

NEAL ■ GERBER ■ EISENBERG

LATERAL FAQs

Who are your clients?

We are proud of our client list, consisting of privately and publicly held companies, financial institutions, not-for-profit organizations including foundations and high net worth individuals. It includes a diverse range of companies of all types and sizes. We represent large institutions (such as an international fast food giant and a multi-faceted manufacturing holding company), and we represent small sole proprietors (such as a local jewelry manufacturer and a family-owned meat processing company), as well as every size client in between. We represent companies traded on major stock exchanges, as well as four of the top five privately held businesses in Chicago. Clients from all walks of life, throughout the United States and beyond, seek our advice and counsel and come to us for our expertise.

The advantage to having such a diverse array of clients is that our attorneys get to tap into a diverse array of problems and concerns on a daily basis, from the most sophisticated transactions and bet-the-company litigation to personal decisions affecting families and counseling clients on employment and insurance matters. The range and depth of the services provided are traditionally associated with much larger law firms or with specialized boutique firms.

Does the firm have billable hours requirements for attorneys?

The firm expects all associates beyond the first year to bill 2,000 hours on an annual basis. First year associates are expected to bill 1,600 hours on an annual basis with the 400 hour balance to be spent on professional development activities such as shadowing, practice-based learning, and learning the skills to efficiently practice law. All other attorneys are expected to bill 1,800 hours on an annual basis. This requirement is prorated for attorneys who take approved leave during the year and/or who work on an approved part-time schedule.

How does the firm develop associates?

Recognizing that legal acumen and hard work are our primary commodities, the firm has a competency based talent management system. This system, utilizing benchmarks and competencies to provide a roadmap for successful professional development, informs work allocation, evaluation, and individual professional development planning at the firm. The competency framework provides clarity to associates and partners about what drives success at our firm. It helps guide associates' development through the core competencies that are firm-wide coupled with specific practice group benchmarks that help lawyers hone technical legal skills in their field.

What are the Core Competencies?

After conducting an in-depth analysis to uncover the basic drivers for success within the firm, we were able to identify the competencies that are most critical to the development and success of attorneys at our firm. The competencies include written and oral communication, research and analysis, professional judgment, efficiency and responsiveness, client service, business development, leadership and teamwork, firm citizenship and investment in the firm. The development of these competencies are charted over four levels. It was vital to the firm in making this shift that we continue to honor individuality and advocate for diversity. Significantly, the skills necessary to master these competencies are all objectively observable and obtainable through training, mentoring and a personal commitment to success.

How is compensation structured?

We are proud to be at the forefront in applying a core competency framework to all aspects of associate development, including compensation. All entry level associates joining the firm from law school are slotted in Level 1. Compensation for the first two years out of law school is lockstep. Thereafter, compensation falls within 4 base salary bands that coincide with the four competency levels. Movement from one level to the next entails a significant increase in compensation.

What benefits are available to attorneys?

The firm offers a wide array benefits geared towards health, planning and work-life balance. Click [here](#) for more detail.

What is the starting salary for a first year associate?

First year associates are paid an annual salary of \$145,000.

What is the firm's evaluation process?

The firm has a formal semi-annual associate review and evaluation process that focuses on discrete observable behavior and skills. The process begins when associates identify the work they have done over the review period and solicit evaluations from their supervising attorneys. Those evaluations are then compiled and reviewed by the Associate Review Committee that gauges the progress of each associate's development. Associates are provided with hard copies of each of their individual reviews as well as the committee's summary of the firm's view of their progress and growth opportunities. These reviews are discussed with each associate at a meeting with an Associate Review Committee member and a partner from the associate's practice group. The meeting is also a forum to discuss the associate's professional development plan and their practice specific benchmarks. At the year end evaluation, associates are also provided with compensation information, including any discretionary adjustments to their compensation for the year just ended, and their new base salary for the coming year.

The firm actively seeks associate feedback on the review process and the associate's experience with the firm. This information is used both to improve our processes and to provide the associate with the best possible experience.

What training opportunities does the firm provide?

The firm prides itself on providing a wealth of opportunities for associates of all levels to get involved in day-to-day work and client interactions.

The firm works through its practice groups to put together formal training programs at the smaller, practice group level to enhance and develop the substantive skills of attorneys within that group, from the most junior to the most senior. While the litigation groups have run trial training and trial skill programs, the Corporate and Securities group hosts a training program on structuring deals and drafting agreements.

The firm also provides cross-disciplinary training programs to keep general legal knowledge up-to-date and also encourage cooperation and facilitation across groups.

The firm works to bring in some of the best consultants in the field to provide additional training on a firm-wide basis. New partners receive training and coaching on business development, supervision and leadership, and the business of law firms. Communication and writing training is valuable and available at all levels, both in large-group settings, and in one-on-one coaching as needed.

Finally, the firm encourages all of its attorneys to take a leading role in their own professional development, and to that end encourages individual participation and leadership in local and national bar associations.

What is the firm's track to partnership?

The firm has a four level associate structure leading to partnership. Associates are considered for partnership when they are in the fourth associate level. Lateral associates are considered for partnership with the rest of the attorneys with their same level of experience, with the exception that the firm generally does not consider a lateral associate for partnership until he or she has completed at least one full year of service with the firm.

What is the firm's policy on pro bono work?

At Neal Gerber Eisenberg, pro bono work is a cornerstone of our mission. We encourage all of our lawyers, from summer associates to partners, to devote time to pro bono legal work. Stepping beyond our day-to-day practice not only sharpens and extends our legal skills, it also increases our engagement with the communities in which we live and work.

As a gold-level member of The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle, the Firm has established the goals that each of the firm's attorneys will devote at least 50 hours per year to pro bono, and that the firm averages at least 50 hours of pro bono service per year.

To facilitate participation, the firm has established relationships with four community service organizations which provide a steady flow of training and pro bono opportunities. But, unlike many firms, rather than create a one size fits all program, we reinforce our emphasis on entrepreneurship. The projects in which our attorneys engage are self-directed and spearheaded by an individual or a group of individuals who share a passion about a certain cause or organization. All hours expended for approved pro bono work count as billable time. So at the end of the day, we all come out ahead. In addition, the firm has established relationships with

four not-for-profit organizations that provide many opportunities for transactional and litigation pro bono work. Further information is available [here](#).

What is the firm's policy on judicial clerkships?

The firm views judicial clerkships favorably. We believe that individuals who complete such clerkships gain valuable insights into the court system and the litigation process. Individuals who join the firm following a clerkship are provided with a Judicial Clerkship Bonus, as well as any relocation benefits to which they are entitled. They also receive one year of credit for a completed judicial clerkship (regardless of the length of the clerkship).