

## To Split or Not to Split, That is the Question

Our students are frequently in the position of having to decide among numerous summer job offers. Should students take advantage of the opportunity some employers offer to split the summer between two employers, typically spending 6 to 8 weeks at each position?

*The consensus in CDO is that splitting during the first-year summer may not be a good idea, but splitting during the second-year summer may make sense.*

Yale statistics seem to mirror this advice. Over the last five years an average of 12% of first-year students have decided to split their summer while 33% of second-year students have split their summer.

### First-Year Summer

For most 1Ls, their first-year summer job will be their first legal experience. It may take some time to become acclimated to the work environment, to the process of conducting research, and to dealing with fellow attorneys and support staff. Additionally, the importance of securing good references and a writing sample can be particularly important during this time because of the potential need for them when applying for second-year summer jobs.

### Second-Year Summer

By the time their second-year summer rolls around, most 2Ls will already have had some experience working for a legal employer. This experience, coupled with an additional year of school, usually provides a level of confidence that will enable a student to hit the ground running during the summer. As a result, second-year students may find splitting their summer to be a wise choice if they feel the need to explore several workplaces.

### Potential Pros

- ✓ Opportunity to explore two different jobs. This is especially helpful for students who are trying to decide between a public interest or private sector position or are set on pursuing public interest but wish to spend part of a summer exploring a private sector position.
- ✓ Ability to expand your network of contacts. Working with different employers increases your chances of meeting people with similar career interests who can serve as mentors and contacts in your future job searches.
- ✓ Greater likelihood of working on a variety of different types of legal projects. While each project may not be very in depth, you will be able to explore a number of legal issues during the summer.
- ✓ When working for one employer for the entire summer, a few students have been known to get a little lazy towards the end of the summer and not perform as well as they did in the beginning of the summer. By limiting the number of weeks you are with one employer, you may avoid that problem.
- ✓ Opportunity to investigate more than one city.

### Potential Cons

- ✗ Insufficient time to thoroughly explore the position. It takes time to really see what the attorneys at an

organization do, what the culture of the place is, and what it would be like to work there on a daily basis. Six or so weeks may not provide you with sufficient time to take in all this information.

- ✘ Inability to secure a strong reference. Your opportunity to work on a significant project with an attorney who will get to know you and your work product sufficiently to serve as a strong reference may be lessened. It may be more difficult to develop strong mentor relationships as well.
- ✘ Failure to create a strong writing sample. A good writing sample requires attention on your part and on the part of an attorney willing to assist you in revising your work product. This may not happen in 6 to 8 weeks.
- ✘ Less time to rehabilitate in the event of a misjudgment/mistake. Everyone makes mistakes when starting new jobs. However, when you only have the opportunity to work on a handful of projects with a limited number of attorneys, your error may take on greater significance.
- ✘ Logistical issues associated with moving to a new city and finding new living arrangements.
- ✘ Logistical issues associated with the potential desire to be available to participate in FIP in late August.

### Deciding Where To Go First

Many employers will require that you spend the first half of the summer with them because there is a perception that students do better work during the first half of the summer and are more likely to accept an offer. Employers provide orientation programs for students arriving at the beginning of the summer. You may wish to work for the employer in which you have a greater long term interest during the first half of the summer.

### Summer Program End Dates

When interviewing with employers, inquire about the length of their summer programs. Some employers have surprisingly early end dates, as early as August 1. You are not going to be able to spend the second half of the summer working for an employer with an early program end date.

### Conflicts of Interest

If you will be working for more than one employer in the summer, be sure that both employers are aware of your employment plans. It is likely that you will be asked to participate in a conflicts check to determine whether the potential for a client conflict exists. It is important that you do not reveal any confidential information. If you have any questions when participating in the conflicts check, consult with your employers.

### Split Public Interest Summer Opportunities

When considering whether to split, don't forget to consider applying to firms who offer split public interest summer opportunities. Through these programs, you can receive the law firm's salary while exploring public interest work for part of the summer. See CDO's handout *Firms Sponsoring Split Public Interest Summers*.

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