

## Stage 6: A Day in the Life of a Student

We often get questions from prospective articling students about what our students really do during their articles. Do our students spend most of their time in the library researching? Do they interact with clients, lawyers, and staff? Do they work with one another? Do they have any fun amidst the new found challenges of legal practice?

To give you a first-hand view, we went right to the source. We asked our current students to prepare a diary of one day spent in the office. A few of the results are as follows. Their names have been removed to protect the innocent.

### **Student #1 in Corporate Rotation:**

8:15 a.m. - I arrive at the office. To my surprise my keyboard is missing. I check my office to make sure that nothing else has been stolen. I can't even log into my computer to send an e-mail to IT. I phone Jonathan in the IT department to ask for a new keyboard. A few minutes later a concerned Jonathan comes down with a replacement. Later in the morning our IT director comes down for details. He is concerned that we have fallen prey to a thief.

8:30 a.m. - A reliable partner tells me that my keyboard wasn't stolen, but is being held hostage by partner, Loren Mallett. It figures. The corporate department has a reputation for their practical jokes. Rather than bargain with Loren, I decide to play dumb and pretend I have no clue that he is the culprit. I resolve to plan a completely disproportionate response. Revenge is best served cold. In the meantime, there's work to do.

8:45 a.m. – I get a call from one of our lawyers. We are acting for the purchaser

in an asset deal and he would like me to conduct due diligence searches on the seller. Some of the searches require the consent of the purchaser, so I will have to draft consent authorizations. These need to go out quickly, so I return to my office, draft the authorizations, get the lawyer to review and sign them, and send them off.

11:00 a.m. - Time for coffee. I bump into an associate at the coffee machine. I tell her about my situation with Loren and ask her if she has any ideas for revenge. She has an idea, but I think it may be a little too harsh. I was looking for a disproportionate response, but not that disproportionate. However, I do make a mental note: seek her assistance whenever I need "revenge advice".

11:10 a.m. - Back to work. I have a task that is due in the afternoon. One of our clients has recently expanded its business, and the standard waiver that it gives to customers needs updating. It is a rather unique business, so our precedents are of no help. I check the time and notice it's noon. We have an educational seminar today, so I'll have to get to back the waiver drafting later.

12:05 p.m. – "Ascend" is Alexander Holburn's in-house professional development program. As soon as I'm in the boardroom, I head straight for the food. Rita Hannaway, our office hostess, always orders great sandwiches and amazing cookies. Unfortunately, our Director of Research has taken the last chicken pesto sandwich. I should have arrived earlier. Today's seminar is being led by corporate partner Mike Roche and is on Shareholders' Agreements. Mike has often fallen prey to Loren's and others' practical jokes. I make a mental

note to talk to Mike to see if he has some ideas for revenge.

1:15 p.m. – After the Ascend session I return to my office. I check my e-mail and notice one from a lawyer who has asked me to come see him when I'm free. One of our clients is selling some goods and there are *Personal Property Security Act* (PPSA) issues that need to be researched. The good news is that I took secured transactions in law school. The bad news is that I wasn't exactly a star in that class. In any event, the lawyer doesn't need an answer for a few days, so I return to the waiver drafting.

3:00 p.m. – The draft waiver is complete. I take it to the lawyer, who thanks me and says he'll look at my draft and go over it with me tomorrow.

3:15 p.m. – I return to my office. There's a note on my desk from a lawyer asking me to come and see her. She has a will that she'd like me to draft. The client will be coming into the office to execute the will later in the week, so she will need a draft in a couple of days. I've never drafted a will before, so the lawyer gives me a book of clauses and a sample will and sends me on my way with the file. I start working on the will.

5:00 p.m. – A couple of associates come by my office to see what I think about the plans for the associates' party, which students are invited to. I ask for advice on exacting revenge on Loren. They have some good ideas.

5:30 p.m. – I put the finishing touches on the draft will.

6:15 p.m. – Time to leave.

Epilogue – The following week my chair went missing. I still haven't retaliated, but like I said, revenge is best served cold.

## **Student #2 in Litigation Rotation:**

8:35 a.m. - I step off the bus at Burrard and West Georgia and feel the sting of the cold rain hit my face. I still haven't gotten use to the constant November rain and almost miss the familiar crunch of the frozen ground in Edmonton. I decide to stop at Café Artigiano for a latte to kick start the day and warm myself up.

8:38 a.m. - Arriving at the door I pause and sigh. The line is eight people deep. I am supposed to call one of our clients at 9 a.m. about a small claims file, and I want to review the file again so I don't sound like a idiot on the phone. I am about to leave without my coffee when I see one of our partners at the front of the line. He asks me if he can buy me a coffee. Not wanting to insult a partner (and not wanting to leave without caffeine) I happily oblige. We chat about the Israeli-Lebanese war as we wait for the barista to work his magic. We both have a particular interest in the subject as his wife is Lebanese and I spent the summer working in Haifa.

8:40 a.m. - As we walk to the office, the partner asks if I would be interested in tagging along to a mediation next week. I am elated. We arrange to meet for lunch the following week so he can brief me on the case and the process.

8:46 a.m. - I settle into my office and turn on my computer. I grab the small claims file and review the opinion letter I sent to the client last week. Elizabeth, the students' assistant, stops by to say good morning and brings me an index I had dictated yesterday so that I can proofread it. I am terrible at dictating. I cringe each time I re-read my own words.

9:00 a.m. - I take a deep breath and call the client. He is out of the office for the morning. I leave a message and cross my fingers hoping that he will catch me off

guard when he calls back so I don't have time to get nervous. I contemplate billing .1 for leaving the message but have trouble getting used to the idea that time is money.

9:03 a.m. - I take out some notes I jotted down while discussing an assignment with a lawyer. All I have written is "law" and "letters rogatory" and a file number. Not very helpful. Note to self: take better notes next time.

9:11 a.m. - I found out from Wikipedia that letters rogatory has something to do with "conflicts", so I cruise the conflicts section in the library until...wait...YES! A CLE! I love CLEs. They are an articling student's dream come true. Generally, a clear and concise summary of the law citing B.C. cases. If you get the right CLE, your assignment can be done in no time. I push my glasses up on my nose contemplating what a supreme nerd I am, rejoicing about finding a CLE.

9:43 a.m. - I am sitting in the library taking notes when an associate comes rushing into the library. He needs someone to run to Master's Chambers to ask that his matter be stood down until the afternoon because he is trying to get the other parties to sign a consent order. I agree to go and run to my office to grab my umbrella and a bit of courage. I have never actually spoken in Chambers before and I feel slightly sick to my stomach.

10:00 a.m. - I have just spoken to the clerk hoping that she would just let me stand the matter down until this afternoon without appearing before the Master. She says that I will have to ask permission from the Master. I calmly take a seat in Chambers while experiencing a full-on panic in my head. What if the Master says no?

10:17 a.m. - I have been sitting in the gallery rehearsing what I am going to say.

I am particularly concerned about the part where I say my name. What if I say my name wrong? They call my matter. I stand up, get past the name hurdle and the Master agrees to stand the matter down until this afternoon. YES! A litigation victory! I am so proud of myself, I skip all the way back to the office.

10:35 a.m. - I begin pulling cases off the electronic databases for my groundbreaking memo on letters rogatory. I highlight every other sentence to ensure that I don't drift off while I am reading.

11:40 a.m. - One of the other articling students calls to see if I can pick him up a handout from the lunch time Ascend seminar. I am looking forward to today's seminar on "Tips for Examinations for Discovery" because it is being led by my principal, Jeremy Poole, who is not only very knowledgeable, but also entertaining. I forgot to bring my lunch so I am "Jonesing" for a sandwich and one of those awesome cookies provided at the lunchtime sessions.

1:15 p.m. - I return from lunch to find the red message light on my phone lit up. I have two new messages. One from the client I called this morning and one from the associate who sent me to Chambers that morning. He needs me to go back to Chambers. It seems the parties haven't yet agreed to the consent order so he wants me to have it adjourned until Monday.

1:17 p.m. - I call the client back. He is out at lunch so I leave a message. I stare at the sticky that says .1. Are two messages worth billing .1? I continue to work on my letters rogatory masterpiece until it's time to go to Chambers.

2:17 p.m. - I am walking back to the office after another litigation victory. I arrived at Chambers on a Friday afternoon to find only the clerk and an IT guy in the

courtroom. I explained the situation. She adjourns the matter without me having to appear before the Master. I am a bit disappointed that I am denied the opportunity to reprise this morning's award-winning performance, but then I figure the Master is probably still out for lunch.

2:22 p.m. - Back to letters rogatory.

3:24 p.m. - Another articling student calls to see if I am going to "Treats". Treats is a Friday ritual where a group of staff and lawyers sign up to bring snacks, and everyone on the list then congregates in the kitchen to snack and chat. It is hard to pull myself away from research, but I make an exception for Treats.

3:42 p.m. - As I am heading back to my office, stuffed with chocolate cake and popcorn, I run into one of the senior partners, who asks me to take a trip out to Surrey next week to take some pictures of equipment in a machine shop for a case he is working on. Since he asks so nicely, and he has a corner office, I agree. He tells me he will draft a memo and send it to me with instructions. I think about the fieldtrip one of the other articling students took in August where he got to test out waterslides and feel a bit cheated by the machine shop research. But Surrey is nice in November...

4:24 p.m. - After working for a solid 42 minutes (that is .7 billable hours) on my Nobel Prize-worthy memo, a couple of lawyers walk by my office and ask if I am going to the "Wind Down". It's the last Friday of the month where staff, lawyers, and managers gather in the lounge for drinks, snacks, and socializing. I am almost finished my memo, so I decide to put it off until Sunday. I will head down to the lounge, snack on some samosas (today's theme is Indian) and start off the weekend. Only 19 more weeks of being

an articling student, not that I am counting.

### **Student #3 in Litigation Rotation:**

8:00 a.m. – I arrive at the office at the usual time. On the way up in the elevator, I run into a friend from school who is articling at another law firm in my building. Apparently he was at work until midnight last night. Ouch! I empathize but am quietly thankful that my articling experience has not been like that.

8:05 a.m. – In my office, I open up my email and get ready for the day. I have a little time to relax and develop a plan for the day.

8:15 a.m. – So much for that plan. I am called into one of the partner's offices to discuss a research assignment... and she needs it by the end of the day. Fortunately, it isn't a complex issue and should only take me a few hours.

8:45 a.m. – I bury my head and try to get research done on some projects that are due today.

9:45 a.m. – I head down to the courthouse for a Chambers application. Like a typical Vancouver winter, it's raining, so it's nice that our office is just two blocks from the Courts.

9:48 a.m. – It's a zoo down at the Chambers courtroom. Lawyers are mingling everywhere, and I see another friend from law school. Luckily, she's not opposing counsel on my motion and it's great to see a friendly face. I check in with the clerk and take my seat in the courtroom. Nothing to do but wait...

10:45 a.m. – Here we go! My motion has been called. After introducing myself to the Master, I go through my submissions.

After some initial nerves, I settle down and get through the materials. It all goes well – I think Masters usually have some sympathy for articling students, although you always hear urban myths about a judge ripping into an incompetent student in front of a packed courtroom.

11:00 a.m. – I head back to the office to begin researching the assignment from this morning. There are already several emails from lawyers asking for a student's help. Luckily, my fellow articling students have picked up the slack, and all the assignments have been taken care of.

11:55 p.m. – Today the students and associates have a lunch-time information session in one of the boardrooms (officially referred to as "Ascend"). These lunches are great, but you have to get there early if you want the best sandwiches. Today's session is about "How to prepare your client for an examination for discovery". The presenting lawyer gives us some excellent advice, but it frightens me a bit to think that I will soon be responsible for conducting an examination for discovery.

1:00 p.m. – Back in my office, I phone a potential witness relating to one of my small claims files. We talk for about 20 minutes until I am confident that I have covered all of his relevant evidence. He has agreed to sign a witness statement, so I dictate a summary of his evidence for my assistant to transcribe.

2:30 p.m. – Needing an afternoon pick-me-up, I grab a quick coffee from the office lunchroom. It's a nice little perk to have free coffee when you're trying to repay student debt.

2:40 p.m. – I spill coffee on my shirt for the second straight week. I convince myself that coffee stains give the impression that I'm too intellectual to care about my appearance.

4:20 p.m. – After getting nowhere in my online legal research, I walk down the hall to our firm library. I explain my frustrations to Emma, our library technician, who quickly refers me to a textbook that covers exactly what I was looking for. Why didn't I ask for help earlier?

4:45 p.m. – I walk over to a partner's office to have an informal talk about the results of my research. She is pleased and asks if I can draft a memo by tomorrow morning. Uh-oh! I am swamped with other projects, but I have learned that in this situation, the best approach is to tell the lawyer about your other deadlines. They are usually very understanding and will extend the deadline or at least talk to the other lawyers whose work will get bumped. As I hoped, she tells me that the memo doesn't really need to be done until the end of the week. That just made my life easier!

6:00 p.m. – An email circulates from one of the younger lawyers inviting others out for a few après work drinks. I am outta here...

#### **Student #4 in "Litigation Rotation"**

8:00 a.m. - Arrive at the office. I need to finish up a reporting letter to a client giving our opinion on their potential liability and quantum of damages. I am always amazed when I do quantum memos as to just how much the various parts of a person's body are worth – who knew?

9:30 a.m. - The "anyone for coffee" emails start coming out. I join a couple of the associates and students heading downstairs to Starbucks, and we talk about ways to get to various coffee shops without having to go outside in the pouring

rain - the perks of working in an office connected to the mall!

9:45 a.m. - Back to work. There's an email waiting for me: a lawyer has received a new file and wants me to do some research on issues of vicarious liability – should be interesting. I loved studying torts in law school, so this stuff is right up my alley.

12:00 p.m. - Student lunch time! These are the best – we all get to go somewhere nice and chat about how things are going and what kinds of work we are doing. The students are a great group this year, so hanging out for lunch is always fun.

1:00 p.m. - Back to work. One of the lawyers has a trial coming up, so she has asked me to phone the witnesses for the other side and see what they have to say – if they'll talk to me, of course. I explain to them who I am and who we are representing, and it turns out they have all

been asked to be witnesses because they are angry at our client for various reasons. And, boy, do they ever want to tell me about it! I am amazed at how much I learn about the file and the people involved - lots of juicy gossip.

3:50 p.m. - Alarm! Urgent! A Statement of Defence needs to be filed at the Courthouse by 4 pm! Is anyone available to go?!? I volunteer, even though it is raining. It's always nice to get some fresh air and enter the "where it all happens" world of the Courthouse.

4:15 p.m. - Back to work. Up to the library to do some research. I bump into one of the other students and talk to her for a minute about the issue I'm researching.

6:00 p.m. - Pack up – time to head home. I make myself a list of what I need to do tomorrow and shut down my computer. Say a quick goodbye to some people who are still around and head out!