

Announcer ([00:00](#)):

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Rita Treadwell ([00:21](#)):

Welcome to GTDRIVES' Dynamic Dialogue, a Greenberg Traurig Diversity, Equity and Inclusion podcast. My name is Rita Treadwell. I'm a diversity, equity and inclusion manager in our Atlanta office, and in this episode I will continue my discussion with Kesha Allen, Law School Talent Acquisition Manager in our D.C. office, on all things related to campus interviews and summer associate recruiting. Welcome back, Kesha.

Kesha Allen ([00:45](#)):

Thanks for having me, Rita.

Rita Treadwell ([00:46](#)):

How can summer associates effectively build relationships and networks within the firm?

Kesha Allen ([00:51](#)):

Well, I think it's important, A, because we talked about mentorship in the last episode, relying on your mentor team to help you and introduce you to the attorneys that you want to build those relationships with. Showing up to our social events and networking events that help you get integrated into the firm. We have official mentors, and then we have those unofficial mentors.

Rita Treadwell ([01:18](#)):

Those organic relationships, right?

Kesha Allen ([01:20](#)):

You don't have to always wait for someone else to make that introduction. Make it. Let them know a little bit about yourself. Network. When you're invited to coffees and lunches and outside events, maybe a court event that a shareholder wanted to take you to, go. Be engaged. Don't be afraid to make those connections, because you don't know how that is going to enhance or further your career in the present or later on. I would say just get involved, however you'd like to.

Rita Treadwell ([01:54](#)):

Right. There's nothing wrong with saying yes. It's an invitation.

Kesha Allen ([01:58](#)):

That's right.

Rita Treadwell ([01:59](#)):

We don't know what that yes will lead us to. How can summer associates seek important and impactful feedback they can use to improve their overall performance?

Kesha Allen ([02:09](#)):

One part of our summer associate program is our midsummer reviews and end-of-summer reviews. You don't have to wait for those reviews to be scheduled in order to receive feedback. I think it's important, if you're working on something and you're not really sure. Nobody expects you to know everything when you walk through GT's doors.

Rita Treadwell ([02:32](#)):

This is the time for learning.

Kesha Allen ([02:33](#)):

That's right.

Rita Treadwell ([02:33](#)):

This is the time to really get into the craft of law.

Kesha Allen ([02:37](#)):

Absolutely. If you're working on something, ask plenty of questions before the assignment. While you're working on the assignment, seek feedback so that you know, "Okay, I'm headed in the right direction." Seek out the feedback. I think that's important, and people forget that piece when given an assignment. I know everyone is busy, but ask the question. Never be afraid to ask the question anyway. It is important. I always tell people I'd rather ask the question and be a little annoying throughout the assignment or whatever you're working on, versus potentially turning in a product that someone did not ask for or is not pleased with. That's how you use feedback to improve your performance.

Rita Treadwell ([03:27](#)):

What if I'm running late with that assignment? I might miss this due date. What if I've made a mistake? How do I pivot from that mistake?

Kesha Allen ([03:35](#)):

Communication. Clarifying. Questions, asking questions. Communication. If you know you have competing assignments or your assignment is taking longer than you expected, as soon as you know that, let the associate or the shareholder that you're working with know that information. If you have competing assignments, when you're asked to accomplish the assignment, let whoever gave you the assignment know that, "I have five assignments currently I'm working on, and these are the deadlines." Ask for deadlines.

Rita Treadwell ([04:11](#)):

They can help you prioritize too.

Kesha Allen ([04:14](#)):

Exactly. If you feel a little intimidated by the shareholder or whomever, you have that mentor network. Use it. Reach out. Ask the question. "Is it okay if I communicate that I have competing deadlines? Is it okay if I communicate that I'm running late or this assignment is running behind?" Whatever that looks like. Overcommunication a lot of times will help you with that anxiety as well, because a lot of times,

although you think that someone wants something yesterday, they may tell you to, "Relax, I don't need this right away."

Rita Treadwell ([04:52](#)):

You won't know that unless you ask.

Kesha Allen ([04:54](#)):

You won't know unless you ask the question. I agree with you, Rita. A lot of times when we are starting our careers, we have that anxiety and we're nervous to begin with.

Rita Treadwell ([05:04](#)):

We want to be perfect.

Kesha Allen ([05:05](#)):

We want to be perfect, but as we know, nobody is perfect. The closest you're going to get to perfection is asking questions.

Rita Treadwell ([05:13](#)):

We talked about resources and we talked about support systems. Can we talk a little bit about how some of our associates can leverage these groups? We have GTAAG, which is the Greenberg Traurig Asian American Affinity Group, which includes our Asian Pacific American Affinity Group, our South Asian American Affinity group. We have GAIN, which is Greenberg Traurig's African American Inclusion Network, GTWI, which is the Greenberg Traurig's Women's Initiative, the LGBTQ+ affinity group, Somos GT, which is our Latino affinity group, and most newly mentioned is our Veterans@GT, which is our veterans and military affinity group. How can our summer associates leverage those groups?

Kesha Allen ([05:54](#)):

Whatever affinity group you identify with, remember who you met at the beginning of your summer. Write the names down. You can look on our intranet and find out who the members are of these various affinity groups, and maybe you reach out to someone. Don't be shy to reach out to get that extra mentoring that you may need throughout the summer.

([06:19](#)):

I think it's important to have a friend that can help you navigate the firm. Again, the firm has many offices. We have a lot of different offices and people to navigate, and I think using your affinity group in that space will help you to navigate. Maybe you can find someone who went to the same school that you can connect with. Leveraging the affinity groups, it's like this small phrase, but I think it's multilayered in that you can leverage your affinity group in so many different ways and aspects.

Rita Treadwell ([06:57](#)):

There's one-on-one mentoring, you can reach out, but also our affinity groups are open. Even if you align with an affinity group that you identify with, they're open. All of these affinity groups are open, so you can have an ally in a different group.

Kesha Allen ([07:12](#)):

That's one of the reasons I love GT. We are very inclusive in that way. It may be someone else, again, that just went to the same school. It could be an organization, that maybe that person is on the board or is involved in some way, an organization that is important to you. I think we can leverage the affinity groups in many ways to maximize your summer experience and to help you succeed here at the firm.

Rita Treadwell ([07:45](#)):

What are some strategies for making a positive impression and really standing out as a summer associate, above and beyond some of the things that we've mentioned? "How can I stand out? I've done my assignments. I've turned them in on time. I've communicated well. I've knocked on doors. I've introduced myself. I've said yes to the coffees and the chats and the dinners. What else can I do? I feel like I've done all these things. I must be winning, right?"

Kesha Allen ([08:12](#)):

Right, right. Be responsive, and honor your commitments. I know during your summer you're going to get invited to so many different meetings, coffees, lunches, dinners.

Rita Treadwell ([08:27](#)):

Baseball games.

Kesha Allen ([08:28](#)):

Baseball games, all of it, and that is the true life of an associate, having to manage your time. I'd say take advantage of as much as you can without overcommitting yourself, but the other things are seek out projects that align with your passions, your interests. I think that's important just in general. If you seek out those projects that align with those things, you'll be passionate about your project.

Rita Treadwell ([08:57](#)):

You'll shine.

Kesha Allen ([08:57](#)):

You'll be excited about the project and I think you'll shine in that space, because that's something that's either important to you but also something you're passionate about.

Rita Treadwell ([09:07](#)):

Let's say I get a tax assignment. I might not be passionate about that. How do I view it and navigate through something that I'm not excited about? Because that's going to happen, right?

Kesha Allen ([09:18](#)):

Fake it 'til you make it. Are you going to say no to that shareholder, right? You may not always have those, but it's good to have a great balance there. I think if you accept a tax assignment and you want to be a litigator, accept a litigation assignment that interests you as well that balances that out, so that you're definitely getting projects that you are interested in and you're passionate about. We all in our careers have to work on projects that don't necessarily align with what we are passionate about or even interested in, for that matter, but we still have to take those projects. You never know where that project may take you, and it may just circle you back to your passions.

Rita Treadwell ([10:05](#)):

Own the passion and own the new passionate project.

Kesha Allen ([10:09](#)):

Yes, and be excellent in whatever you do. We can't always pick the assignment, but we can pick or we can choose what attitude we're going to have towards it.

Rita Treadwell ([10:19](#)):

Say that again. Say that again. How we respond to things really defines who we are, right? How do you respond to criticism? How do you respond to assignments you don't necessarily love? How we are responsive and how we work through and show our skill set in those times really defines who we are.

Kesha Allen ([10:38](#)):

Absolutely, and remembering that when we say client service, we're not only talking about our outside clients. We're talking about our internal clients, and some days your clients may be just your shareholder and senior associates, and then other days it may be the actual client.

([10:59](#)):

Remembering that when you have those assignments that are less than ideal, remembering, "I still need to provide that exceptional client service at all times," and seek out additional training. We're not passionate about a lot of things that we don't know a lot about, and sometimes it may take an additional last-minute training class or something that helps you to understand your project just a little bit better, and I think sometimes we forget that we can do that as well and learn a new skill.

Rita Treadwell ([11:34](#)):

When your eyes are open to something new, you may become passionate about that new thing, and that's an incredible opportunity. We talked about balancing projects and assignments during the summer internship just a little bit. What are some additional tips that we can talk about in terms of balancing, and valuable skills that summer associates should focus on while they're here?

Kesha Allen ([11:59](#)):

A lot of times we think about networking and we think about the mentoring and we think about asking questions, and all of that can be a little bit overwhelming. What I can say is remember that your summer program is a chance for you to learn and grow. It's okay to push yourself a little bit past what you are comfortable doing, because I think that is where we shine, when we just press just a little bit into being uncomfortable and not just doing those things that are comfortable. Because again, when you do those uncomfortable assignments or you do those so you're in an uncomfortable space, you're actually growing, and don't forget that when you're balancing.

Rita Treadwell ([12:47](#)):

You're disrupting your status quo.

Kesha Allen ([12:49](#)):

Exactly.

Rita Treadwell ([12:52](#)):

Live on the verge of disruption.

Kesha Allen ([12:53](#)):

Absolutely. What impression do you want to leave at GT when you leave, and people are still looking at some of the work that you did? Just remember that in those projects, you're working towards something, but your summer is where it actually begins. If you need to balance a little bit more than what you're used to, in addition to the projects and the outings and all of the other activities that go with the summer program, just remember. "Look, this is just the beginning, and I want to leave the best impression that I can leave on the firm." Always show how much you're interested in being at the firm, and remembering that this is the beginning of your career.

Rita Treadwell ([13:44](#)):

Work on your listening skills.

Kesha Allen ([13:46](#)):

That's right.

Rita Treadwell ([13:46](#)):

Work on being responsive. Work on using our email systems and those tips that we talked about in terms of making responsive use of emailing and calendaring, so you can learn how to use our internal systems.

Kesha Allen ([13:59](#)):

Absolutely, and this is true with any person starting something new, where always there's a healthy amount of anxiety. There's a healthy amount of nerves and you don't know what to expect, but that's okay. Again, this is where you shine, so just show up. Be the best version of yourself every day. Remember to be authentic every day. Remember to ask those questions, make those connections. I think that's important. All of us will be better for it, and you'll have a fantastic summer.

Rita Treadwell ([14:35](#)):

That's great feedback, Kesha. I want to ask about learning about the environment you're in in your office. Is that something that would be useful? Because every office in GT operates a little bit differently, so getting the lay of the land as you walk in the door, how important is that?

Kesha Allen ([14:51](#)):

Someone told me a long time ago that when you start a new position at a new place, the best thing you can do is to listen. You can ask questions, but listen. Turn on your listening ears and really listen to what people are saying. Pay attention to what people are doing. It is so important.

[15:14](#)):

I can't tell you how many times I, just in my own recruiting world, have given an assignment to someone and I thought I was very clear. They didn't ask any questions, so of course I assumed that they knew exactly what the expectation was, and it fell flat, the assignment, because they didn't really listen, they

didn't ask any questions, and they didn't take any notes. I think that's important in your new environment. Listen, then ask questions. I may be old-school, but take notes.

Rita Treadwell ([15:50](#)):

I feel like that was some advice given in one of our Bridge to Leadership classes. You should have a notebook and pen wherever you are, so you're ready to take down some good notes.

Kesha Allen ([15:58](#)):

Absolutely, and those notes will go a long way, trust me. I do it every day.

Rita Treadwell ([16:03](#)):

We are near the end of our time, Kesha. Is there anything you would like to leave us with as we finish our two-part series?

Kesha Allen ([16:11](#)):

We are an authentic firm. We look for that in our summer associates and, quite frankly, our business staff. I think it's important. Again, research. Learn about Greenberg Traurig, all the things that we are involved in, and many initiatives in the community as well as on your campuses. Pay attention to what's happening in the news and learn about how GT is intertwined there, and that's for anywhere you want to start your career, for that matter. You want to make sure that we line up with the things that are important to you as you begin your career.

([16:53](#)):

Pay attention to the summer associate program. Talk to seniors that maybe have been at GT, so that you can get a sense of the firm and the area geographically that you want to be. Learn about their offices as well. Overall, just, again, ask questions, research, pay attention, take notes.

Rita Treadwell ([17:15](#)):

Come in ready to go, ready to work.

Kesha Allen ([17:17](#)):

That's right. That's right.

Rita Treadwell ([17:20](#)):

That's the best advice one could have and one could give. Those are invaluable tidbits, Kesha, and I want to say thank you for your time. I want to say thank you to our audience for joining us for this two-part episode, and stay tuned for the next episode.

Kesha Allen ([17:33](#)):

Thank you, Rita.