
So You Want to Represent Start-ups and Tech Companies?

A conversation with Jon Gonzales, Partner at GCA Law Partners LLP

Office of Career & Professional Development
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Q: How can students learn more about representing start-ups and technology companies?

A:

1. Attend meetups where you can connect with tech leaders (http://technology-startups.meetup.com/cities/us/ca/san_francisco/).
2. Attend relevant MCLE events and speaking engagements sponsored by the largest firms in the tech space. Look at Wilson Sonsini, Cooley, Fenwick & West, Orrick, Perkins Coie, and Gunderson Dettmer.
3. Have a presence on LinkedIn and follow leaders in the tech world.
4. Follow business news and tech news. Consider subscribing to publications such as Business Week, The Wall Street Journal, and various venture capital blogs and news sources about startups - such as Mattermark (<https://mattermark.com/>). Some of my preferred VC Blogs are by Hunter Walk (<http://hunterwalk.com/>), Fred Wilson (<http://avc.com/>), and First Round Capital (<http://firstround.com/review/>).
5. Read The Lawyer Whisperer blog for insights into professional and career development (<http://www.thelawyerwhisperer.com/>).

Q: What are alternative paths to tech transactional work outside of traditional OCI recruitment?

A: Many large firms that represent technology companies offer non-partner track, junior level staff attorney positions or positions at affiliated companies. Some of the firms that have these positions are Orrick (see article at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/24/business/24lawyers.html?_r=0), Wilson Sonsini, and Fenwick. Starting in one of these positions would allow a graduate who might not have been an OCI-competitive candidate to gain relevant experience, build connections within the tech community, and benefit from a recognized name on their resume.

Q: What do you think of JD preferred positions or starting your legal career in-house at a tech company?

A: Both of these could be good options if your focus is to stay with the same company and/or develop a career focused on commercial transactions or business-side advancement. However, if your goal is to develop the legal skills to advise a variety of start-up companies, then you may find yourself constrained by limited training capacity in-house. Of course, this would depend on the individual company you were at. Companies willing to train lawyers straight out of law school include Hewlett-Packard and Pfizer.

Jon Gonzales is a partner with GCA Law Partners LLP. Jon's experience includes the representation of technology companies and investors in connection with business formations, mergers & acquisitions, public company filings, corporate governance, venture capital financings, public offerings, bank and equipment financings, licensing and other technology transactions, domain name acquisitions, commercial transactions, counseling of executives and corporations with respect to employment and severance agreements, and general corporate and securities law.