

CAREER INSIGHTS



BECOMING SELF-AWARE AND NAVIGATING THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

60 seconds with...



Emma Haywood

Associate in IP/IT shares her words of advice to students who are about to embark on their careers

As someone who has taken on mentoring and a supervisory role for students on work experience schemes at the firm, are there common areas where the students could develop?

There are two key development opportunities that stand out for me when I'm mentoring and supervising work experience students: confidence and attention to detail.

Students are often quite nervous when they first join us on work experience. This is completely understandable in an unfamiliar environment where you're keen to impress, but it can stop you from making the most of the experience. Remember you've made it through a rigorous selection process to earn your place. Our recruitment team has recognised your past achievements and seen something promising in you. Make good eye contact, smile, think in advance about how you introduce yourself to others, and most of all, show your personality.

Attention to detail is key, and can take some time to master. You may think the odd typo or formatting glitch doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, but we're trusted by our clients to get it right, and the delivery of our advice is just as important as the content. In a personal context, if you were buying a home or making a will, would you be comfortable working with a solicitor whose emails were full of errors? Would you feel confident that the law was correct and their advice was accurate? Check and check again - and if in doubt, ask.

Do you have any advice on navigating a professional environment?

Professionalism means different things to different people. For me it definitely does not mean losing sight of your personality. My advice would be to observe those around you and learn the unique culture of your organisation – everything from small talk topics to dress code. I also think it's important to cultivate self-awareness early in your professional life, so that you know exactly who you are, what you're bringing to the table and how you can develop a working style that plays to your own strengths and still fits with that organisational culture.

What would be your advice to students who are still unsure about their career choices?

If you're undecided, remember that establishing that a particular career path is not for you is incredibly valuable. Don't feel disheartened if it seems you're discounting every option along the way. You're learning more about what you want from your career, which will make it much easier to identify the right opportunity when it does arise.