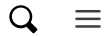


Learn more about **LSEG**



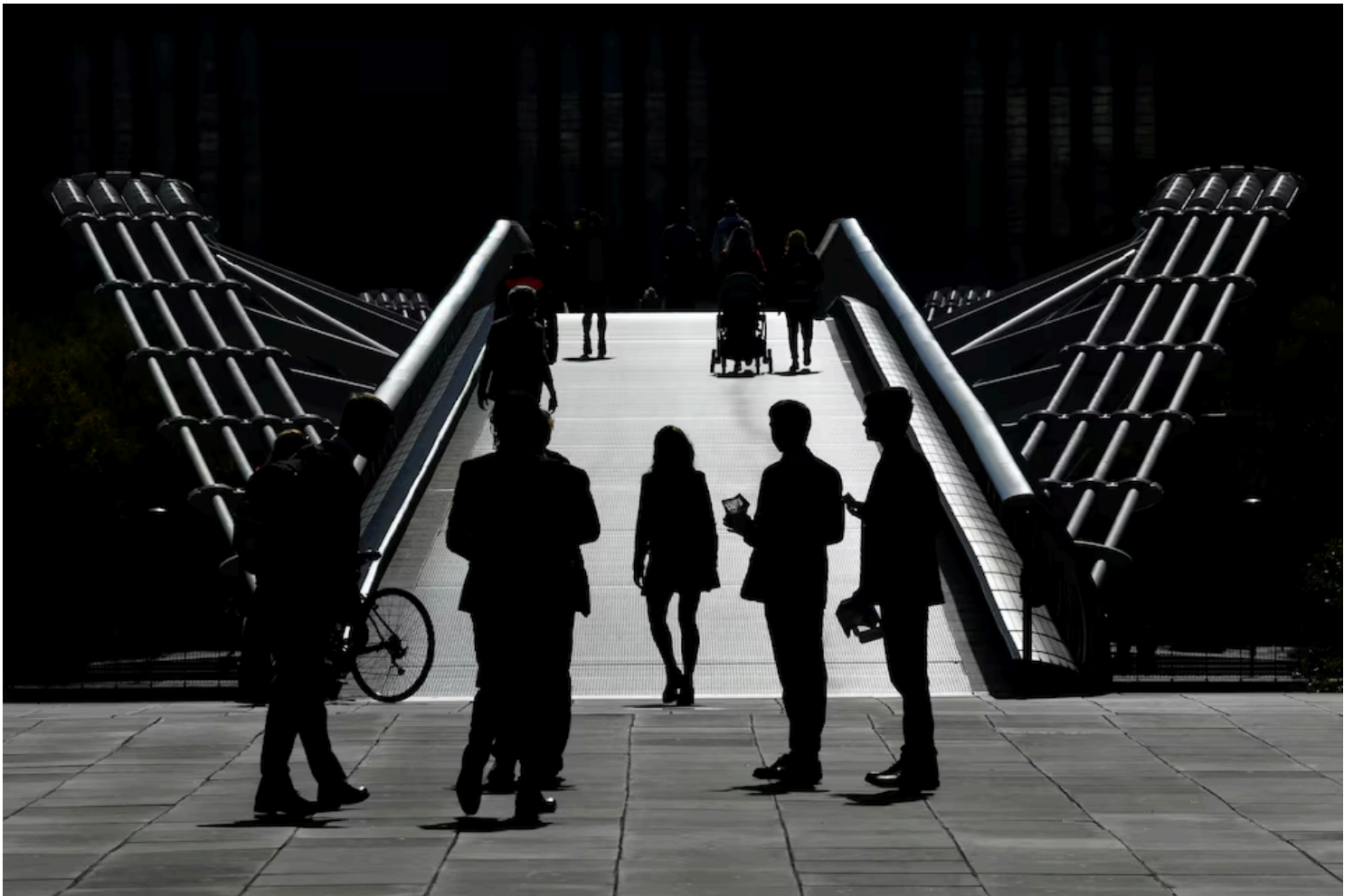
My View Following Saved

Government | COVID-19 | Legal Innovation | Antitrust | Legal Industry

'A whole new ballgame.' How 3 law firms brought in new associates amid Delta wave

By **Karen Sloan**

October 22, 2021 7:00 PM CDT · Updated 2 years ago



REUTERS/Toby Melville [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)

Summary Law Firms

Some firms held in-office orientations, while others stuck with a remote format
Fostering connections required creativity

(Reuters) - Thousands of new law firm associates launched their careers this fall—but it wasn't business as usual.

The COVID-19 pandemic and sparsely populated offices forced firms to get creative in onboarding this year's crop of new lawyers. Some stuck with entirely remote orientation, while others opted for in-person onboarding. And some gave new associates a choice between the two.

Fully remote onboarding can work, said Sharon Meit Abrahams, founder of consulting firm Legal Talent Advisors. But she said new associates working mainly outside the office need extra support.

"It's harder for them to be working in their own bubble at home, without the ability to walk down the hall, bump into a third-year and say, 'Hey, have you ever done a TRO? Can you help me?'" she said.

Reuters caught up with partners and talent managers from three law firms that took different approaches to associate onboarding to find out how they are getting their first years up to speed.

Reed Smith

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Reed Smith's new associate class completed their week-long September orientation in person at the firm's offices. The approach was partly driven by the new lawyers' own desire to be with their new colleagues, said Doug Cameron, managing partner for the Americas.

"They've been going to school, for many of them, remotely. And I think they are looking for that community atmosphere," Cameron said.

The firm has launched a newsletter for new associates and assigned "integration partners" to assist in their transition. Reed Smith learned during the pandemic that it needs to be intentional about fostering connections between lawyers, but also careful about the amount of time lawyers spend in online meetings and training sessions, Cameron said.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld

When the Delta variant's spread pushed Akin Gump to revert to a fully remote new associate orientation last month, director of attorney training and development Jeanette Lee set out to rethink the process.

Lee wanted associates to catch up fast on skills and experiences they missed when their summer program was cut short and went virtual.

"I met with all the practice groups that were taking in first-year associates and said, 'Listen, this is a whole new ballgame here. We can sort of wipe the slate clean and figure out exactly what this particular class needs,'" Lee said.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

The firm beefed up substantive training, adding practice-group specific sessions, she said. It also offered first years opportunities to socialize and hear from experienced Akin attorneys in casual conversations.

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom

Skadden opted for the middle ground, giving new attorneys the option to attend its three-week Associate Comprehensive Education program (ACE) from the office or remotely, said Jodie Garfinkel, director of talent development and strategy. Out of 124 first-year associates, 81% opted to complete ACE in person—a figure that surprised Garfinkel.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

"They've been holed up by themselves and they really didn't get to go to classes their last year—so many things contributed to feeling like it's time," she said.

Skadden also encouraged partners to actively engage with the new associates, since they aren't encountering as many of their new colleagues in the office.

"How do you create not just the knowledge but the sense of belonging and community?" Garfinkel said. "That's probably the biggest challenge."

Read more:

[Firms kick off summer associate programs integrating innovation, legal tech](#) 

[Another Zoom summer? Firms rethink associate programs as COVID-19 restrictions lift](#) 

Jumpstart your morning with the latest legal news delivered straight to your inbox from The Daily Docket newsletter. Sign up [here](#).

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles](#). 

Purchase Licensing Rights



Karen Sloan
Thomson Reuters

Karen Sloan reports on law firms, law schools, and the business of law. Reach her at karen.sloan@thomsonreuters.com



Read Next / Editor's Picks

World

Democratic lawmaker dons Putin mask, mocks Republicans at Biden impeachment hearing

ago

United States

Trump signals support for 15-week national abortion ban

10:47 PM UTC

World

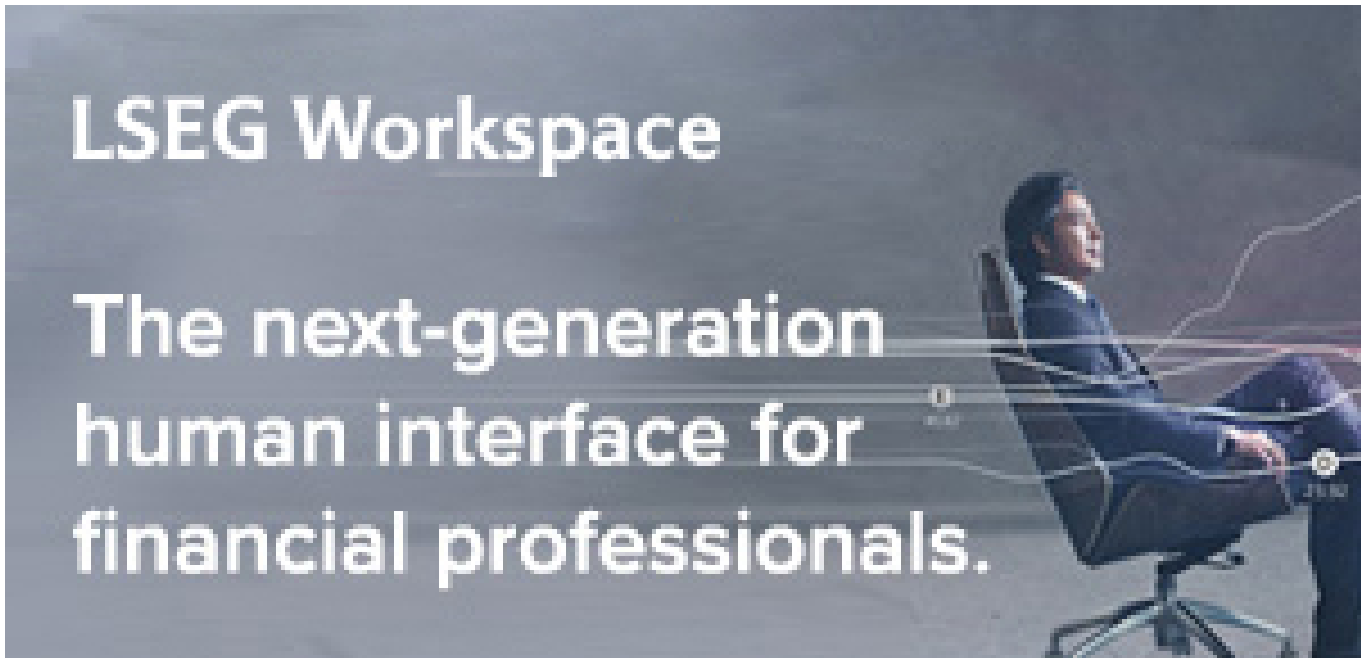
US Congress struggling to reach spending deal to avert weekend shutdown

12:33 AM UTC

World

Texas border enforcement law again blocked in legal whiplash

7:50 PM UTC



Sponsored Content



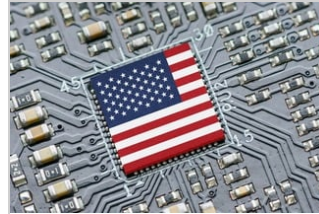
Hands Down One of the Best Cards for Good Credit

Sponsored by
The Motley Fool



The 5 Dumbest Things We Keep Spending Too Much Money On

Sponsored by
The Penny Hoarder



Team that recommended Nvidia in 2005, issues "All In" Buy Alert.

Sponsored by
The Motley Fool

Sponsored Content



7 Ways to Retire Comfortably With \$500k

Sponsored by Fisher Investments



Wall Street is Selling NVDA At a Record Rate – Here's Why

Sponsored by Chaikin Analytics



Lazy People Keep Spending Too Much Money on These 5 Things

Sponsored by The Penny Hoarder



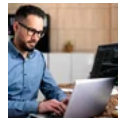
Where should you invest \$1,000 right now?

Sponsored by The Motley Fool



Leverage TradeStation's platform to trade across asset classes.

Sponsored by TradeStation



Epic Credit Card Bonus Is One of the Best Offers We've Ever Seen

Sponsored by CardCritics



Industry Insight >

Legal

Harvard hires law firm King & Spalding amid US House probe

Mike Scarcella, David Thomas

January 24, 2024



Legal

Attorneys with disabilities are rare at law firms. It doesn't have to be that way, group says.

Karen Sloan

December 5, 2023



Industry Insight

Companies need to integrate climate reporting across functions to comply with California's new law

Henry Engler

October 20, 2023



Legal

Cellino, Barnes firms battle former colleagues over fees, years after split

Diana Novak Jones

September 27, 2023



Sponsored Content



Leverage TradeStation's platform to trade across asset classes.

Sponsored by TradeStation



Wall Street is Selling NVDA At a Record Rate – Here's Why

Sponsored by Chaikin Analytics



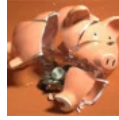
The Tiny, Fast-Growing Company Flying Under the Radar. Don't Miss Out.

Sponsored by The Motley Fool



If You Have \$1,000 in Your Checking Account, Here Are 8 Money Moves

Sponsored by The Penny Hoarder



7 Retirement Income Strategies Once Your Portfolio Reaches \$500k

Sponsored by Fisher Investments



10 Lucrative Dividend Stocks With Double Digit Dividend Yields

Sponsored by Liberty Through Wealth



Sponsored Content



Buying NVDA? See This Market Veteran's Latest AI Warning First

Sponsored by Stansberry Research

Hands Down One of the Best Cards for Good Credit

Sponsored by The Motley Fool

5 Side Hustles That Work Even with a Full-Time Job

Sponsored by FinanceBuzz

Epic Credit Card Bonus Is One of the Best Offers We've Ever Seen

Sponsored by CardCritics

Gain new perspective. Develop professionally and personally. Go.

Sponsored by HBS Executive Education

Say Bye To Bank Loans If You Own A Home In These Zip Codes

Sponsored by Lendgo

Latest

Home

Authors

Topic sitemap

Media

Videos

Pictures

Graphics

Browse

World

Business

Markets

Sustainability

Legal

Breakingviews

Technology

Investigations

Sports

Science

Lifestyle

About Reuters

About Reuters

Careers

Reuters News Agency

Brand Attribution Guidelines

Reuters Leadership

Reuters Fact Check

Reuters Diversity Report

Stay Informed

Download the App (iOS)

Download the App (Android)

[Newsletters](#)

Information you can trust

Reuters, the news and media division of Thomson Reuters, is the world's largest multimedia news provider, reaching billions of people worldwide every day. Reuters provides business, financial, national and international news to professionals via desktop terminals, the world's media organizations, industry events and directly to consumers.

Follow Us



Thomson Reuters Products

Westlaw

Build the strongest argument relying on authoritative content, attorney-editor expertise, and industry defining technology.

Onesource

The most comprehensive solution to manage all your complex and ever-expanding tax and compliance needs.

Checkpoint

The industry leader for online information for tax, accounting and finance professionals.

LSEG Products

Workspace

Access unmatched financial data, news and content in a highly-customised workflow experience on desktop, web and mobile.

Data Catalogue

Browse an unrivalled portfolio of real-time and historical market data and insights from worldwide sources and experts.

World-Check

Screen for heightened risk individual and entities globally to help uncover hidden risks in business relationships and human networks.

[Advertise With Us](#) [Advertising Guidelines](#) [Coupons](#) [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)

All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. See here for a complete list of exchanges and delays.

[Cookies](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy](#) [Digital Accessibility](#) [Corrections](#) [Site Feedback](#)

© 2024 Reuters. All rights reserved

