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Associates Firm Expectations

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**McDermott
Will & Emery**

**University of Michigan
Law School**

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Associates
Firm Expectations

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What Is a Superstar?

- This presentation has been adopted from comments made by Jeffrey Stone, Chair of McDermott Will & Emery, LLP, at a new Associates orientation
- Although the roles of Associates may change over time, particular with the introduction of AI in the law sector, I believe the attributes of Star Associates will remain unchanged

What Is a Superstar?

- Reputation for reliability and care
 - Leaves Partners with deep sense of confidence
 - Inspires belief that work will be done—and done well

- An Associate who looks beyond the routine and takes ownership
 - Always delivers good work
 - Thinks ahead and proactively addresses issues
 - Acts professionally
 - Consistently demonstrates good judgment

Secrets of Superstardom

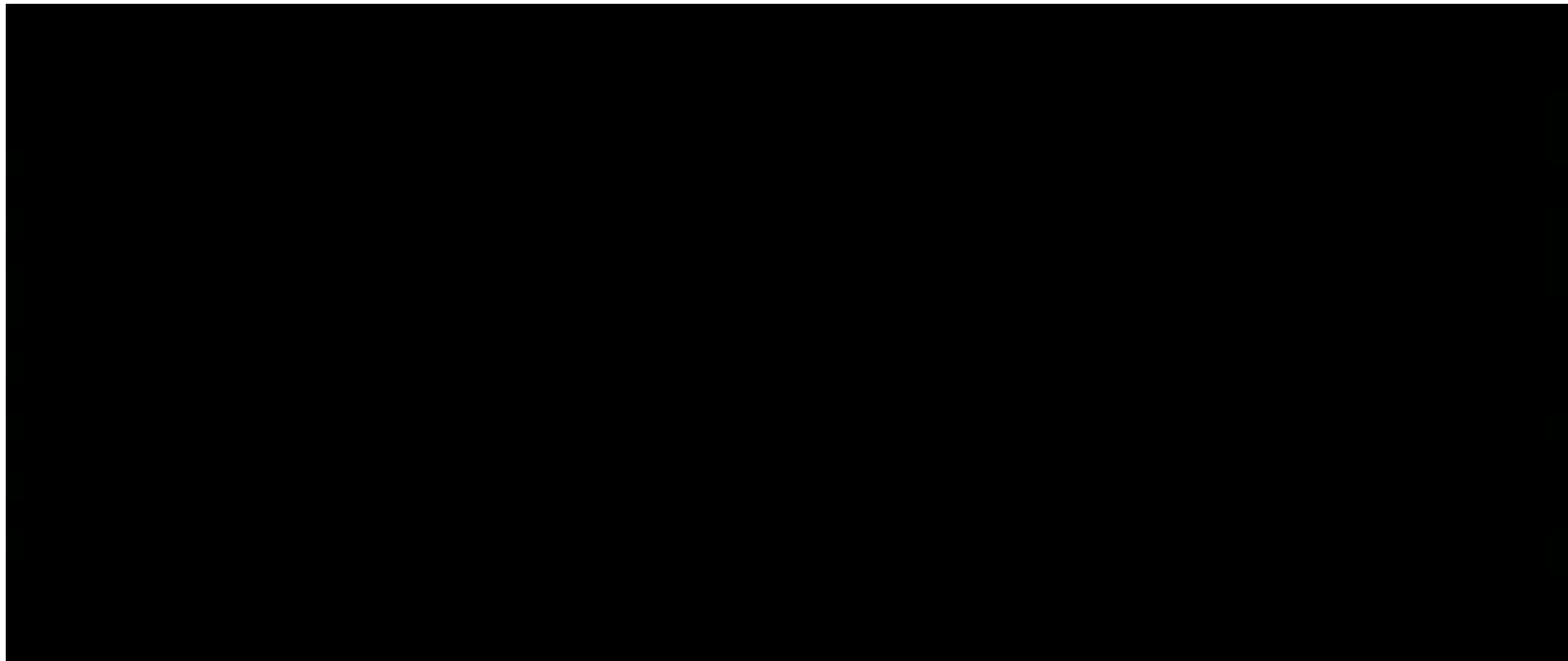


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- No guarantees of success
- There are traits that we see over and over again in successful Associates
- Many of these are the same traits of our most successful Partners

My thesis: Superstars are made, not born.

The 10 Commandments of Superstardom



1. Superstars Work Hard

“Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work.” – *Stephen King*

- Not about racing to have the most billable hours, but about investing the hours to stand out
 - Ownership of the facts takes time
 - Mastery of the documents takes time
 - Command of the interrelationships takes time



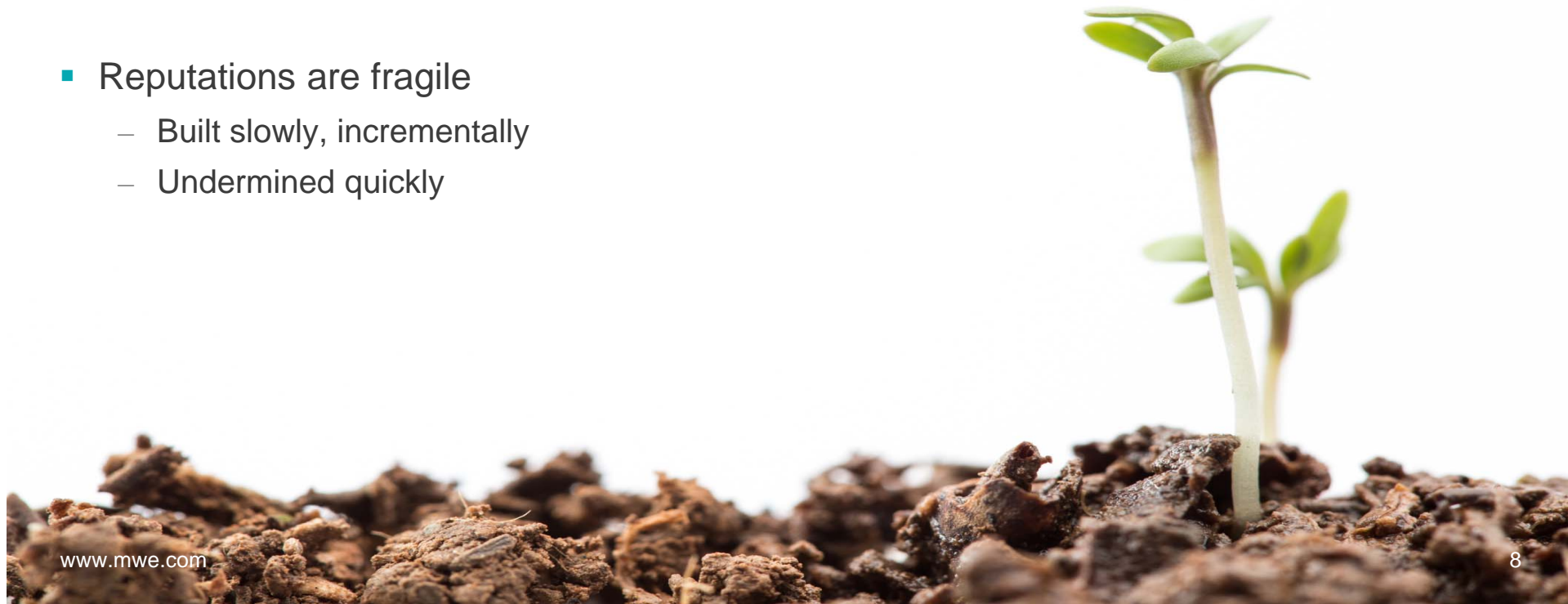
1. Superstars Work Hard

- Hard workers have more control over their own dockets
 - Easier to say “no” when busy
 - Easier to pick and choose when busy
- Superstars say “yes” even when busy
 - Sometimes the best cases and projects come up at the wrong times
 - When opportunity knocks, embrace it



2. Superstars Build Reputations

- Every move you make—beginning Day One—counts
- Reputations are fragile
 - Built slowly, incrementally
 - Undermined quickly



2. Superstars Build Reputations

- Make yourself indispensable, and become the expert
 - Facts
 - Issues
 - Legal developments
- Be part of the solution
 - Sweat the small stuff; little things count
 - Understand that Partners are incredibly busy and under intense pressure
 - Partners are worriers: Do you *cause* or *relieve* anxiety?

3. Superstars Think Like Partners

- Be an owner, not an assembly-line worker
- Try to see how what you are doing fits into the bigger picture



Ask yourself :

- What would I do if I were running this project or case?
- What would I want from the Associate if I were running the project or case?

4. Superstars View Everyone as a Client

- Treat everyone like a client (Partners, judges, clients, non-clients)
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect (all colleagues and staff)
- In meetings and on calls, make everyone feel that you are focused solely on them and on the topic at hand
 - Don't leave to take other phone calls
 - Avoid distractions; don't check email or any electronic devices

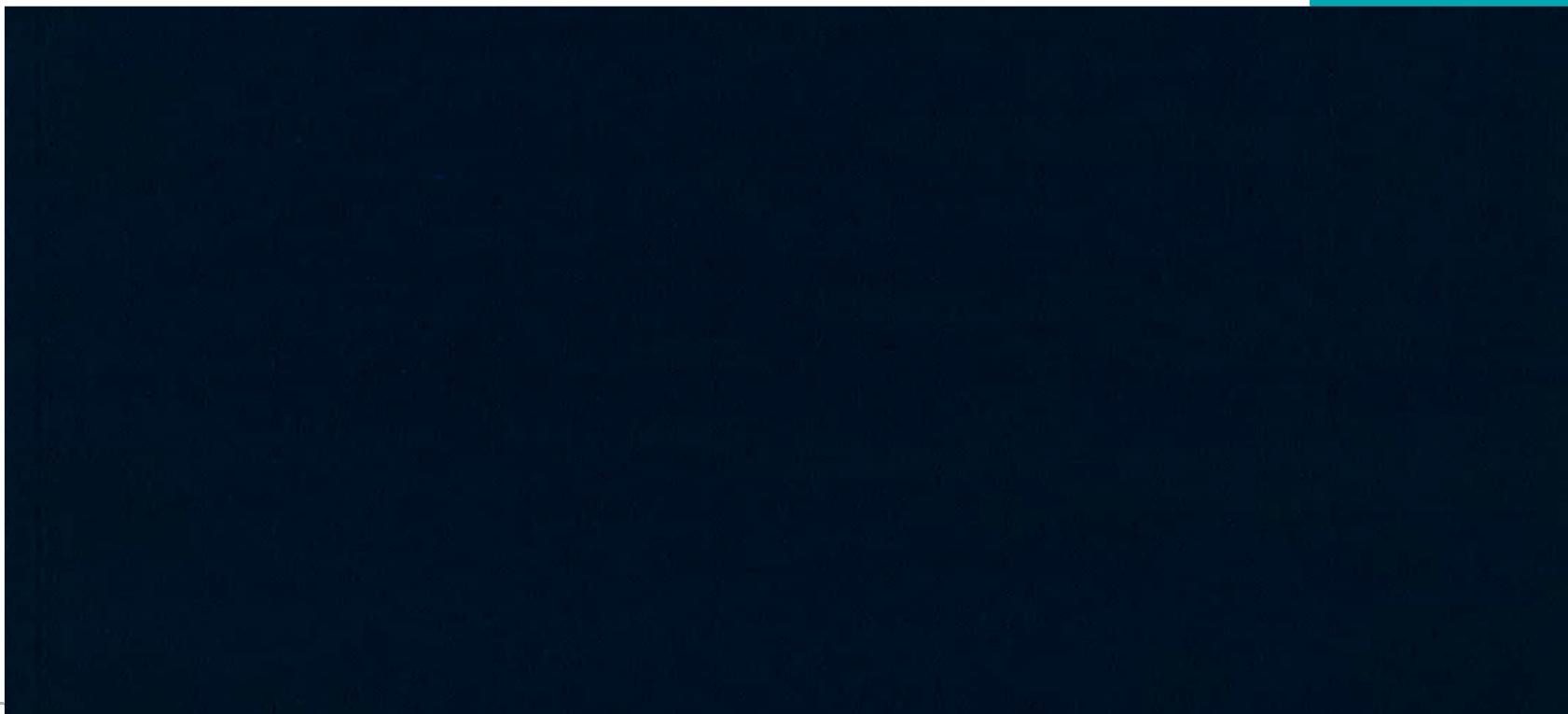
4. Superstars View Everyone as a Client

How Partners work with clients	How Superstars work with Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze facts• Create options• Opine on strategies• Execute on those strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master the facts• Succinctly create and assess options• Make cogent recommendations• Implement flawlessly

5. Superstars Have Good Judgment

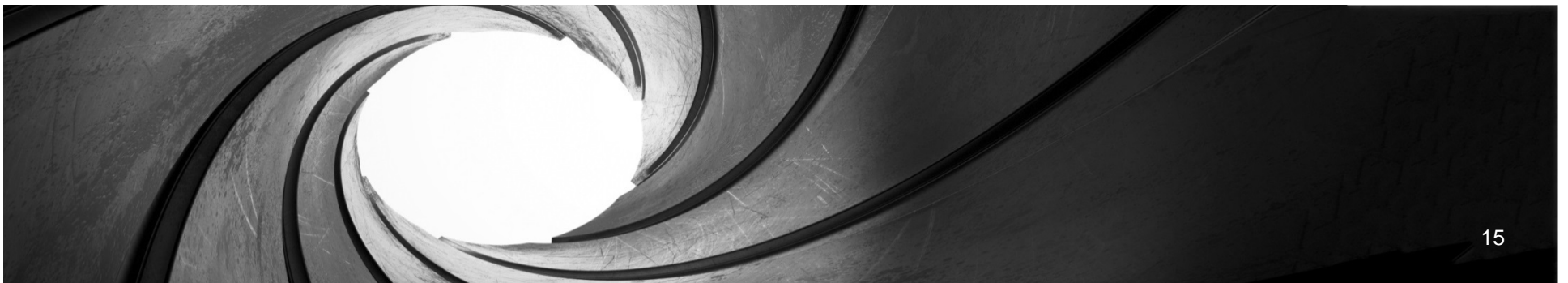
- Lawyers get hired because they have good judgment
- Be the lawyer that the client wants to talk with before they have to make a hard decision
 - This is one of the highest professional compliments you can receive
 - You want people to treat you like “E.F. Hutton”

When E.F. Hutton talks,



5. Superstars Have Good Judgment

- How do you cultivate good judgment—and how do you develop a reputation for having good judgment?
 - Focus on what is important
 - Distill the issue to its essence
 - Practice crafting statements on the core of the issue: what does this matter really turn on?



5. Superstars Have Good Judgment

Five universal lessons:

- Avoid snap judgments
- Anticipate twists and turns; be prepared
- Keep it simple whenever possible
- Be clear in thought and speech
- Understand the question and address it squarely, then move to the next level if necessary

5. Superstars Have Good Judgment

- Develop good professional habits
 - Proofread carefully
 - Know key deadlines
 - Arrive early for meetings
 - Be ready to take notes
 - Regularly check messages (nights and weekends) and respond promptly
 - Anticipate potential problems and prepare Plans B and C
 - Avoid temper tantrums or emotional outbursts
 - Don't make excuses: just GSD
 - Accept responsibility when you make a mistake—accountability is key—no finger pointing, particularly at staff

6. Superstars Are Enthusiastic

- This is a hard business for everyone
 - Long hours, pressure, winners and losers
- Be someone who others like being around
 - No whining!
 - Good spirit counts for a lot, particularly at 2:00 am
 - Help set a positive, constructive tone
- Goal: Be someone who is a pleasure to work with and is taken seriously by other lawyers, clients and colleagues

6. Superstars Have Fun

- If it's not fun, it's not worth doing
- Lawyers who love what they do are better at it
- Look at the Partners you most respect
 - Can you see yourself doing what they are doing?
 - Does it look like they are having fun?
 - Would it be fun for you to do that?



7. Superstars Have Fun

- Bad days—even weeks or months—don't mean it's not fun
 - We all pay dues
 - We all go through slow periods
- But those who are best at what they do are usually the ones who have the most fun at it—and make it fun for others who work with them

8. Superstars Are Lifelong Students

- You are building a career
- You are building a set of skills and tools
- Relentlessly learn
 - Read
 - Ask hard questions about why they did it that way
 - Emulate those you respect
 - Ask hard questions about why they did it that way
 - Seek feedback
 - Be self-critical
 - How could I have done this better?



8. Superstars Are Lifelong Students

- Learn new skills
 - What is your weakest skill?
 - How do you make that better?
- Learn to be part of a successful team
 - Most of our cases are collaborative; most of your school work was not
 - What's the difference?
- Learn from new relationships
 - Part of the learning curve in college/law school was the new people you met
 - Cultivate new relationships and create a diverse network of contacts; these can last a lifetime

9. Superstars Invest in Their Professional Development

- Have a plan
 - Short term and long term
 - Take regular stock
 - Know your strengths and weaknesses
 - Be ruthlessly honest with yourself
 - What would you say as a Partner reviewing you?

- Execute on that plan
 - If the plan is to get more courtroom experience, take stock every week
 - What am I doing to make that happen?

9. Superstars Invest in Their Professional Development

- Look for opportunities
 - Where are there gaps?
 - How do those gaps correspond to my talents, interests?
 - What can I become the expert?
 - Statutes (Foreign Corrupt Practices Act)
 - Issues (changes in tax code; new corporate developments)
 - Cross group issues (health-care litigation; life sciences corporate work)

10. Superstars Own Their Careers

This might be sacrilegious to say to Summer Associates on their first day, but....

- Superstars are building a career, and MWE might be just the beginning
- Superstars know that there may be life beyond MWE



10. Superstars Own Their Careers

- Superstars know where they are—and where they are going
- They know their strengths (and play to them) and their weaknesses (and try to correct them)
- Superstars take initiatives to build their careers; they look beyond billable hours and become engaged on a variety of fronts

10. Superstars Own Their Careers

- Superstars develop mentors
- Mentors are not managers—they are trusted counselors, advisors
- Most Partners like to be asked for advice
 - Appropriate times
 - Airplane rides
 - Dinners on the road
 - Targeted questions that reflect some real thought and analysis

10. Superstars Own Their Careers

- Superstars are always building
 - Substantive assets
 - Skills
 - Reputation
 - Connections
 - Opportunities

- Superstars are successful in the moment, yet are always thinking about the future

Keys to Superstardom? Follow the Commandments

1. Work hard
2. Build your reputation
3. Think like a Partner
4. View everyone as a client
5. Have excellent judgment
6. Be enthusiastic
7. Have fun
8. Be a lifelong student
9. Manage and invest in your professional development
10. Own your career