



From Student to
Young
Professional:
Embarking on a
Pupillage at MJM

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In the fall of 2010, I prepared to make the transition from student (which seemed to be my perpetual state of existence) to that of young professional as the month of September marked the beginning of my year of pupillage at MJM. Thankfully, I was not starting at a new place but rather was returning to the firm that had trained me while I was a student and stood beside me in support as I undertook my academic journey.

I had my Law Degree in hand, the Bar Vocational Course (now the Bar Professional Training Course 'BPTC') under my belt and a plethora of mini-pupillage, mooting, marshalling and pro bono experience to go along with it; but I wondered whether that would be enough.

Pupillage is the one year of training that is completed between the culmination of one's legal academic journey and their admission to the Bermuda Bar for practice. During this year, a pupil is under the tutelage of a senior lawyer (their pupil master) who assists in developing and honing the pupil's professional skills while also educating the pupil on the Professional Conduct issues that can arise in one's practice.

My pupillage year is divided between the three main practice areas of the firm: (1) Litigation, (2) Property, Trusts and Estates and (3) Corporate. The beauty of pupillage at MJM is that the structure is flexible to suit your interests; I expressed my interest in Litigation from the beginning, so half (6 months) of my pupillage is spent with the Litigation team under Litigation Partner Juliana Snelling (my pupil master). My remaining six months will be divided equally between the Property, Trusts and Estates and Corporate Departments. Exposure to all practice areas not only exposes the Pupil to different areas of Law but develops different skills that can in turn be applied in one's ultimate area of practice.

My pupil master intentionally involves me in her matters by discussing with me case strategy and asking me about case strategy and asks what advice I would give in certain instances. This inclusion makes me feel a part of the team and assists in developing my ability to provide legal advice. Juliana and I have regular appraisals to ascertain what areas are going well and what areas need development. I also maintain a weekly training diary to track the work that I have completed, the skills that I have used and the lessons that I am learning as I make the transition from student to professional.

During my seat in Litigation, I have had exposure to many facets of a busy practice of different matters ranging from Employment to Landlord/Tenant to Family and Commercial and even some Crime. I have attended hearings and trials and observed advocacy by Counsel (submissions, witness handling and interlocutory applications). I have drafted correspondence to clients and pleadings such as statements of claim and witness statements. I have attended and participated in Client conferences with our Attorneys and undertaken research on a range of legal issues using both online and paper sources for research. The completion of an article that I wrote entitled the Pursuit of Equality (which looked at the newly

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enforced Equality Act in the UK and the draft Workforce Equity Bill here in Bermuda), provided me with an opportunity to flex my research and drafting skills.

I have also had an introduction to the administrative aspect of the Firm as I have learned the accounting procedures that the Firm uses and the online filing system for efficient practice management both of which are just as essential to a practice as one's knowledge of the Law. Another interesting element to my pupillage experience has been learning about the Anti-Money Laundering Regulations and the firm's obligation to comply with and undertake Client Due Diligence measures to prevent being used for Money Laundering or Terrorist-Financing Purposes.

The ethos of the Firm is very welcoming and there is a strong sentiment of teamwork and camaraderie as everyone strives to maintain the clients' best interests. Another invaluable dynamic is the unspoken open-door policy where senior practitioners are amenable to helping the younger lawyers by providing guidance and insight to them. In discussions with Senior Practitioners I have found that they not only draw on personal experiences but seek to shed new light on other potential perspectives to a matter. There is an intentional focus placed on training and nurturing new legal talent at MJM, which reaffirms the Firm's commitment to the future generations of lawyers.

Another facet of the MJM that attracted me is that it has its finger on the pulse of the legal needs of our community as MJM seeks to play its part in fulfilling Corporate Social Responsibility. We have a team that provides advice at the Legal Advice Centre each month and there is a regular commitment to provide legal advice to our local seniors through Age Concern. The Firm also supports the efforts of the Law Students' Association of Bermuda. MJM's outreach to different demographics and age groups enables MJM to use its expertise to touch all sectors of our local society.

Before returning home, I wondered about whether I should stay in the UK to try and obtain experience there and while I completely see value in it, I feel it would be remiss not to mention that the quality of work that hits our shores is comparable and that commencing one's legal journey in Bermuda can be just as fulfilling and rewarding. The nerves that I had in September of making the transition from student to young professional have dissipated thanks to the intangible support of my Pupil master and the rest of MJM. If the first third of my pupillage is an indicator of the rest of the year, I look forward to learning as much as I can and I know that this year will provide a solid foundation for my legal career in the years to come.

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