

One-on-One With **Hicks Johnson**

One-on-One With Hicks Johnson is a series featuring conversations with our attorneys about their legal practice and career path. Next, we talk with Hicks Johnson Associate Fraser Holmes.

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[Fraser Holmes](#) is an associate at Hicks Johnson who litigates complex commercial disputes at both the trial and appellate levels, as well as in arbitration proceedings. Below he discusses the importance of mentorship, his experience on a recent trial team, and what differentiates a great associate from the pack.

Q: **What made you choose a boutique over the Big Law path, and what made you choose Hicks Johnson in particular?**

A: I was looking for active mentorship that could help me develop and get hands-on experience with the skills I would need in my practice. So I knew I wanted to go to a firm where I would be able to have more individualized relationships with leadership, greater exposure to clients and courts, and a firm where I felt like an integral part of a long-term plan. And Hicks Johnson was where I felt that buy-in and commitment from leadership. Mentoring is a key aspect of my professional life at the firm, and it is entirely organic, but it also feels very purposeful. The firm has done a great job of committing to associates and putting them in positions not only where they can succeed, but also where they feel like they're an integral part of the overall success.

Q: *Could you talk a bit about your experience playing an active role on a recent matter?*

A: I was part of a four-person trial team (along with [Andy Hicks](#), [Marc Tabolsky](#), and Emma Sandhop) that handled a two-day bench trial before the Bankruptcy Court in the Eastern District of Texas. I took two of the fact depositions, had first pen on nearly all of our pleadings — including an extensive pre-trial briefing in anticipation of trial — took direct testimony of a witness at trial, drafted a closing argument with Andy, and assisted in drafting our post-trial briefing. After we prevailed at trial and the defendant appealed, I took first pen on our appellate brief before the District Court for the Eastern District of Texas. Because Hicks Johnson staffs matters very efficiently, every member of the team makes substantive contributions that impact the outcome, including the associates.

Q: *What have you learned so far about business development?*

A: That it is not one-size-fits-all, and that it really only works if it's purposeful. Many times, business development is treated as basically professional speed dating: The goal is to get in front of as many people as possible with the hope that volume and luck will lead to results. That might work for some people, but I have learned since being at the firm that there are lots of ways to develop the type of professional networks and connections that eventually become your business development tree. I guess the biggest thing I've learned is that you don't have to change yourself somehow to meet these business development techniques — you can change the techniques to suit you.

Q: *What do you think sets Hicks Johnson apart from its peers?*

A: I think Hicks Johnson is very purposeful in everything it does, and it always takes a long view to each of its decisions. The firm is not about doing things just for the sake of doing them, be that legal work (i.e., there's no "make work" here), recruitment initiatives, firm structure, or employment decisions. Leadership feels very committed to finding the right ways to address areas for growth at the firm and amplify our strengths. And I think that commitment makes our long-term prospects feel more growth-oriented than what some of our peers may be experiencing. A good example of that purposeful growth is the recent expansion into Chicago.

Q: *What qualities and skills are partners looking for in junior attorneys?*

A: I think what all partners will tell you is they want attorneys who take ownership over the matters they are staffed on. High-quality research, writing, and advocacy skills are kind of assumed for a high-quality associate, and so what differentiates a strong junior attorney is whether the attorney can anticipate what is coming next. A good associate will get a partner an answer to their research

question; a great associate will get a partner an answer to their research question and answers to follow-up questions the partner might have later. It's a difficult skill set to build, and it really takes spending a lot of time talking high-level strategy with partners. Hicks Johnson provides exactly those types of opportunities to its associates early in their careers, and the result is associates who are thinking like partners, which is obviously the ideal result.

About Hicks Johnson PLLC

Hicks Johnson PLLC is a premier boutique law firm with offices in Houston and Chicago, specializing in complex commercial litigation, arbitration, and appeals. Known for delivering results, our trial and appellate lawyers are well-versed in handling high-stakes cases.



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