

Five misconceptions about being a trainee solicitor



Think training contracts are filled with photocopying and cut-throat competition? Cripps trainees are on hand to bust some myths...

You may feel apprehensive ahead of starting (or choosing to apply for) a training contract – it's easy to listen to rumours about what the trainee experience is like and let them form your opinion. The truth is, everyone's training contract is unique: you will work in different teams, for different fee earners, who come from different backgrounds and have different ways of working. Here's a few myths about training contracts, busted.

1. 'Hello, nice to meet you, I'm a soulless lawyer'

A lot of the apprehension starting a training contract is a result of the worry that once you start the job, you won't have much of a social life or any life for that matter! You probably think you'll be working late every night of the week and may even have to cancel weekend plans to catch up on work at home. For my part, I certainly haven't found this to be the case. Trainees at Cripps have a fantastic work-life balance. While you may decide to work late occasionally to get the job done, or offer your supervisor support when you know they're up against a tight deadline, there is no expectation that you should work late. We are actually encouraged to do more outside of work and be human.

2. Love thy photocopier

You may have heard that training contracts are nothing more than an extended course in photocopying. During your training contract, you definitely learn some double-sided scanning wizardry, and pick up speed pagination and foot-high bundle preparation skills. But, certainly at Cripps, you are mostly exposed to, and assist with,



complex legal issues, interesting transactions and practical problem-solving, on a daily basis. And as you get more experienced in each seat, you are even given responsibility to run your own files.

3. A hardened hierarchy?

Trainees, apprentices and paralegals are firmly at the bottom of the lawyer ladder, but the misconception is that the ladder is very vertical and, therefore, very steep. While law firms are typically (and necessarily) structured hierarchically, it is rarely felt. At Cripps, you're certainly not a ghost writer for fee earners. Collaboration is key; trainees often have the opportunity to put a stamp of individuality on their work, and are given credit when they do. Our offices are open-plan, meaning that there's no such thing as a closed door: you can ask fee earners of varying seniority for help, any time.

4. Let me just pull this knife out of my back...

You may have heard that the run up to qualification can be a particularly trying time: it has been described as nastily competitive, brutal and stressful. Of course, the end of the training contract means that your period of employment with the firm has come to a natural end and there is no guarantee that you will have a job once you qualify. However, it is important to remember that the firm has invested a lot in you and will have an interest in your retention.

You may also have heard that your relationship with fellow trainees can get quite tense, particularly when there is more than one trainee after the same job. At Cripps, however, it's all about the people. Let it be known that there is no animosity felt among peers here and no one will try to put themselves above you. Everyone is genuinely supportive and at the end of the day, you're all going through the same process, together.

5. Proofreading4life

Before starting a training contract, I had heard and believed that my experience as a trainee could be summarised as a "gap-fill" exercise, completing the blank spaces in contracts and proofreading other people's work. It's actually far from it. Every day I carry out detective work, investigating different legal positions from the point of view of a variety of clients.

I have to think creatively and am encouraged to exercise independent judgement and thought in my analysis. It's not quite the high-drama performance that is '*Suits*' every day, but you do get great client exposure, active court experience and plenty of opportunity to get stuck into juicy, complex matters.

Hopefully this has revealed a few untruths and should serve as a reminder to always keep an open mind. Think broadly, embrace every experience as an opportunity and most importantly: don't believe the rumours, because there's a lot to look forward to!