

Press Coverage | June 5, 2025

# For Phila. Summer Associates, AI Training Is a ‘Hot Topic’

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Susie Elitzky, director of legal talent recruiting at Troutman Pepper, and Sona Spencer, chief legal talent officer at Troutman Pepper Locke, were quoted in the June 5, 2025 *The Legal Intelligencer* article, “[For Phila. Summer Associates, AI Training Is a ‘Hot Topic.’](#)”

Troutman Pepper Locke, however, is an outlier, given the firm underwent a merger this year with Locke Lord. In total, it’s hosting a total of 121 summer associates recruited by the two legacy firms, with 16 in the Philadelphia office, compared to 18 last year.

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And for Troutman Pepper Locke, the firm’s internally developed ChatGPT program Athena serves as both a tool and a signifier of the firm’s culture.

“It has been a really amazing opportunity for us to tout our brand around innovation and help summer associates understand that ... there are so many opportunities to be creative within our law firm structure,” explained Troutman Pepper chief legal talent officer Sona Spencer.

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At Troutman Pepper, the firm sets up summer associates for success by pairing them up with advisers who help establish expectations.

“We try and tee things up so that should a summer associate start here as an entry-level associate, it’s not a huge difference with respect to the types of work, the types of feedback, and the types of skills they will be evaluated on,” explained Troutman’s director of legal talent recruiting Susie Elitzky. “It’s up to summer associates’ advisers to ensure they are having the opportunity to complete the right type of assignments. We want to be sure we can evaluate their legal acumen and ensure they’re hearing from us how they performed and what is successful at our firm.”

For Troutman Pepper, which completed a merger with Texas-based legacy firm Locke Lord earlier this year, the summer program also provided the firm an opportunity to leverage integration efforts from the merger for summer associates.

“The summer program from my perspective is another opportunity for us to bring more people together within a common cause in a firm context,” Spencer said. “Leveraging our Troutman Pepper Locke YOUNiversity was an opportunity for us to both present to summer associates what it would be like as an associate here, but we’re also getting more information out about the resources at the firm.”