

Chapter 5

The Career Climb

Stage 1 – The Wide-Eyed Rookie

What You're Doing:

- Taking every assignment (even the dumpster fires nobody else wants).
- Triple-checking your work for typos that partners will still find.
- Trying not to look like you're Googling "how to draft a motion."

Bad Ass Hack:

Listen like it's your superpower. When you get feedback, write it down and use it immediately. The associates who grow fastest are the ones who treat every correction as a secret weapon.

Stage 2 – The Grinder

What You're Doing:

- Becoming the "go-to" for certain tasks.
- Saying "yes" to everything because you think that's the game.
- Confusing being busy with being valuable.

Bad Ass Hack:

Start building a reputation not just for working hard, but for being responsive and efficient. Make sure you proactively update partners and clients. Over communication is not a bad thing. Provide quality work quickly. Partners view this as being more profitable and will gravitate to you as the workhorse.

Stage 3 – The RainMaker-in-Training

What You're Doing:

- Getting face time with clients – not just the partner's clients, but your own connections.
- Building your network before you need it.
- Creating a personal brand inside and outside the firm.

"If you wait until you need a network to build one, you're already too late."

Bad Ass Hack:

Keep a "relationship list" – people you want to know, help, and be known by. Send them articles. Make introductions. Be useful without keeping score.

Stage 4 – Bad Ass Partner

What You're Doing:

- Originating clients and managing million-dollar matters.
- Leading teams like a CEO runs a company.
- Shaping the firm's culture and strategic direction.

Your legacy isn't just the business you bring in – it's the people you lift up. The partners everyone respects aren't just rainmakers. They're talent makers.

The Payoff

You can't skip stages, but you can accelerate through them if you're intentional. The key is being deliberate. Stay aware of where you are, keep moving forward, and you'll avoid the stall that sidelines so many mid-career lawyers.

What stage are you in today:	
What You're Supposed to be Doing:	
What You're Actually Doing:	(if you don't know this answer, ask your manager)
How Can You Advance to Next Stage:	(ask your manager, look at your annual reviews)

How Can You Advance to Next Stage (cont):	
Notes:	

If you need assistance with this worksheet, email us
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