

## My First Year at Selendy & Gay

08/06/19



*Vivek Tata was set for a prime associate position at any Big Law firm. With an impressive resume and experience as an associate at a venerable white-shoe firm, it would have been an easy decision to return to a traditional law firm. Vivek, however, was seeking more.*

*We spoke with Vivek about joining Selendy & Gay as one of its first associates, the importance of courtroom experience, and why taking the traditional path can be the biggest risk of all.*

### **How did Selendy & Gay get on your radar?**

I was wrapping up my clerkship, and I knew that when I returned to practice, I wanted to do more than watch from the sidelines. Returning to Big Law was an option, but I knew that courtroom opportunities would be few and far between. Large firms do great work on document-intensive investigations and cases that everyone knows will end in settlement. But they rarely go to court. Selendy & Gay partners are trial and appellate lawyers. It appealed to me that the firm is regularly brought in as trial or appellate counsel, to supplement or replace a big firm.

I had stringent criteria: I wanted to learn to be what one of my mentors called a “courtroom lawyer”—and I knew it was hard to get that experience at a large firm. I wanted to work on big, challenging cases. And most importantly, I wanted to work with great people. Several lawyers I respect told me about Selendy & Gay. So, I did my research, and started reading about the firm and looking at the bios of the founders.

### **What tipped the scales toward Selendy & Gay?**

I was taken with Selendy & Gay’s commitment to training and giving experience to junior associates. I also appreciated that the firm is proud and passionate in taking on pro bono and public interest matters, and that there is no tension between doing good and doing well.

Once I started doing my research into the firm, the cases they've worked on, and their views on law and the law firm model, it became clear that Selendy & Gay isn't wedded to tradition for tradition's sake. It was clear to me that they wanted to build a trial- and appellate-focused law firm that could compete in the 21st century. I knew it would be a great place to launch a career.

Since joining, the firm has delivered on its promise. The partners go out of their way to get associates hands-on experience. Within my first month of joining the firm, I was brought into the fold of an expedited arbitration, opposite a very well-respected top law firm. I prepared witnesses for trial, and I also gave an oral argument, which was exciting. Meanwhile, on the opposing side, the only people who argued the case or examined witnesses were partners.

### **How would you describe the environment?**

Selendy & Gay is a deeply collaborative environment. As a litigator, no matter where you go, you will inevitably work very hard. The trick is to have fun while you're doing the work, and it's important to surround yourself with enthusiastic, intellectually curious people. At Selendy & Gay, I have the opportunity to work with wonderful mentors and peers.

The work can be intense—the best legal work is—but I know my hard work plays a pivotal role in delivering a win for our clients. I feel valued on my team and by clients, and I am afforded so many opportunities to truly learn how to litigate and lead. I am the manager of a few of my cases, and run point in managing workflow and anticipating present and future needs. I feel lucky to have that responsibility.

It's impossible to get bored here. We handle bet-the-company cases, criminal matters, appeals, and of course public interest work, all with the same level of care, time, and attention to detail.

### **What do you like best about being here?**

In just a year, the firm has built an extraordinary community. It's collegial and supportive. Between partners and associates, there's a high level of trust. Partners expect us to tackle hard problems—but their doors are always open for questions or concerns.

That sense of trust is particularly important to me as a new father. I know that if I need to head home to relieve the babysitter and finish a project from home, it's not an issue. This is not a place where you worry about putting in a specific number of hours of "face time." The focus is on doing the best work for our clients, and on being a good colleague. Those seem like the right priorities to me.

### **What are the risks of joining a new firm?**

I would ask a different question: What are the risks of joining a typical big firm? In a class of a hundred associates, how will you manage to get the core skills and experiences you need to progress? Will you have the opportunity to go to court, to take depositions, and to run cases? Are partners going to go out of their way to convince clients that the firm's associates should get to do important tasks?

A big firm may seem safe, but there's a long-term cost.

If you want to be a courtroom lawyer, you'll get the skills and experiences you need here.

#### **Attorney**

- Vivek Tata