Reimagining Summer Associate Training: A Case Study

By Betsy Chessler

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For a decade, we had been presenting our summer associates with a “laundry list” of research resources, office by office. It was time to demonstrate research methodology with real-world research questions and a consistent training program across our multiple offices worldwide. Working together, the Research Services team of Morrison Foerster LLP created a one-hour presentation that was broadcast live via videoconference from several offices at once. We broke down legal research into five steps: Preliminary Analysis, Secondary Source Research, Locate and Analyze Primary Law, Updating Primary Law, and Concluding Your Research. Then we showed how the steps applied to actual questions we had received. We followed with 30 minutes of local training in each office. This short, but dynamic, training put everything in context for our summer associates and was well received.

Challenges:

• Educating 100+ summer associates in multiple offices and time zones.
• Providing a standard research approach despite varied practices, law school class, work assignments, and experience level.
• Highlighting library research tools without overwhelming summer associates with long lists of resources.
• Each office had its own training session, so time commitment for each librarian was high.

Solution:

• Create training program that emphasizes common methodology, using real life research questions.
• Program includes brief overview of research tools, with promise to provide further information on an as-needed basis.
• One live video presentation across offices ensures everyone gets the same message with less work for each librarian.
• After the one hour video presentation, Summer Associates meet with local librarians for short Q&A and library tour.