort of your intro to people. You just don't want it to have a mistake. And then beyond that, in interviews, either not having any questions at the end, having inappropriate questions, having looked up more about them than is publicly available in a work context. An area which is sort of controversial is thank-you notes. And I have seen many mistakes on thank-you notes – poor writing, misspelling, weird, referencing things that went with a different interviewer. And people notice that. I think just a plain thank-you note is sort of a throwaway, but a mistake can be a real red flag and I've seen it sabotage a person's offer.

Alison Monahan:               Right, exactly. That's one where you definitely need to get the spelling of the name right. You need to be sure if you've referenced something that you talked about that that you actually talked about it. It seems like a simple thing, but there are actually a lot of ways that can go wrong.

Sadie Jones:                   And I think the reason people make mistakes is that they probably are sort of writing them quickly and not thinking about them too much, like, "Oh, this is just the same thing I've written over and over again." So they don't double-check it and proofread it, and maybe even have somebody else proofread it. So, every part of this is important.

Alison Monahan:               Yeah, I've also seen weird things that are missing on your resume. Maybe there's a big gap that you didn't intend to be. Sometimes people leave things off by mistake. Even I've seen law school resumes that didn't have your law school



on it because you maybe forgot and sent the wrong one. You also need to make sure your cover letter really matches. So if you have multiple cover letters for different types of positions, you want to make sure that you're not accidentally sending your three paragraphs about public interest work and how you're so dedicated to this to a law firm, because they're not going to be impressed.

- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And everything on your resume needs to be accurate. So, even if you're explaining something in a certain way, you can sort of massage your story, but everything needs to be accurate. If you wrote that you graduated from somewhere, you need to have graduated from there. If you wrote that you are fluent in a language, you need to be fluent in that language. And if you wrote that you did something, you worked somewhere, it all needs to be accurate because everything can be checked. So, just don't put anything that isn't true.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. When I was working as a programmer, I always liked to make people do a little test. If they're applying for a job and they said, "Oh, I know HTML." It's like, "Great, could you just lay out a table for me real quick?"
- Sadie Jones: Right. And they think, "Oh, it's not about that kind of job, so they're not going to ask me about it, because it's something different." And that's not true.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Well, I just felt like this was a pretty basic task, and if they put that they knew how to do it, they should be able to do it. Eventually, I was not allowed to do that anymore because people felt it was too aggressive. But I mean, it's on your resume. If you tell me you know this, you ought to know it.
- Sadie Jones: Right, which is the same if someone just starts speaking in that language – you really need to be prepared to speak in that language. That could happen.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you put that you're fluent in Hindi, they're probably going to have somebody talk to you who's actually fluent in Hindi, and they can check if you really are.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely. So I think that's a mistake that people put without really thinking about it, like, "Oh, it's just a little bit of an exaggeration." But I think that can be a big deal.
- Alison Monahan: Right, "I'm kind of fluent." Yeah, I think that's right. You want to make sure that everything on there is accurate and if it's testable, that you could live up if given a test on the subject.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly.



- Alison Monahan: Well, what do you think people should do if they're listening to this and they're thinking, "Oh my gosh, I did maybe send off a resume that has something weird on it, or maybe I did get the name wrong of the firm." How can people handle mistakes like this?
- Sadie Jones: Well, I think if it's a resume issue, you can probably fix it and send them a new one, and you don't even necessarily have to say what the thing you changed was. I think it's pretty easy, especially if it just happened, to fix it, to send it off and to say, "Oh, here's an updated resume. Could you use this one when distributing instead of the last one?" And I think if it's a cover letter, you could do something similar. You may want to acknowledge it: "I saw there was an error." I wouldn't make a huge deal about anything. I think you sort of have to acknowledge it, fix it, but not dwell on it and make it a bigger deal than it needs to be.
- Alison Monahan: I agree with that. I think fixing the mistake is good, and fixing it in the most kind of innocuous, non-over-the-top way is even better. Obviously, if you have discovered there's a problem, you're feeling probably not great about that, but you don't want to make that someone else's deal or problem. You just want to send them a note that says, "Hey, I noticed there was a mistake on my resume. Could you please use this version instead?" I think that's great language.
- Sadie Jones: I definitely felt like people are trying to fix something that they feel uncomfortable and then making it sort of my issue to deal with, like help them work through it or make them feel better about it. And that is not the person's job.
- Alison Monahan: Like, "Oh, don't worry, it's fine."
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. You're just trying to fix it and move on. And I bet you that they're not going to think much about it unless you make it a big deal.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think you could even say, "Hey, I have an updated resume. I just wanted to make sure you have the most recent version." And they're going to be like, "Okay, great, whatever. Throw that in the file."
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And the same, if you realize you spelled someone's name wrong in your thank-you email, I don't think you send a follow-up email. You just kind of let it go.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. There are times I was thinking that you don't need to fix it. There's nothing you can really do to fix it, you made a mistake. Next time double-check their name spelling.



Alison Monahan: Right. Well, let's talk about that because I think even more importantly... Obviously, no one's perfect, but we do want to minimize the mistakes that we're making. How do you think people can avoid making some of these types of mistakes?

Sadie Jones: I think have multiple people read all your documents, if you can. And have someone maybe do the final read-through, who hasn't seen it before, I think is a good idea. If you have kind of the same person, you're working with someone, or a parent, or a friend, or career services – if they've seen it over and over again, I think it's harder to catch the things like that because they may not be looking for it. So I think having people double-check. I think taking each part of the process seriously. Like I said, a thank-you note, a cover letter – none of it is a throwaway. Even though someone may never read it, you have to assume that the person is going to read it carefully. And so, every piece of it needs to be kind of carefully prepared. Especially if you're doing a lot of applications in a row, I think you want to make sure you're not on autopilot. I think this is where a lot of mistakes happen, where you're just doing it over and over again. And so then, you forget which firm you're sending it to.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think it's easy when you get in that mail-merge mode just to be like, "Send them all out!" But you do actually want to look at this stuff as it's going out the door because this is your reputation. And it may not seem important, but somebody might remember if you say something offensive or your resume is like half the page. They might be, "Well, that was weird. What was up with that?" You want to make sure you're presenting a good impression.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So I think it's just spending the time and the effort, and being careful.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I remember when I was actually sending resumes and cover letters and applications and things in envelopes, I would always make sure I had the really fancy paper because that kind of forced you to sit there and be like, "Okay, how is it going in the printer? Does it look good when it came out? Did I print it the right way on the page?" It just kind of forced you to slow down a bit.

Sadie Jones: And when you know each of those is costing money or you put a stamp on it, you're actually more careful.

Alison Monahan: I know. That paper was so expensive. I spent so much money on the Crane stationary paper.

Sadie Jones: Exactly, I think there were things that took more time and effort, and now that they've become easier, I think we can definitely tend to sort of miss things and not be as careful.



- Alison Monahan: Right. I think the other thing if you're applying online is you want to make sure you're actually submitting everything they're asking for, something that's even specifically for clerkships and things. If the judge has asked for something or the firm has asked for something, "Do they want a writing sample?" Make sure that you've ticked the boxes, and if there's anything else that they want – sometimes firms might want references or something – you want to make sure that you're giving them what they're asking for because in a lot of cases, frankly, that's just kind of a test to see if you follow directions.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. Here's another mistake. You can't not include your transcripts. So, there's no way around them seeing your transcript. They're going to see it. So not including it and making them have to go back to you and ask for it is just annoying, and it's not hiding anything, it's actually making it stand out more. And I've seen a ton of law students do that, like, "Oh, maybe they won't notice."
- Alison Monahan: Right. Another one that people try to get away with is they leave off the dates on their resume, and that's just always weird. It's like, "You graduated when you graduated. This job lasted however long it lasted." And again, it just kind of draws more attention to the fact that, "Well, why did they not do this? What are they trying to hide here?" I think in a situation like that, if there are things you're concerned about, that's something to talk to someone about at career services or talk to us about it, but you have to put the dates on there.
- Sadie Jones: You want to make it clear what your job history and life history was, and if there's a blank, then they are going to see there's a blank. And that's okay, but you can't fudge it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, people are going to notice. If you just don't have any dates on your resume, it's like, "Hmm. Okay, that's strange. Let me find out more about that, or just let me throw this in the pile of stuff I don't really want to deal with right now."
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. Here's another thing. Some places make you do a background check. Now, it's usually more after you're actually accepting an offer, but they may even have you fill some things out, HR forms. That should all be accurate. So even if there's something that you're concerned about or you don't feel good about in your past, like a criminal issue, a credit issue, whatever it is – you can't lie because they're going to find out, and the lie is way worse than whatever you had to explain.
- Alison Monahan: Right. No, that's definitely one of those where you just want to, again, very professional, very to-the-point, but deal with whatever it is and then move on and don't draw extra attention to it by trying to hide it, because as you said, it will come out.



- Sadie Jones: And let's say that you actually made a mistake, you realize that you checked something wrong. It's totally fine to tell them, "Oh, I made a mistake here. I should have checked this box." Again, don't make a big deal about it unless they're asking you more, but just fix it.
- Alison Monahan: Right, you want the record corrected, essentially, so if it ever comes up, you're like, "Oh, you know what I did... Here's the email where I sent that saying I checked the wrong box. Thanks."
- Sadie Jones: An email. Definitely.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Have a track record. Have a record.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, let's switch gears a little bit now and talk about some on-the-job mistakes. What have you seen here?
- Sadie Jones: A lot of things with the document management system. I see a lot of mistakes.
- Alison Monahan: Very true.
- Sadie Jones: I would say that's probably number one, and I'm talking about that summer associate all the way to everyone. So, when they give you training on it, pay attention, learn how it works, learn how to save stuff. And then when you are working on a case, make sure you know whatever the file number is or wherever you need to save it, that you understand what security needed to be on it, and that it's correct. So it's not like you've locked other people out of it, but also maybe it's not open to everybody. Don't snoop on things that you're not supposed to – they will know. There's a trail of all of that. Don't save stuff locally on your computer – that's the number one thing that really makes people upset. So just understand how the document management system works, even though it's boring. All that orientation stuff is probably the most important thing.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I actually completely agree with that. I think it's one of those things people do not pay attention to, and when it is not done correctly, it is absolutely infuriating for everyone who works with you. And people will basically want to kill you or fire you, or just cut your head off because if you're there at 2:00 in the morning and you know that somebody worked on something and you can't find the document because they saved it locally and then they went to bed. And now I'm awake and it's 2:00 in the morning and I don't have the document I need to work on, I'm not happy about that.



- Sadie Jones: And so, ask the questions you need to ask at the beginning. Whenever you're having the meeting to go over it, make sure that you're asking these questions that you are going to need to know later – so, whatever information you need to take down about how it gets saved. I just want to emphasize that's, I think, the biggest mistake.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and I think that other thing that goes along with that, that's kind of related is that you have to make sure if you're in a firm, you're going to be billing your time to someone. So you need to get those billing numbers, and this actually usually relates to the document management system because the documents are saved in the client file. But if you don't have those billing numbers, which seem, again, kind of not that important, it becomes a huge problem.
- Sadie Jones: And make sure you understand how the billing system works. For example, some firms let you bill travel time or other stuff to this or to that, or it's billable or it's not billable. Make sure all that stuff that they tell you that you understand, so you know that you're doing it correctly, because that's another thing partners get really upset at. And to go along with that and bill for time as you go. They will call you out. I have seen emails go to an entire firm, where they list at the end of the month every lawyer that didn't put in their time, including partners.
- Alison Monahan: Probably because time is money. Literally, this is their money, and if you are not billing this time on an almost daily basis... Because what people don't realize is people are looking throughout the month to see, "Well, how is this month going? Are we using our resources? Do people need more work? Do they have less work?", all of these things. And you can't do that if people haven't bothered billing their time. Not to mention trying to recreate an entire week or an entire month at the end of it is an absolute nightmare. And I'm a person who hates...
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and it's probably not going to be accurate.
- Alison Monahan: No, and I hated billing time, and it was torturous to do. But the more you get behind, the bigger of a mistake it is, basically.
- Sadie Jones: And you can find the system that works best for you. I know some people use timers, some people don't, some people do it constantly. I just think at the end of the day, you want to make sure that you add your time in for that day. You definitely, especially when you're starting out, don't want to stand out for not having done it. And summer associates bill their time also. So whether or not they're charging your time, that is not your problem. Your problem is to put everything in accurately.



- Alison Monahan: Right, and to understand what you're supposed to be doing. Part of what people I think don't understand too is oftentimes, your report and what you entered will actually go to a client for their sign off. And so, it's much better to have as a line item that, "I worked on the brief for blah, blah, blah, and discussed, worked on these issues", and list them out, versus, "Wrote brief." A client's not going to pay for that.
- Sadie Jones: And usually – again, going back to orientation – usually they'll give you examples. There's usually an orientation on timekeeping, and they will tell you, "Here's an example of a good timekeeping record. Here's an example of a bad one." So you can see exactly how to do it. All that stuff, I just feel like people don't pay attention, and it's actually super useful.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, they just don't think it's important, and that is the kind of stuff that will drive particularly partners absolutely up the wall, because they're the ones who are dealing with the clients who are always asking for discounts, and if they can't support the fees, then that's money out of their pocket, and then they are very unhappy.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And to go along with that partner thing, certain partners like things a certain way. Whatever you can figure out maybe from the associate or maybe the partner will even tell you, I know they can be weird about font and spacing and paper clips and all that stuff that may sound silly, but if you're somebody that finds out how the partner likes it and does it correctly, they are going to remember you as someone who paid attention and made them happy. And that's great if you could start out like that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I had a partner tell me once my job was to make him look good. And I thought that was a little weird, but it is basically true. But he yelled at me in court, basically whisper-yelled at me for not having the right staples on the documents. And I'm like, "You never told me this." He's like, "That's not my job. Your job is to figure out how to do this."
- Sadie Jones: Well, that's why we're giving you all the tips now, that you can figure out this stuff because it matters.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. You think, "Oh, I'm this highly trained, highly paid lawyer. I would never get chastised over paper clips or staples." But you do because nobody thought... My thinking was, "I'm not the paralegal." And the paralegal is like, "This is not my problem. I'm out doing other stuff." So I think it's one of those things – anything you're not sure about, you need to ask and clarify because someone probably has an opinion on it.
- Sadie Jones: And I have a feeling that the partner is just thinking, "Oh well, that's the right way." Whatever special thing they want is correct and any other way you would



do it is wrong. They're not necessarily thinking, "This is bonkers, this doesn't matter", because it matters to them.

Alison Monahan: Right. They're the ones who are standing up in court, passing out those papers, and they want them to look good, whatever they think looking good means. And you are not clairvoyant, you need to ask these questions. But things happen. But I do remember getting yelled at over staples versus paper clips or something like that, in court, in front of everybody.

Sadie Jones: I've heard a lot of those stories, and so you don't want to be that person.

Alison Monahan: No, you don't. It's not a great feeling. It's like, "How much law school did I do, so I can now be chastised over paper clips? Great, okay." But a partner once told me about somebody else that they'd assigned to make copies, and she was the low person on the totem pole. And she completely screwed up the copying job, and he was like, "How am I paying this person this much money and they can't even make copies correctly?" And that is also a fair point.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Well, and with copies, sometimes you need the billing number too.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.

Sadie Jones: I know people that have charged it to the wrong thing, and then it's a whole big deal, especially when you're making a lot of copies. I think a lot of this stuff seems small, but it just makes you stand out for doing it wrong and makes you stand out in a good way for doing it right and kind of figuring it out.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think the other thing people don't ever think about is that you need to know how to use some of this random technology, like a fax machine, for example, because there will come a time, if you are a low-level person in a law firm, where it will be 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and somebody needs to send a fax internationally and no one knows how to work the machine, and then it's your problem.

Sadie Jones: Because usually it's not just you dial in a number. Usually there're a lot of codes and different things.

Alison Monahan: I'm speaking from experience on this one. I've needed to send a fax at 3:00 in the morning to Albania where the partner was on vacation and no one knew how to do it. And I was there, trying to Google how to use the fax machine. These things happen. And there, you just want to make sure you have resources. So if they're doing an orientation and they're telling you, "If you ever need to use this, here's where the documentation is" – that is something to pay attention to.



- Sadie Jones: Exactly. So some of the stuff may not be you need to memorize it and always know how to use it, but at least know where you look it up. Most firms have a portal, an internal page where a lot of this stuff can be found. So just explore that at the beginning and figure out where you can find answers to things.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Other mistakes I've seen happen – people sometimes are citing bad cases or making a bad decision about legal strategy. You're usually not the one making the strategy decision, but I have seen higher-level people would be making terrible decisions, and then it's a question of, "Well, how do I tell them I think this is a bad choice?" But something like citations and bad case law – that's just something you have to be really careful about, because as the lower-level person, you're probably actually going to be the last person who does that check before things go out the door.
- Sadie Jones: Mm-hmm. And it's not going to make you look good coming in, that you couldn't do some basic stuff.
- Alison Monahan: No. I remember clerking, and there was a case that had been overturned like the week before and the briefs were submitted after that. And so we got these briefs with literally bad case law in them, and the judge is just like, "Did anyone follow this, because this is not actually the law now?" And they're kind of like, "Oh. Yeah, no, we didn't notice that." He's like, "Yeah, you're going to need to revise this because you don't want to be making this argument with this case right now."
- Sadie Jones: That must have felt embarrassing.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Well, things happen. As a clerk, you see a lot of things. Also, one time, there was a case going on and we had a hearing, and I was looking at the documents to prepare something for the judge for the next day. And I kind of went in his office at 6:30 PM and I was like, "Hmm, I'm not sure there's subject matter jurisdiction in this case." And he was like, "Huh, that's interesting. No, I think you're right, actually." So we go in the next day and he kind of asked the lawyers, and they say, "Oh, we're willing to waive that." And he's like, "Yeah, that's not the way this works in federal court. You need to go back to state court." So things happen. I mean, how embarrassing?
- Sadie Jones: I think you don't want to be that person, that made that mistake.
- Alison Monahan: No, and there are certain case law things that people always screw up. I remember this summer somebody, or another summer, massively screwed up a choice of law issue because they forgot about the Erie doctrine. And this is stuff from first-year Civil Procedure that you probably didn't think was that important, but it is really important in reality because you've got to get the law right.



- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think that's a lot of the theme of this, is things you don't think are important but turns out that they are, all the little things.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because they become big things when you get them wrong.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. Another thing is I think understanding when you need to be there, when you need to leave, what's expected of you. If it's not COVID times, is there sort of a FaceTime requirement, or does it not matter? Try to understand what that is, because if someone's looking for you and you're supposed to be there and you're in a spin class – that's not going to look good. Which is something that happened, that my entire summer class decided to go to an exercise class instead of come to a training, because they thought it was optional.
- Alison Monahan: Not that you would remember that.
- Sadie Jones: Even though they had RSVP-ed. Yeah, they really all got a talking to. So, if you say you're going to do something, do it. That's important.
- Alison Monahan: No, I think that's absolutely true. And when you're in-person, I think this is actually an underutilized way to use your secretary, because your secretary will basically cover for you if you're on good terms with them, but you have to tell them. So, if you are going to go to that spin class, you probably want to duck out and tell your secretary, "Hey, I've got a really important meeting I've got to take off-site. I'll be back in an hour. If anybody's looking for me, I'll be back then." That's way better than, "Where in the world is Alison? I need her right now. No one knows where she is, we can't contact her." So the secretary is there to be like, "Oh, you know what? She had to step out for an hour. She'll be back." That's fine. Nobody cares about that.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And when you are a summer associate, I think not as much generally is expected of you, so you at least need to be there when it is in-person. It's just like I think they expect the basics, because it's not that long of a time, you're not asked to work as much as a junior associate. So I think they do expect that sort of at the very least.
- Alison Monahan: And I've heard of firms where their secretary was literally required to basically check people in and check them out.
- Sadie Jones: I've heard that too.
- Alison Monahan: If you are at that place, then somebody's going to be watching, so you need to be on good terms with them.



- Sadie Jones: And every place is different. That's why I said I think it's a good idea to kind of understand. Maybe you talk to your mentor, you go out to lunch with some junior associates, but these are questions to ask – what kind of place is it in terms of that, and what's expected, because you just don't want to stand out. On the other hand, I've seen summers kind of stay too late, people are concerned about them, they're working too hard, and that they're trying to kind of overdo it, and somehow that doesn't look good either. So I know there's kind of a medium.
- Alison Monahan: I think it's a balance, and this also, again, depends on the partner. Some are morning people, some are night people. You need to find out if you're working for somebody who wants to start working at 7:00 AM. You might have a different schedule than if you're working for someone who never comes in before 11:00. And both of those people exist.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think it may be sort of a general firm thing, it may be the specific person you're working with. But you want to be clear on what those expectations are, because you don't want to be like, "Somebody's looking for you. They don't know where you are, you're missing."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because then they just get anxious and angry, and that's just never a good state for someone to be in when they find you.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. And also, you have email on your phone, they're expecting you to check it. Being a lawyer, you don't get to leave at 5:00 or 6:00 and then you're done and you don't have to look again. It's just not that kind of job.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, unfortunately so. Alright, before we wrap up, let's switch gears a little bit. What if somebody is being blamed for something that's not actually their fault at work? I've seen this happen a number of times with junior associates. So, they don't really make the mistake, but they're the ones who ultimately get blamed for it. Is there anything people can do about this?
- Sadie Jones: This is such a sticky situation.
- Alison Monahan: It is.
- Sadie Jones: And I think it can depend on the details of what the issue was. Generally, it's not a good idea to throw someone else under the bus, right? But you also don't necessarily want to say you did something. So, my advice would be to kind of focus on what the solution is to the problem, rather than who did it. So you understand this happened, what can you do to help fix it? I think there's a way to not directly take responsibility for something that's not yours, but maybe take responsibility for the solution, and then they'll remember you for that.



- Alison Monahan: That's good advice. I think this is super sticky because on the one hand, if you have proof that you didn't actually submit this document and your version was good, there's a very strong temptation to get that proof out there, and sometimes I think that can make sense depending on the scenario. But I think you do have to be very cognizant of making the person who's above you in the chain angrier by the fact that now it's clear that it wasn't your fault and it's really their fault. It's kind of a no-win situation basically, unfortunately.
- Sadie Jones: And there might be situations where you didn't make the mistake, but maybe you should have seen it. Or maybe you did make the mistake. I think there are a lot of situations where you probably were at fault somewhere in there, and maybe everyone is, because a lot of people looked at it and didn't see it. I just feel like focusing on blame is never the most mature way to deal with it, and no one really wants to hear that.
- Alison Monahan: That's true. And I think if this happens repeatedly, it's probably a sign you need to get a different job, frankly, or at least stop working if you can, from the person that you're working with, because there are some people who just do this and you do not want to be working for those people.
- Sadie Jones: I think that a good partner always takes responsibility ultimately for whatever the work is. I know that not everyone does that, but the partners that I've worked with were really great, always feel like they should have looked at everything in the end and it is kind of their issue. And so, hopefully they're not focused on the blame because they're in charge. And I just think that's a good message to kind of send down the line, like, "Hey, I was the one who was responsible for this, but you guys have to make me look good."
- Alison Monahan: Right. and I think it's the same thing if your secretary or a paralegal does something and they don't do it correctly. Ultimately that's your problem, you should've looked at that.
- Sadie Jones: Please don't blame your secretary first. You can work with them on whatever the issue was later, but that looks really terrible if you blame the secretary or paralegal to the higher-ups. It doesn't look good.
- Alison Monahan: That would definitely be a mistake because they're not going to be amused by that. A lot of these people have been there way longer than you have, and also it's just really bad form because you were the one who was admitted to the bar, you were the one who was signing off on this. And if they screwed something up, it's on you, it's not on them.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and hopefully you learn something, like, "Next time I should've checked" whatever it was. So yeah, that is definitely the hardest situation though.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think so. Alright, well, unfortunately, we're running out of time here. Any final thoughts you want to share?
- Sadie Jones: Go slow and think about everything that you're doing carefully. You don't want to get too caught up with not making a mistake that you're paralyzed, but you want to feel like you were careful and that if you made a mistake, you were doing your absolute best and you're going to fix it and not make that mistake again. That's what I would say. But I think just kind of being careful and really calculated about everything you're doing is helpful.
- Alison Monahan: I agree. I think you want to have kind of a defensible process, and then if mistakes slip through, then occasionally they happen. But you always, for example, want to be double-checking the names of people, as we've talked about. Or your citations – you want to have a process for the citations to make sure that they're going to be as correct as possible. And if you do, then when somebody comes back to you and they say, "Oh, there's this problem", then either you've got to figure out what went wrong in the process or at least can explain to them, "Well, look, here's how I tried to make sure that didn't happen." And hopefully, people recognize that sometimes things happen. That's life.
- Sadie Jones: And just you don't want to have made the same mistake twice, which is a big thing. That you've learned something, you've moved on, it's not going to happen again.
- Alison Monahan: No, that's a great point. If you have made a mistake, you want to be sure that you can explain how next time your process is changing so that this would not happen again, because if it does happen again, it looks a lot worse.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: Well, thank you so much for joining us.
- Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.
- Alison Monahan: My pleasure. For more career help and the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, you can check out [careerdicta.com](http://careerdicta.com). 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, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at [lee@Lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:lee@Lawschooltoolbox.com) or [alison@lawschooltoolbox.com](mailto:alison@lawschooltoolbox.com) – that has one L in it. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at [LawSchoolToolbox.com](http://LawSchoolToolbox.com). Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!



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