

# Drinker Biddle

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## Drinker Biddle Training Program Facts At-a-Glance

**WHO:** Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP

- 700 lawyers
- 12 offices nationwide
- 16 national practice groups
- 38 newly arrived associates

**WHAT:** Drinker Biddle's First Year Associate Development Program

- Drinker Biddle was the first AmLaw 100 law firm to create and announce a highly structured training program for its new associates instead of deferring or dismissing them.
- The program is unique: it focuses on intensive "learning by doing," much the same way lawyers were trained before the rise of the billable hour.
- The new associates will have no billable hour requirement during the training period.
- If they perform work on client matters, they will be charged at a significantly reduced rate or, where appropriate, their time will be written off entirely.
- They will be paid at a rate of \$105,000 annually for the six months of training; thereafter, their salaries will be adjusted to the prevailing market rate.

**WHERE:** The First Years are resident in five of our largest offices:

- Chicago
- Florham Park, N.J.
- Philadelphia
- San Francisco
- Washington, D.C.

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**WHEN:** The program begins Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2009, and continues through March 2010

It consists of three main components:

1. **"Core Curriculum"** for first six weeks. First Years will learn the "basics" of being a client-centered lawyer and a thoughtful and practical problem solver.
2. **Practice Group Training** for next six to eight weeks. First Years will experience more customized training with their practice groups and the firm's clients.
3. **Apprenticeship** for final 12 weeks. First Years will shadow partners and more experienced lawyers, "going where our lawyers go, doing (and watching) what our lawyers do."

**WHY:** "We have chosen a different path."

Drinker Biddle does not see how deferring these new associates' legal career for several months or a year will help them, the firm or, more importantly, our clients. To the extent that many of our clients are no longer interested in accepting newly minted lawyers on their matters but still want more experienced associates, we must continue creating those more experienced associates. Delaying these new lawyers' arrival to the firm does not make them more experienced or marketable. Simply put, the only way to turn them into well-trained and experienced lawyers is to start training them and getting them some experience. We think later is not better than sooner.

**HOW:** The training program was first announced in May 2009.

The program is part of the firm's plan to meet – and surpass – the "Value Challenge" put forward by the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC), whose membership includes many of the firm's clients. The Value Challenge is part of the "paradigm shift" of the past year in the legal profession, and is one of many factors that have made it clear to Drinker Biddle that the status quo was unacceptable. The training program essentially was a result of listening to what our clients wanted and striving to deliver the value that they need.

The firm has devoted significant resources to developing the program, a sign of its commitment and industry leadership. Unlike the medical profession, where clinical and formal residency programs are the backbone of real learning, until now there has been no comparable approach in the legal profession in the United States. This program is unprecedented among large law firms and will likely be a bellwether for professional development in the U.S. legal arena into the future. While it is a first-time effort, during which the firm itself will learn many valuable lessons, the investment of time, talent and other resources has been substantial and tremendously unifying, especially with the active support of our clients.