



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to The Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking with ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones about what you can learn from a summer job that maybe isn't your first choice. 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 talking with ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones about what you can learn from a summer job that you do not 100% love. So welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Sometimes law students are disappointed at the summer job they end up taking. Maybe it's not the exact type of organization they wanted, the precise type of work, the ideal location and so on. But there's a lot to be learned from any legal job. Do you agree?

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think a lot of this can be kind of the attitude you have about it going in.

Alison Monahan: And what type of things do you think people can get out of a summer job, even if it's not their ideal job?

Sadie Jones: I think there's a lot of things that you can get pretty much out of any summer job. I think just working in a professional environment is something maybe you've never done before, especially if you went straight through. Specifically working in a legal environment, I think will be helpful, just learning how things go. You can get a writing sample, you can get research and writing skills, you can get references for the future. There are a lot of different things that I think you can learn and walk away with out of any summer job at all.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. I think if it's nothing more than learning to start being a professional, establishing your professional identity, dealing with all types of office politics, just kind of seeing how does this world operate. I think for a lot of people who are coming in without a lot of professional experience, that alone is a sufficient way to spend the summer, whether it's working on something that you love or something you don't love, or you're not that interested in. I think if



you treat it almost like an anthropological experiment, you can actually get a lot out of it.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. I think that you can take a step back, especially if it's not the area of law that you're interested in long-term or the one that you wanted. So, just taking a step back and saying, "What am I going to get just out of working?" It doesn't necessarily have to be the area that you expect to work in later on.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think you'll obviously learn some type of substantive knowledge, but oftentimes, say, for the first summer particularly, people have just kind of taken whatever job they can get, and that's totally fine. I think what you want to be thinking about this summer is shaping it into something that you can talk about later, because when you do interviews for maybe your second summer, which might be more focused on what you're actually looking at, or jobs after school, which hopefully are going to be closer to what you really want, you're going to have to talk about this experience and you want to be framing it in a way that actually sounds like you've got something out of it.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I always say that to 1Ls – that I think the first summer is sort of a gift, because there's not much pressure on finding the thing that you really want to do long-term. I think it more is just about the experience and having something to talk about, and feeling like there's something substantive that you can take with you and talk about in interviews. Particularly the 1L summer, most people are not going to get a job that fits exactly what they want. There are those 1L BigLaw jobs that are few and far between, and most 1Ls get one of a few different things that all 1Ls get. And I don't think it really needs to be in anything in terms of your long-term career goals, but I do think that you should think about, "How am I going to explain this in an interview, and what's this going to look like on my resume, and what are the things I can take out of it?" So I think it's a gift. I think it's sort of a freebie in a way.

Alison Monahan: No, I think that's right. The path of your legal career is certainly not determined by what you do your first summer, so I don't think there's anything to worry about. I think it's just a question of making the most of whatever experience you have, even if it's not something that you're necessarily 100% thrilled about. Well, for somebody who's going into this summer job and they know they're somewhat disappointed, they feel bummed about it, they're not thrilled about what they got, what advice do you have?

Sadie Jones: Well, first I'd say maybe have those feelings and work through them a little bit. And I think we've talked about that before, that maybe you need to talk to somebody or just deal with it, because that's okay that you are disappointed you didn't get what you wanted, and you're maybe not feeling great about it. And then I think you move on and you say, "I'm going to have a good attitude. I'm going to go in with an open mind and I'm going to say, 'What can I



contribute to this job, and how am I going to make the most of this situation?" Because I do think a lot of it is how you go into it and the attitude you have, and kind of focusing on the positives, because there are positives out of any job. I can't think of any job where I couldn't tell you five things that I think you could take out of that job, and that you could contribute to the job.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think both of those are so key. Even if you, for whatever reason, are not super thrilled about the job that you've ended up in, someone hired you. So, they hired you to do something and with the hope that you're going to make their lives easier, or the lives of the people you're working for. So, I thought your point about what you can contribute is really good, because it's not just what can you take away? Hopefully, you're doing work that is helping someone – that's usually what lawyers are doing. We're doing something to try to solve someone's problems. So I think if you frame it as what you can contribute, I think that may help people feel more connected to what they're doing and less about, "Well, this isn't setting me up for my career in securities."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And also, particularly if we're talking about this summer, I think you need to take a step back and say, "Most people probably aren't exactly where they want to be right now... "

Alison Monahan: Just in the world.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So I think you need to say, "I made the best of a really difficult situation, and what does that say about me?" Because most people are not exactly doing what they want to be doing right now, and I think we all feel like we've had to make the best of it.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think it's important if you do have a job in the summer of 2021 to recognize this is actually an opportunity, because a lot of people last year didn't have this opportunity. They thought they had jobs secured, and then suddenly, poof! – all those went away. So, at least you have something.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. I think if you have a job right now, that's great. You should pat yourself on the back, whatever it is.

Alison Monahan: Right. And if people are listening to this and they don't have a job yet – well, we've got other podcasts on that. It's not too late, so you can go out and find one. I think one of the things people can really try to take away too is to try to build some personal relationships. Even if the work is not exactly what you're looking for, even if you don't find the job so compelling or so interesting, you're going to be working with other people. And so, these are great opportunities to kind of dig in, try to make some new friends, try to make some professional contacts, because nobody stays in a job forever these days, people are moving



around all the time. And in a way, this is your professional network, so you may as well try to connect with people.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I would say along those lines, make sure that those people don't know that you're not really happy with the job and that it's not your first choice, because I think that's part of the relationship building. I think seeming positive and into it is going to build those relationships more.

Alison Monahan: Right. You want to be that person who is enthusiastic and eager to help and eager to learn, not that person who clearly sees this as beneath them and isn't putting in the time and effort, and just has a generally bad attitude. Basically about the only way you can really screw this up is to be the person that comes off as not wanting to be there.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I'd also say even if you go into it thinking 100% that this is not where you want to be and it's not what you want to practice later on, you really don't know. I know a lot of people that ended up, particularly during the last economic crisis, in areas that they were not happy with, that they did not want to be at, they were very upset about it. And a lot of them stayed even after they had the chance to leave and it turned out that maybe it was a better fit, maybe they had an open mind and it worked out. So I would say, don't ever be 100% sure that it's not where you want to be.

Alison Monahan: Right. The counterpoint to that is, I took firm jobs saying I definitely want to go into litigation, and maybe if they'd stuck me in some other random area, it actually would have been a better fit for me. Who knows?

Sadie Jones: I think that's so true. And I always tell summer associates that they should try an assignment in an area that's completely foreign to them or something they think they're totally not interested in. I think it's worth exploring, because law school definitely sets you on a certain path and mostly tells you about certain areas of practice, and so why not try something really different?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think just be open-minded. Like you said, you really don't know. And sometimes people take a public interest job their first summer and then they later go into BigLaw, and then years later they're reflecting back and they're like, "You know what? I really think I actually liked the work I was doing as a 1L summer more than this. Huh." And then basically circle back to doing that. So, you don't know how the long run is going to play out, basically.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And I think it can be sort of freeing to not be in this area that you were sure you wanted to be in. I think it kind of opens some possibilities, and maybe in a certain way you could feel less pressure about it. So, I just think it's kind of how you frame it in your own mind, going into the job.



- Alison Monahan: Right. And I guess worst case, maybe you learn what you definitely don't want to do in the long run, and that's actually useful information too.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely.
- Alison Monahan: Alright, well, let's switch gears a little bit. So, sometimes the job seems like it might be a really great fit before you start, but then it turns kind of disappointing for any number of reasons. What can people do in this scenario?
- Sadie Jones: Well, I think there's usually something you can do probably to alter the situation in some way. So, there're usually things that maybe can be changed – maybe there's someone you can talk to, maybe you can approach it from a different point of view, maybe there's some way you can learn something differently. So I think you should kind of explore options to improve the situation.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, certainly. I had one summer job that frankly was fairly disastrous. Sometimes these things just happen, unfortunately, and it doesn't necessarily reflect on you. You might just be caught up in a bizarre scenario or be working for someone who is a terrible boss. It's a difficult situation because you went into this thinking, "Oh, this is going to be so great", and then suddenly it's really not great. So, hopefully the organization might have ways to improve it. Honestly, sometimes I think you just have to suck it up.
- Sadie Jones: And sometimes you get stuck with a bad person. There's somebody who's in charge of the assignment you're working on, who's not ideal, and sometimes it has nothing to do with you. And people will tell you this is a difficult person to work for, but that's kind of a good experience for down the line also. Being in a situation that's difficult, you're going to learn something from that.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think if nothing else it's going to teach you a lot about that workplace, and you can evaluate whether you would want to continue if it was an option to be in that same workplace, and also to really evaluate how this happened so it doesn't happen with your next "dream job". So, if you think that this was the job for you, and then you go in and you find that you hate the day-to-day work – well, there was a miscalculation somewhere along the line. I think a bad boss is kind of a different scenario because that's a little more out of your control, but this could be providing information about maybe you're being, I don't know, overly optimistic or just not really understanding the scenario of what this type of work looks like. But you definitely can use this as a learning experience and say, "You know what? Maybe family law is really not for me."
- Sadie Jones: And maybe the values or the things you think are important in a job change. Sometimes people just want the job that makes the most money, sometimes they want the job that's going to give them the most flexibility in their life. I



think those things can change over time, and it's about paying attention and listening to yourself and saying, "What's important to me right now?"

Alison Monahan: Right. So I think if you're in a job that you're really excited about and you start to have these issues, you've really got to figure out why, what is going on? Were there things that you did that contributed to this, or were you just caught up in a bad situation? Is the work itself not the right work, is the office environment not the right place for you? Are people saying or doing things that are inappropriate? There are all kinds of things that can go wrong in a legal job.

Sadie Jones: Also, I think you should evaluate, are all these things happening in the job, or is it you in that job? Are you putting a lot of pressure on yourself, are there things you could change, are you taking on too much? I think also kind of seeing, is it this particular situation, is there something going on with yourself? I just think look at it from all angles.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think talking with somebody that you can trust, maybe somebody outside of the environment you're working in. Or when this happened with me, I went to my mentor who I had become friendly with, and kind of ran the situation by her. And she was like, "Wow, this is really terrible, and I don't really know what to tell you to do." But even just having that validation from someone who is like, "Yeah, this is not okay. This is not normal. This should not be happening", I think it can be helpful. Obviously, you're probably burning that bridge because they're probably going to tell someone else about it, so maybe you should go talk to a therapist or something, or a coach. But I think in some cases, you can improve the situation, and then you should do that and try to make it better. But in other cases, it's just an unfortunate situation, and I think it's time probably to start thinking about your next steps.

Sadie Jones: And I think some people sort of have the opposite problem of what we're talking about, where they have this idea of something being a dream job, and they have trouble letting that go. And so, I think that's something also to think about – your dream job could be the worst fit, and so you need to look at that also.

Alison Monahan: Right, or just that you're not being realistic. Maybe it does have a lot of great things that are good for you, but the reality is the day-to-day work of working in the legal profession can be very demanding. So, probably every day you're not going to wake up being like, "Oh, I'm so excited to go to my dream job", if you've just gotten home at 3:00 in the morning. Some of this might just be reality hitting people.

Sadie Jones: And just what it's like to start out in anything.

Alison Monahan: Right, it's difficult. You're going to be working a lot.



- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and where you don't really know what you're doing out of any of these jobs. So, I would just say it all should be a learning experience.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. I think do your best, evaluate the situation, and then ultimately, this is really only one summer. So if things are not going in a great direction and it's kind of turning into a mess – well, you know what? You've only got a few more weeks probably.
- Sadie Jones: And also we talked about the 1L summer being a freebie, but sometimes the 2L summer doesn't work out, and I also don't think that means something for the rest of your life.
- Alison Monahan: No.
- Sadie Jones: There's another job, and another way to do something different, and a path. And maybe it's going to take you a little longer to get where you need to go, but I think some people get really stuck if it doesn't work out or you don't get an offer, or it's not what you really wanted to do. I think it's best to focus on, "Okay, what's the next step of somewhere that gets me to where I need to go, and how can I kind of put this on my resume and have a story that makes sense for moving forward?"
- Alison Monahan: Absolutely. Speaking as someone who had a terrible 2L summer experience, it doesn't matter. In the end, that just became fodder for a blog post and this podcast, and who could have predicted we would be talking about it today?
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. I think like we've said, if you don't have a job yet, it's still not too late. Ultimately you want to find something to do for the summer, and there's something to do for everybody during the summer in some form, and that's what you need to focus on.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. Alright, let's shift gears a little bit again. What about disappointment over the way that a job might be playing out in these strange COVID times? I'm guessing a lot of these summer positions may still be virtual or may be some type of hybrid, and if nothing else, they're probably going to have pretty limited social events. So, the traditional big blowout parties and things that people had, especially in law firms, or even in New York, they would have huge parties that all different types of lawyers were invited to all summer long, and it was super fun for everyone. That's probably still not happening, right?
- Sadie Jones: I don't think so. I think even if things are going to be able to be in-person, they're obviously going to be much more low-key and different. But what I would say is rather than compare it to what you thought it was going to be, or what you've heard, or what you pictured a summer associate position being, I



would just focus on what the reality is, which I think is where we all are right now.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Sadie Jones: We have to let go of the way things used to be, the before times, and we have to say, "Where are we now, and where can we find some joy and meaning in what we're doing right now?" I would also say there're some advantages to not having all of those things. I know they all sound really fun, but they are a lot of pressure.

Alison Monahan: They're really honestly not that much fun. I was like a career summer associate, I did it three times. I don't think I enjoyed a single one of those parties, to be honest.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I've spent many, many summers doing them, and even on the employer side, they do seem fun at first and they get less fun over time. But I'll say a lot of bad things can happen at those events also. There's actually more of a chance you're going to lose your offer because of some situation that happened at one of those events. And so, I would say there's less pressure. And I know some of these Zoom things can be awkward or things are going to be probably more smaller groups, one-on-one. But kind of move past the "It's awkward." It's awkward for everyone, we all know that. And then just get into it. Figure out the best way to connect with someone in that situation.

Alison Monahan: No, I think that's absolutely right. It is what it is; there's nothing you can do about it. So, back to our original point, you may as well just try to take advantage of getting what you can out of this, whatever scenario exist, and taking away from it whatever you can learn, and not getting fixated on this idea that you don't get to go to the golf course or whatever. You want to talk about awkward, try being asked to swim in a swimming pool with the rest of the law firm as a summer associate. I mean, that was horrific.

Sadie Jones: That's the thing I always remind people – some of these events sound really fun in terms of what you're doing, but it would be fun if you were doing them with your friend.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Sadie Jones: But you're not. You're doing them mostly with a bunch of older partners.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Honestly, some of those were just like, "Wow. Okay, do we really have to do this?" So maybe you're not really missing much. And you're right, any event like that was an absolute potential minefield, and every single summer you heard crazy stories about people getting their offers pulled because of bad



decision-making they made while drunk at a party. So hey, you don't have that problem.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. I mean, I think it's kind of a gift, to not get to do all of that stuff. And I've heard some positive things actually about some of the virtual events, genuinely positive things, and same with the interviews. So I would say I really do think there are advantages, and I think we might look back when we have to go back into the more social world, and maybe miss some of these times, is what I'm thinking.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I went to my first Zoom wedding as a guest last weekend, and it was actually legitimately really fun. I had no idea what to expect. I was just like, "Wow, this could be super awkward", but it was actually great. I had a really good time.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So, I bet you never would have thought that that's something you would have enjoyed or ever done.

Alison Monahan: No, and I feel like now people might even just set up a stream at their wedding, even if it can be in-person, just for the people who can't make it. Because there are definitely weddings I wanted to attend but I couldn't go for some reason. I'm sure I would have enjoyed it, at least partly, on Zoom.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. No, I think that it will kind of change going forward, maybe there will be some more options for virtual ways to participate in things where it makes sense. I just think we should sort of appreciate what this is right now and some of the advantages that come out of it.

Alison Monahan: Well, and I think too, dialing back the social events, particularly for these BigLaw firms, it's fine if it's just like you're a single person, but even then, if you're an introvert, you probably don't want to be going to all of these things all the time. But anyone who has family or even pets and things, you would be gone these really, really long days, and it was just considered totally normal that you would basically never be home. So I think for some people that may be better as well.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think there are definitely some advantages, and I think in certain ways, you can sort of participate in a better way in these more one-on-one smaller situations. I think people are sort of paying attention more; if it's you and another person on Zoom versus you and another person in a really loud corner of a cocktail party.

Alison Monahan: Right, where you're both tired and have work to do and don't really want to be there anyway. No, I think that's a great point. I think people, when they're trying to make a connection, if people are reaching out to you, they're legitimately



reaching out to you to try to make that connection. And so, I think that's definitely something to take advantage of.

Sadie Jones: I'd also say something we've talked about before, but if there are things in-person, just make sure that you're sort of following the lead of how they're doing things and what sort of the guidelines are. Make sure you're kind of fitting in to what they're expecting in terms of social distancing or masks or outside or whatever it is, because I think that we may sort of slowly get back into those things.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Sadie Jones: So, just be careful that you're sort of being aware of what they expect of you.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. And again, be careful what you're putting on your social media if it's public, just generally being cognizant of being a responsible person in these odd times where people have very different viewpoints on what might be acceptable.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. So I would say just kind of stay in a way where you're not being really outspoken.

Alison Monahan: Right. Well, before we wrap up, one question: Is it ever okay to quit a summer position if it's going really, really poorly?

Sadie Jones: I think I've seen this once in my years of being in this industry. I would say it should be an absolute last resort. There are situations where I think for your own health and personal concerns that you need to do that, but I don't think you quit a summer job because you don't like it.

Alison Monahan: Right. No, I agree, I think if you are in a position of danger to your physical or emotional or mental health, and it's gotten to a point where you just cannot bear to do this anymore, I think that's different than just being like, "Well, I don't really love the work and I'm kind of bored and it would be nice to have a little extra vacation." Generally speaking, you should just stick it out.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And any of these summer jobs can't be that long, because it's the summer. So I think usually you can do that. I would also say if you are having a really hard time, talk to them before you just quit. If it is kind of personal issues going on, maybe there is a way for them to scale it back or offer you something, because usually they'll want to work with you. They recruited you there, they hired you, so at least give them a chance before you just cut it off if it's that bad, if it's super extreme. But other than that, I think you just have to say, "This wasn't a great summer, I'm not really enjoying it, but I can finish it."



- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I'm thinking of things like someone's being sexually harassed or something. That's a different scenario than just like, "Oh, I didn't get the assignment that I wanted."
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And also just remember, you're going to have to explain it if you left early, usually. So, you can't just quit and then think you'll just say, "Oh well, it only ended up being a half summer job."
- Alison Monahan: And I think it's different if you have a family emergency or something. I think typically an employer is eager to work with you in that scenario to have a way to close this out that works for everyone. And that's definitely something that if you really need to go and take care of someone or whatnot, talk to them about it, but definitely don't just sort of ghost your employer and never come back.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. So, I think if you're in a situation like that, you need to be fairly open with them about what's going on, and try to just leave on the best terms. But I just think that's an extreme situation, and so that's the only time you do something like that.
- Alison Monahan: Agreed. Well, any final thoughts on this topic before we wrap up?
- Sadie Jones: My final thought is really where we started, which is that I think a lot of this is about the attitude. I know there's a lot of disappointment now going on, just generally, and so I think you kind of need to go in and just make the best of this situation. This is an extremely unusual time that would probably never happen to you again. And so, maybe it feels unfair that it was during this important summer and job in your life, but I really think that there's something to be had out of any of these jobs. And so, it is about going in with kind of an open and positive attitude.
- Alison Monahan: I definitely agree. I mean, what choice do you have really? Alright, well, thank you so much for joining us.
- Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.
- Alison Monahan: My pleasure. With that, we are out of time. For more career help and the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, check out [CareerDicta.com](https://www.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 or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!



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