

'You Have to Get More Creative': What Law Firms Learned About Training During the Pandemic

09/09/21

(This article was originally published in the September print edition of The American Lawyer as "Lessons Learned.")

Associate and summer associate training has taken on a new life in the remote age. The content hasn't necessarily changed much—crucial trial skills, business development growth, and mentorship opportunities remain paramount.

The way these development opportunities are delivered has changed by necessity, though.

Remote workshops and training sessions became prevalent throughout the pandemic, with teams talking to one another through Zoom and other videoconferencing platforms. Many understandably feared that this lack of person-to-person connection would stifle opportunities for younger attorneys.

Interestingly, though, many firms tell a different story.

Selendy & Gay's Administrative Partner Lena Konanova said the firm has continued its trial and deposition training programs through the pandemic, looking to give younger attorneys live trial experience. Rather than an in-person courtroom, the firm used the PSG virtual deposition program platform and Zoom to conduct remote proceedings, complete with actors logging onto Zoom to act as witnesses. The firm's 2021 summer program included four separate virtual programs, where summer associates appeared in front of judges for pretrial conferences, opening statements of witnesses and closing arguments.

Konanova shared that while the firm is looking forward to in-person instruction resuming soon, she believes these experiences will help give Selendy & Gay's attorneys an edge no matter what form the courtroom of the future takes, especially as the firm prepares for the "possibility that certain depositions might continue to be taken remotely in the future."

"It has been a really valuable skill for associates to learn, to develop methods to keep the attention of judges and juries through a screen, and to overcome the challenge of driving home something like a cross-examination, or a deposition of a hostile witness, with the same impact as when everybody is in the courtroom," she said.

Read the [full story in The American Lawyer](#).

Attorney

- Lena Konanova