

# CAREER INSIGHTS

## Trainee spotlight: advice for aspiring lawyers



### Timothy Biasi

#### 1. What was your career route?

After my A levels I studied for an undergraduate degree in History and then a masters in International Criminal Justice, as well as doing the GDL and LPC as my legal qualifications. As with many people here, these last two were sponsored by Slaughter and May. I considered all sorts of careers at university but took up a job offer from Slaughter and May following a vacation work experience scheme in the summer before my final year. I'm currently in the Finance stream, having just completed a seat in Competition, so am nearly halfway through my training contract.

#### 2. What have been the most challenging aspects of your career so far? What have been your biggest achievements?

It can certainly be challenging when you are faced with novel tasks or research questions, especially when you feel unsure of how to deal with them. But it's rewarding to reach the end of those problems and feel like you have learned from them and contributed to the team, or to see the results go out directly to the client. It's great to be part of the team that addresses any of the significant challenges that our clients face, but in particular I was fortunate to spend some time on secondment to our wonderful Brussels office and this has to be a highlight for me.

#### 3. What skills do you have which are helpful in your job?

It's important to be able to adapt. An inherent part of the trainee role is dealing with new problems and quickly changing from one thing to another. You also rotate between practice streams at least every six months. This keeps things interesting, but requires flexibility. Additionally, trainees need to be able to process and analyse complex information, and be able to communicate clearly and concisely. Last but not least, dealing with people inside and outside the firm is a significant aspect of the job, so it's also important to be able to manage relationships and relate to others.

#### 4. What top tips do you have for succeeding at applications/ interviews?

##### Applications

Take time over your applications – a few focused and tailored applications are likely to do better than a scatter gun approach where you send the same thing to many firms. It's worth getting to know the firms you are applying to, whether that's through talking to people who work there or spending time reading their website and recruitment materials. If you can figure out which firms are a better fit for you, and what exactly each firm is looking for, you'll not only have a stronger application but also end up at a firm where you are happy to work. The same principle applies to any job or university you might be looking at! Similarly take every opportunity to gain experience as this will make your application stronger and, even more importantly, help you make better decisions. If you can't get legal experience at this stage, don't worry. Think about what opportunities you can find, and what applicable skills and knowledge you can learn from them.

##### Interviews

Interviews can be daunting, but there are things you can do to prepare for them. For example, have conversations with people or read about issues you think are relevant in the news, and drill down into the reasons why you are applying for the role. It's important to think carefully about what you want to say, but you shouldn't try to stick to a rigid script. Interviewers are looking for someone who can think on their feet and deal with new problems, although practicing will give you more confidence and help you give more considered answers. You shouldn't be afraid to change your mind in an interview or ask questions where you are unsure – or stick to your guns if you are challenged but believe you have good reasons for what you are saying. Don't be put off by unfamiliarity, as the interviewers may be looking for how you engage with an issue rather than what you know. If you are stuck with a question, try to think of how you can break it down or address parts of it, or perhaps you can draw an analogy to something you do know more about.