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THE JUNIOR LAWYERS' WORKBOOK

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I used to have this idea of what being a lawyer would be like. You know that interview question, “why law?”, and how everyone answers, “*I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer*”? Well, that was me (for real). I wanted to be a lawyer for a long time, and I was excited to make it through law school and into the working world.

The trouble with work, though, is that – well, it’s work. Even with the best of intentions, it’s easy to lose sight of your purpose amongst the day-to-day stresses and challenges. In many firms, learning & development is seen as something to be gained on the job - but I knew that I was often successful in a structured environment. So I set out to structure my own development.

I started with a short manual – I called it the ‘*First Seat Trainee Handbook*’. It was an accumulation of everything I thought a first seat trainee would need: a mix of professional development and practical details. The intention was to gather the most helpful information in one place, in a form that a trainee could keep on their desk.

After that, I wrote the ‘*Junior Lawyers’ Handbook*’. I had the same intention with this project – to make professional development accessible – but with a focus on skills and abilities. It was published in 2019 by The Law Society.

And now, at the end of my time as a junior lawyer, I wanted to gather together some lessons I’ve learned. I’ve always been a big fan of the checklist format, so I’ve put together a collection of checklists – for law students, aspiring lawyers and junior professionals. The checklists cover:

- I. Public speaking
- II. Receiving feedback
- III. Choosing your work environment
- IV. Adding value as a junior lawyer; and
- V. A general list of major principles I’ve learned over the past five years. (I got some leading legal voices to help with this last one, so you really get to hear from the experts.)

I hope it’s not only inspirational and interesting, but useful on a very practical, day-to-day level. As always, make it your own – print it out, make notes, create your own version, share it with friends, whatever is most useful. I hope your first steps as a lawyer are both exciting and meaningful – good luck!

THE PUBLIC SPEAKING CHECKLIST

A checklist to prepare for presentations, speeches and other public speaking events

- THE WEEK BEFORE -

1. Start by mapping out your presentation.

Note your answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the main point of the presentation, in one line?
- 2) If the audience only take away one message, what would you want that to be?
- 3) Do you want to change the audience's mind about something? If so, what?
- 4) What practical advice, tools or tips are you providing the audience with?
- 5) How is your presentation going to be different from things the audience has heard or experienced before?

2. Next, figure out your general structure.

- How much time do you have to speak? In general, you want to have more content available than you're able to deliver within the given time.
- Map out the beginning, middle and end of your presentation. Think about having the energy of your presentation peak at the start (to catch the attention of the audience), at the end (so they leave energised and focused), and somewhere in the middle (so you don't lose them along the way).
- Once you have the main structure of your presentation, go through your notes and mark in the margin the approximate time you should arrive at each point. So, for example, for a 60 minute presentation you could mark each 10 minute interval in your notes. This is pretty helpful when it comes to keeping on track, because you can see where you're supposed to be as you continue to make your presentation.

3. Work out some fall-back positions.

Always good, ahead of time, to figure out what you'll do or say in the following circumstances:

- 1) Someone asks a question you don't know the answer to
- 2) Someone interrupts you halfway through
- 3) No one asks a question or interacts when you ask them to
- 4) Audience numbers vary unexpectedly – more or fewer than expected
- 5) People talk between themselves, or it's hard to hold their attention
- 6) Someone challenges you, or disagrees with you publicly
- 7) You forget what you were going to say
- 8) You take too long, or don't take long enough
- 9) Some kind of IT problem – for example, slides not working
- 10) You start to feel nervous or lose your confidence

Having even a vague sense of your strategy for each of these situations (and any others that are playing on your mind) will help to alleviate some of the pressure when it comes to the day.

- THE NIGHT BEFORE -

The night before your presentation, run through the following things:

- 1) Do you know exactly what time you need to be there, where you're going, how you'll get there, what you're wearing, etc.? Work through all the practicalities in detail to give you a general feeling of confidence about the basics.
- 2) Are you using notes? Do you have them ready to go, along with any backup materials (memory sticks, etc.)? Are your notes in a format that would be acceptable for other people to see? (Side note: you can assume people will be looking at whatever you're holding – or your background, if you're giving a virtual presentation.)
- 3) Do you know your very first line? The first thing you'll say as you stand up to speak? Sometimes just having a really strong opening line in your mind can help you feel a little more calm and collected.

- ON THE DAY -

Before you enter the room, give yourself a couple of minutes to collect your thoughts. Here's a really simple list of things I do before I speak:

- Collect all notes / materials that I'm taking with me
- Turn my phone on airplane mode
- Make sure I have water
- Breathe, stretch, focus on feeling grounded
- Remind myself of the purpose of my talk: to deliver a message; to inspire or educate – not necessarily to prove anything to anyone

- IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS -

After every speaking engagement, you should be looking to get hold of some kind of feedback. This is hard, because often you won't want to hear criticism – but (annoyingly) this is how you improve: the more constructive the feedback, the better.

There are a couple of ways you can go about getting feedback:

- Have someone in the audience (like a mentor or peer) who is prepared and willing to give you their thoughts at the end;
- Casually ask a few attendees at the end what they thought (this is often best done if people are asking you questions after you finish, or if people are taking a while to leave the room); or
- Send an email to the group (if you know them well, and if it seems appropriate) to gather general thoughts and comments.

Once you end up with feedback (and if you agree with it, or if there are any consistent points), make sure you action it in some way – make a note, create some next steps to improve on whatever it is, ask someone to help you develop your skillset. I'd recommend gathering public speaking feedback in one place – it makes it much easier to refer back to, and to pick out ongoing themes / patterns.

- FOR BEING AN ATTENDEE -

A quick note about attending presentations. You'll end up going to a lot of talks, webinars, workshops, etc., throughout your time as a junior lawyer. Even with the best of intentions, it's easy to let them pass you by, concentrating instead on your emails or your to-do list (or your lunch). Here are a few simple steps to stay engaged, and to try and retain some of the information coming your way.

- 1) **Always have a question ready.** Even if you don't ask it, make sure you have something prepared – it challenges you to think beyond the material being offered and start to engage with the substance of the talk. A few ideas for good questions could include: (1) asking about the future of the topic, (2) considering the topic in practice; asking how it works on a practical level, and / or (3) thinking across disciplines (is this topic similar to other things you know about?).
- 2) **Take notes.** Even if you don't read them back, the act of taking notes can help you to sort through information and stay focused.
- 3) **Think practically.** How does this material relate to your own work? Can you see how it could be useful in practice?

It can be intimidating to ask questions, especially in front of a large group of colleagues. But doing so will not only improve your own knowledge retention, but will give you an opportunity to practice your public speaking skills (and will make sure people remember who you are, too).

THE FEEDBACK REVIEW CHECKLIST

A checklist to help you make the most of feedback reviews and constructive criticism

First, a quick note about feedback reviews. We often fear criticism – we’re taught to look for the positive in everything, and negative feedback can damage our own sense of competency (and our ego). But timely, specific, honest feedback can actually be a powerful tool for personal growth. As you work through this checklist, I’d encourage you to think of feedback as a gift provided for your own development. Even just a slight change in perspective can reframe the whole thing, and make constructive criticism something to be sought, valued and actioned.

- THE NIGHT BEFORE -

- 1. Start by revisiting your own understanding of how things have gone since your last review.*

Did you have specific goals and objectives to meet? Did you have personal ambitions, or things that you wanted to achieve? Were you looking to receive a certain type of experience, and – if so – did you get what you wanted?

Review all / any notes you have from previous feedback sessions. It’s helpful to keep all your feedback notes in one place for this purpose – it makes it much easier to pick out clear themes and consistent messages.

- 2. If you had specific goals and objectives, make a note of whether you achieved them or not.*

Although every formal feedback review will be different in structure, you’re likely to see similar approaches. Often, a feedback review will start with the reviewer giving you an opportunity to express your own sense of how things went, so it’s helpful to have notes prepared. Include specific examples of your achievements, so you can back up your claims with evidence.

If you were provided with any comments in advance (see below), work through those too – make sure you note any consistent themes or recurring points, and be prepared to have a discussion around them.

- 3. If you submitted anything, or if you were provided with anything ahead of time (for example, a self-review or supervisor comments), have this to hand.*

It's typical for a review session to involve a submission from you of some description – for example, a brief set of bullet points about how you think things are going. If you submitted something like this, make sure you have it with you (and annotated with your notes, if helpful). If you didn't submit anything, you could always put a written summary together just for your own reference. If you were given any written comments or feedback in advance, make sure you bring these along too.

- ON THE DAY -

MINDSET

Reviews can be intimidating. It's not easy to hear about your own performance, especially when there will undoubtedly be things to improve on. Before you head into the review, make sure you're in the right headspace to take in the information. Avoid being defensive, or denying criticism (even if you don't think the criticism is accurate or fair). You want to be able to provide your own perspective, but keep it analytical – aim to enter your review with openness and self-awareness.

REMINDERS

Before you head in, take a quick look through your notes – remind yourself of any standout achievements, make a mental note of any repeated concerns, and review any general themes from this review or from past reviews. Now is also a good time to prepare some questions, if you have any. These could be general work-related questions around personal or professional development, HR-related questions, or even high-level questions around career progression, promotion or job changes.

MATERIALS

You'll want to bring any relevant notes (unless they contain personal material), plus a print-out or virtual copy of anything you were provided with in advance. You'll also want to take a pen and paper and switch your phone to silent. It helps to clear your diary of anything, where possible, in the hour immediately after the review. This gives you time to process and work through the steps below.

When you're in your review meeting, take notes – and lots of them. Try to capture all the most important points as they're discussed. Ask for clarification if anything is unclear.

- IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS -

1. Review your notes

The first and most obvious step is to review what just happened. Do this while it's fresh in your mind, so you get the most accurate reflection of how things went. Clarify any confusion in your notes, add in anything you missed, and generally prepare your materials for future reference.

This is also a great time to check any remaining uncertainties or questions with your reviewer or supervisor. If you're unsure about what your next steps should be, now is the time to seek confirmation.

2. Figure out next steps

You should have agreed some tangible goals and objectives for the coming months – now is the time to crystallise them and record them with clarity. Work out when your next review is, and mark any mid-way points at which it would be helpful to check in with your supervisor or reviewer. For example, if your next review is six months away, think about checking in every few months to make sure you're on the right track.

3. Put your review into context

The final step is to fit your current feedback with the feedback from prior reviews. You can do this by working through your notes or formal feedback, highlighting positives and negatives, and seeing how they fit in with previous themes. What you're looking for are consistent strengths and weaknesses. For your ongoing strengths, you can try and shape your career in that direction – for example, if you know you excel at public speaking, you can seek future opportunities to develop that. For your ongoing weaknesses, you can create your own personal performance plan to work on those (or ask your supervisor or reviewer, if you're not sure how to address any issues).

You can keep your feedback materials up to date by referring back to them regularly – perhaps at the end of every month – and adding in any informal feedback you receive. That way, you'll end up with a much more balanced, accurate picture of what's going on, and a sense of how to improve.

THE 'ADDING VALUE' CHECKLIST

A checklist to help you stand out from the crowd

Once you settle into your role as a junior lawyer, you'll have worked on things like eliminating basic mistakes, managing your time, paying attention to detail and developing a set of excellent professional skills. Now it's time to think beyond the basics. This checklist is a set of things to consider when you're trying to go one step further and impress your team by adding extra value.

1) Commercial awareness

You'll remember this one from your applications and assessment days, but in the real world it's all about the practicalities. At the heart of it, commercial awareness is the ability to apply legal wisdom in real-world commercial / corporate scenarios. How is your legal insight relevant to your client's demands? It's important to keep the commercial awareness element in your mind throughout your time as a junior lawyer, even when you feel like you're juggling an overwhelming number of considerations. If it helps, run through the following questions before you finalise a piece of work:

- Does this take into account all the considerations that might be relevant?
- Is this piece of advice helpful, in the real world? Is it useful for the recipient, in practice?
- Are there practical considerations that apply in the client's circumstances that I may not have taken into account in a piece of legal research or analysis?

2) Legal wisdom

Ok, so you might not feel like you have much of an opinion to offer yet. But – even as a junior lawyer – you want to start developing skills of analysis, judgment, commentary, opinion and improvisation. You can start to do this through the following suggestions:

- See if you can offer some kind of personal insight or opinion within the context of your work – even if you think it might be wrong.
- See if you can challenge the views of other lawyers or people on your team (when and where appropriate) by offering an alternative way of

thinking. Of course, be mindful of the context and timing, but contrary views, thoughtful questions and interesting discussions are often welcomed, and will go far in advancing your own abilities as well as your personal brand.

- See if you can take the initiative before being asked to do something. Can you look ahead and predict what might happen next? Could you offer to do a task before it's assigned to you?
- Start to develop a sense of intuition when it comes to your work. In a new situation, can you improvise an answer, based on your understanding of the field so far? Can you think creatively, dynamically, and offer a fresh perspective? (Side note: sometimes junior lawyers can actually be the best candidates for thinking in this way, because you're less likely to be tied to a particular way of doing things.)
- Can you start to provide advice, rather than just a summary of an answer? This ties into the commercial awareness point above, but remember that clients are paying for legal *advice*, not just legal *findings*. Can you start to think of yourself as a 'trusted advisor', and hold yourself out as such (even just within the firm)?
- Can you make it a regular practice to speak up – when appropriate – in calls and meetings? And even if you don't choose to say something out loud, can you get into the habit of having something to contribute, if someone happened to ask for your opinion? This is also helpful in getting you into the habit of thorough, reflective preparation before the relevant call or meeting. It might not always be immediately obvious to anyone else, but it will be fundamental in developing your skill-set over time.

3) Document review

Document review is one of the most common trainee tasks. Here's how to stand out from the crowd.

- As you review the document, consider the following:
 - What scenario does this document need to be used in, in practice? Have you considered all the consequences of that practical use? Are there possible situations in which the document needs to be used that are not accounted for in the draft?
 - Have you considered which risks under the document would be the most significant and / or the most likely to occur in practice?

(This analysis will come in useful if you have to negotiate the draft with other lawyers, and decide which points (if any) to concede.)

- How does the document fit into the wider deal context? Are there other documents that are cross-referenced in your draft? Do you understand how those other documents work?
- Do you need to check any aspects of the draft with an expert team (such as tax, employment, pensions, IP or litigation)?
- Do all the definitions and cross-references work? Is the formatting accurate and updated (especially clause numbering or tabulation)?
- When you're reviewing a particular clause, have you reviewed it in the context of the overall draft (as well as just reviewing and analysing the clause in isolation)?

4) Deal dynamics

If you're working in transactional law, this one is key. It's easy, as the junior person on the deal, to learn things at the surface level – to run the transaction checklists, set up the calls and keep on top of the administration. But it's possible to go one step further on your deals. Here are a couple of places to start.

- **Building relationships:** understand who does what, both internally (within your firm) and externally (with other law firms, clients, regulators, etc.). Start to understand the different roles and their place within the broader context.
- **Assume that you're responsible,** without automatically deferring to senior lawyers. It might be that someone else steps in, but when you can see a task, try and think it through as if you were responsible for completing it. Anticipate problems; think through solutions; plan ahead.
- **Whenever you suggest changes, think one step further** – both in terms of timing (managing deadlines, knowing how to deal with time-sensitive scenarios, etc.) and practical consequences. This is also important in situations where documents cross-refer to one another: you need to be able to anticipate how one change might have a broader impact on a whole load of other documents. Being able to explain your own rationale to others is essential – putting it down in an email chain or in writing can be a useful reference point.

- **Asking good questions.** Asking questions is a great way to advance your own knowledge, but it's an art – not all questions are appropriate, helpful or impressive. Before asking a question, you should do a significant amount of work to find out the answer (avoid asking something that has an easily-Googleable outcome), and you should have considered a couple of possible responses. If you still don't understand after being given an answer, think about rephrasing or reframing your question, or come at the problem from a different angle. If you get an answer but you're still curious, go deeper – ask a follow-up question to show your engagement, or ask for recommended reading / further resources.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

A checklist to help you choose the right firm, team or practice area

It's a tricky thing to figure out what you want to do with your life. Even once you've decided to commit to law, there's still a multitude of options. What kind of firm? What area of law? What kind of learning environment? What type of career? This checklist will help you to structure your thoughts – you could use it before you apply for firms, as you're thinking about trainee seat selection, or when you're thinking more long-term about your career in the future.

1) What kind of learner are you?

Without going too deep, this question should get you thinking specifically about what kind of learner you are. Take into account:

- What kind of environment do you learn best in? Do you need a structured teaching programme, or are you self-sufficient? Do you like to have multiple training sessions, resources and precedents available to you, or do you like to learn on the job?
- Do you work best in big or small teams, or by yourself?
- Do you like to have a lot of responsibility very fast, or do you prefer to be supervised and mentored?
- Do you like to have a broad group of peers on your level? Do you operate well within a large group of colleagues whose work may overlap with yours?

Once you have some initial reflections on these questions (noting that your preferences will probably evolve over time), you can compare your answers to each firm, practice area or team you're looking at. Be honest with this process: would you fit into this environment on a long-term basis, or would you have to make significant changes to your own preferences to make it work?

2) What's the communication like?

It's pretty clear that effective communication is one of the most successful tools in personal and professional development. As a junior lawyer, it's important that you get guidance and feedback on your work – otherwise it's

difficult to know if you're moving in the right direction. Most firms and senior lawyers will provide frequent, structured feedback – but if you don't get it, ask. And if you've asked and you still don't get it, rethink your environment. Are you able to succeed without knowing what you're doing right and what you're doing wrong?

If it becomes an ongoing issue within your team or firm, but everything else is working well, it might be that some feedback-related training is required. You could suggest it to the learning & development team, if there is one. Alternatively, if you have a great relationship with your team members, you could suggest that you explore the topic of effective feedback within an internal / informal training session.

3) What's your purpose here?

Again, without going too deep – this is about what you really want from your career. What's your driving motivation? Are you after money, or an intellectual environment, or an academic challenge? It doesn't matter so much what the specific answer is, just that you're honest with yourself about it. Law is a difficult career path, and knowing exactly *why* you want to pursue it can be incredibly helpful for making decisions further down the line.

Once you have a general sense of what it is you want, you can complete the task of comparing your current work environment to your goals. It might not be that you change your path right away, but working out – in a long-term sense – whether a place is the right fit for you will be incredibly useful later in your career.

4) What other priorities do you have in your life?

Law can be an all-encompassing career, and those who are able to craft a sustainable, long-term path are often clear about what is most important to them. Are there other priorities you should be factoring in to your choice of working environment, such as family commitments, interests / passion projects, or side-hustles?

As a junior lawyer, it's possible that you won't have much choice about how to structure your working life for some time (after all, the route to seniority in the legal profession is still relatively traditional), but it's a useful exercise regardless. If nothing else, it will help you get clear on the things that matter most to you, and the things that you'll be willing to negotiate on in order to advance in your desired career.

5) Have you considered all the options?

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Again, this might not be an immediate possibility for trainee and junior lawyers, but it's worth exploring the different working options that your firm or industry might offer. Things like portfolio careers, flexible working, working remotely or job shares are likely to become more common as a new generation of legal professionals (that's you) starts to redefine the profession.

As you begin your career, there's no pressure to immediately define what it is you want, but it's worth checking out the available models. If there are people in your firm working in a 'non-traditional' way, and that appeals to you, explore it – see if you can catch up with them for a quick chat or coffee. You'd be surprised at how many options open up once you know what's possible.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES CHECKLIST

A few suggestions as you start your journey in the law

Eloise Skinner

Listen & learn more than you speak

It's tempting to head into a new environment with your most outgoing attitude, wanting to prove yourself as fast as possible. But that's not always helpful – especially in a profession like law, where so much is based on long-term, complex knowledge. Best bet is to wait until you have something of value to contribute before you speak. You'll gain a lot more by listening, taking notes and asking questions than you will by asserting your own opinion, at least to start off with.

Of course, there will be times where it's helpful – and impressive – to offer your opinion, but read the room first. Make sure you really know what you're talking about, and that what you're saying can be backed up by evidence and examples. If it can't, best to wait until you've thought it through in more detail.

Don't be scared to feel like you know nothing

Following on from the above, it's inevitable that there will be times where you feel like you don't know anything. This can be frustrating – especially if you're straight out of law school, where you might have felt like you mastered particular topics. But being an excellent senior lawyer takes time (think years, rather than weeks), and there will be a lot of moments of self-doubt, self-criticism and uncertainty. That's ok, to some extent. You don't have to have it all figured out. You might also find that it's helpful to be in an environment where everyone else seems to be way ahead of you – if nothing else, it will encourage you to up your game and push yourself.

Don't be scared to fail

Seeing failure as a form of feedback will be one of your most valuable skills as a junior professional. Everyone fails at some point – sometimes dramatically. As a result, it's not something you should try and avoid to any extreme extent. Instead, it's something that can be used as a learning tool. If you can ask lots of questions about *why* something went wrong, you can not only avoid it happening next time, but you can also build an enduring sense of resilience

and determination. You'll always learn something about yourself in the process of failure, if you're listening carefully enough.

Seek out learning opportunities

The corporate learning environment is very different from school or university. In this world, you often have to structure your own learning and development (in addition to any formal training you're provided with). It will be up to you to seek out information, learn lessons and gather wisdom. If you can use each conversation with a senior lawyer as an opportunity to learn something, you'll be setting yourself up in an excellent position. It doesn't have to be a technical or legal skill – it could be something as simple as learning a career lesson, picking up a new habit, or observing professional communication abilities in action. If you can practice this mindset with intention during your junior lawyer years, you'll probably find you can carry it with you into the rest of your career.

One other tip about learning things: when someone is telling you *why* or *how* they did something (for example: a task or an achievement), ask them for details about their mindset as well as the practicalities that helped them succeed. Often, you'll learn a lot by understanding the personal qualities that result in success (for example: resilience, determination, commitment, attention to detail or persistence).

Be thorough and responsive

Simple things like reading each email you receive (thoroughly, to the bottom of the chain and checking any relevant attachments) can be incredibly important in the context of a high-pressure corporate environment. Same goes for responsiveness. It doesn't take much to send a quick email in reply to correspondence, just letting the sender know you received it and you will get back to them. But the consequences are significant: it reassures the rest of your team that you're on top of things, and it allows other people to plan and structure their work accordingly. Setting up these kinds of habits from the start of your career will pay you back in the long term.

Jodie Hill

Be your true self

Everyone starting a career in law is going to have good credentials and lots of legal experience. Think about what makes you stand out and what value you

can add. It becomes really transparent when you are trying to be someone you are not. In order to achieve this, research the firms you want to work for and really look at their values. If you are able to network with any of their staff, ask them what it's like and why they were attracted to the firm.

Ask yourself:

- Do the firm's values align with yours?
- Could you show up as your true self there?
- Why did you start a career in law?
- What kind of lawyer do you want to be?

This will differ for everyone. Not everyone wants to be a commercial lawyer in London. Do you want a role that is more client-facing, or more advocacy-focused?

No question is a stupid question

Time and time again, when delegated tasks, junior lawyers will say that they understand in fear of looking stupid - when they have no idea what they have been asked to do. Life as a lawyer is a journey and you are constantly evolving and learning. It might be that the person delegating the task has not effectively communicated this with you, or that they have not actually passed you the correct information. Always make sure you know exactly what is expected of you.

It can help to repeat the task and instructions back, concisely, to confirm you have understood correctly before starting the task. It's better to ask the question if you are unclear, than to complete a task that is not what was expected.

Own your tasks

There is nothing more irritating than when someone says they will do something and then either doesn't do it at all (nightmare!!) or does it but it is late, rushed or of a poor quality.

Deadlines are put in place for a reason. That reason may not be communicated to you but always assume it should be done before that deadline, unless otherwise agreed.

Own every single task. Each task is a reflection on you and your ability to progress as a lawyer. If you don't think you have capacity to do the task within the prescribed deadline, speak to the person who allocated it to you and explain why and either ask for support or more time to complete it. If you have started the task and found it difficult or you are unsure of the quality, take some time to research and speak to other lawyers and even the lawyer

who allocated it to you, in order to check you are on the right lines before handing it in.

Once delegated a task, it is your responsibility to complete it to a high standard within the prescribed timeframe. Don't wait to the last minute, as you may run into unforeseen obstacles.

If you need more time, ask for it before the day of the deadline. Avoid, where possible, leaving the request to the day it becomes due.

Show your passion

If there is something you are passionate about, join a committee that reflects this passion, or become a workplace champion, or offer to write blogs or speak at events on the topic.

Don't be afraid to ask to help with an initiative if it's something you are passionate about. It could be legal work, or a diversity and inclusion project. It could be a charity initiative or a social or sports event in the firm. Whatever your passion, make it known and step up and offer your support.

Olly Haddock

Be honest about your capacity

This is not a trap. There is, of course, a stigma attached to the notion of "turning away" work. Success is often seen as a zero-sum game; if you don't do the work, one of your junior cohort will. They will be first in line for the plaudits, the job offer, the promotion. As ever, the reality is nuanced.

This is not to say that you should be trimming your to-do list to make sure you're out the door by 6.00pm, but you need to recognise that there are limits to what you can do, particularly where deadlines are concerned. Taking on two jobs that need to be turned around in a similar timeframe, can end up doing more harm than good. This is particularly true if you end up letting the partner know when it's too late to make alternative arrangements. So, be honest and don't be afraid to speak up from the outset. Your team will appreciate it in the long run.

Networking takes practice

One of the most common misconceptions is that networking skills are innate; that one's fate in a room full of strangers is set from birth. That's just not true.

Of course personality traits can give you a head start, but these skills can be built like any other. There are norms and rules to networking that make life easier for those that don't consider themselves naturals – for example, if you think a conversation has run its course, it's fine to exchange cards and move on, acknowledging the need to circulate. It's all about putting yourself in those scenarios as regularly as possible.

It's not enough to be great at the law

The days of simply sitting with your nose to the legal grindstone are (for better or worse) behind us. A successful career in the industry, takes much more than being proficient at applying the law. These days, you need to be your own business development manager, build a professional profile and focus as much on your EQ as your IQ.

As a junior lawyer, it's not all about bringing in new work. Building a reputation internally and networking within your firm can be just as vital. Building relationships with senior figures is key when trying to land the over-subscribed training seat or the NQ role.

That's not to say you shouldn't have your eye on the future. Profile building is a slow process, but eventually you will start to see a snowball effect. As your profile grows, new opportunities will present themselves. Speaking invitations, features in established publications and recognition in legal directories will slowly help to position yourself as an authority in a given field. All of which will help to build a client base. When climbing the ladder, this can be just as important as your grasp of the latest case law.

See everything as a learning opportunity

Being a junior lawyer is not always glamorous. There are any number of common tasks that are likely to make you wonder why you went through those sleepless nights at law school. It is important to remember that these tasks are not simply a rite of passage, but that each can, in its own way, be a learning opportunity.

If you are asked to help with bundling, take note of the process that goes into agreeing the contents - this can be a complex negotiation. When taking an attendance note, try to take on board the client management skills of the partner leading the meeting, the tactical discussions during conferences, or court room procedures at a hearing. Try to see beyond the strict remit of the

task and think about what lessons you can take away. These are often the skills they can't teach you at law school.

Chrissie Wolfe

Draft every email like it's going to be read back to you by a judge...

Email is now by far the most common form of communication for lawyers and, on any given day, you may find yourself sending more than 50 of them to various people, both internally and externally. The casual nature of some of these emails that you might regularly send to colleagues can cause you to fall into bad habits when corresponding with clients and/or other parties involved in the case. If the case is litigated, then all correspondence between the parties is technically disclosable to the Court unless it is protected by privilege (which only applies in limited circumstances).

On a practical level, this means that any email you send to your opponent can be legitimately produced by them in Court for the Judge to read if it is relevant to support an argument that they are making, or, conversely, you may wish to produce it in support of an argument that you are making. This can be a very unsettling experience the first time it happens, particularly if it is the other side producing an email which you barely remember sending as it was 4.59pm on a Friday 2 years ago and you were trying to get 12 out in the remaining minute before gin o'clock. It is guaranteed that the contents of that email will be burned into your memory forever once a Judge has read it to you, word for word, and asked you directly "*what exactly did you mean by this?*" through his furrowed and bemused brow.

Moral of the story: emails = formal correspondence; draft accordingly.

Justin Farrance

Don't compare yourself

Be proud to be you! My biggest learning curve when entering the legal profession was to give up comparing myself to others. It's natural to look across to your peers who seem to be more prepared and ahead – I always felt that. It wasn't until I forced myself to pause when I realised that a lot of my anxiety derived from times that I was unnecessarily comparing myself to others. It was powerful to realise that many of the times I felt inadequate or low, were times spent looking at what others were doing.

My number one tip would be to focus on your path, strengths, areas of improvement and stop looking at those around you. Whenever I compared myself to others, I instantly forgot about how far I've come and all the obstacles I've overcome. As you enter the profession and continue your journey, write out 2-3 short term and long term goals. These will help you stay on track and focussed on the path you want to take. Embrace all your qualities and start thinking more about what makes you, you.

Mind-set is key

It's very easy as a student and junior in the profession to dwell on the negatives and block out any positive achievement in your day. In terms of self-reflection, it's especially important to recognise when you dwell on negatives in your day, what caused that initial feeling and to write down how you responded to that. Did your brain become consumed by one negative? Were you able to block it out? If not, why not?

Your job will be difficult and mistakes will happen. It is all too easy to focus on the one negative in your day that didn't go quite right – I'm writing from experience. Try to recognise when you focus or fixate on a negative and then write down two positives that have recently happened. That sounds tedious, but it's important to remind yourself of the bigger picture around you. It's important to learn from mistakes, but it's equally important to adapt your mind-set to prevent you from becoming down and anxious because of them. Recognising when you are focussing on a negative aspect of your day is a great tool to help shift your thoughts and continue your day in a positive light. Keep working at it!

Find connections amongst people

Forming connections and getting on well with your peers and colleagues is important at every stage in your career. As a junior member of the profession, building mini connections with people is key. It's wrong to assume that your work output is the only quality those more senior are judging you on. It's important to be personable, enthusiastic and engaged in your work and have conversations with those around you. Ask questions and try to find connections or commonalities with people.

Most importantly, enjoy the company of those around you! Ask people how their day is going and check in with your team. I really hope you are comfortable bringing your authentic self to work and wish you all the best of luck as you start out!

Kayleigh Leonie

Have confidence in your abilities

When undertaking a task for the first time, your confidence can waiver and you can feel under pressure to not make any mistakes and for your work to be perfect. It is very easy for negative thoughts to take over and for your confidence to waiver on your own abilities. Agonising over tasks is not helpful and can make you doubt yourself even more. Checking work is essential to ensure you haven't missed anything or made any errors, but you shouldn't be agonising over finalising a piece of work.

A good way to ensure you don't spend a disproportionate amount of time worrying over a piece of work is to set yourself a time limit on how long you think the work should take you and work back from that. When you have almost reached the time limit, take yourself away from your desk and make a drink or go for a walk around the block. Then come back to it for a final proof-read and send it out.

Don't be afraid to raise concerns that you have

If you are worried about anything at work you should consider raising it as soon as possible rather than letting your concerns linger. There is no need to wait until your formal review or your annual appraisal, if something is bothering you then you should speak up. Problems are much easier to work through if they are raised promptly.

Resolving issues early and getting the support you need will enable you to work through the problem effectively. If you are not comfortable talking to your supervisor or manager, you should consider speaking to someone in your organisation's human resources department or confiding in a colleague for support.

Self-care is a must, not a luxury

Law is a very rewarding career, but it can be challenging. Looking after yourself is key to ensuring you are able to do your best work and tackle legal issues comprehensively and efficiently. You need to ensure you are well rested and taking regular breaks so that you can fire on all cylinders. Ensuring you're sleeping well and eating a healthy balanced diet is key, especially when you're working long hours or feeling under pressure. Using techniques such as mindfulness, journaling and physical exercise can all help relieve the stresses of work and help you to feel more grounded. If you don't put your own wellbeing first, you may find it more difficult to keep on top of your work and remain grounded. No matter how busy and demanding work becomes, it is imperative you put yourself first and ask others for help if you need it.

LawCare, a charity which promotes and supports good mental health and wellbeing in the legal community, has a website packed full of helpful factsheets and resources and also runs a confidential helpline you can contact should you need access to emotional support. LawCare's website is www.lawcare.org.uk and the confidential helpline number is 0800 279 6888.

Bring your whole self to work

As lawyers, we are great at solving our client's problems but we tend to leave our own personalities and problems at the door and shield ourselves from openly showing emotion. To create a positive and healthy workplace with an open culture, we should be bringing our whole selves to work and sharing our emotions with colleagues. Allowing yourself to be authentic at work and sharing things with your colleagues can be very empowering and help you create stronger working relationships.

LawCare, in collaboration with the Open University, has created a training course called 'Fit for Law' which provides legal professionals with resources to enable them to understand and develop key emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-reflection and better strategies for emotional self-regulation. The free course can be accessed at www.fitforlaw.org.uk.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I'm Eloise – I'm an author, teacher and therapist. I'm also the founder of [The Purpose Workshop](#), a consultancy business helping people redesign their lives.

I was born in East London, and later studied at Cambridge and Oxford. I trained as a lawyer in the city, but – after some soul-searching, including a year training to be a monk! – I followed my passion into psychotherapy. I'm a published author, and I teach Pilates, yoga, barre, meditation, massage and nutrition. I also have my own podcast, '[About Wisdom](#)'.

Above all, I'm driven by the idea of integration - the power of bringing together all aspects of work and life; to live fully, with intention, integrity and purpose.

PLACES YOU CAN FIND ME :)

WEBSITE	www.eloiseskinner.com
PODCAST	https://anchor.fm/eloideskinner
INSTAGRAM	https://www.instagram.com/eloidesallexia
TIKTOK	https://www.tiktok.com/@eloidesallexia

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Eloise	Author / Founder, The Purpose Workshop <u>@eloiseallexia</u> <u>@thepurposeworkshop</u>
Jodie	Managing Director & Solicitor, Thrive Law <u>@iamjodiehill</u> <u>@thrive law</u>
Olly	Solicitor, RadcliffesLeBrasseur LLP Founder of the LYPN / Chair of the LYLG <u>@ollybsh</u> <u>@londonyoungprofessionals</u> <u>@londonyounglawyers</u>
Chrissie	Solicitor / Founder of Law and Broader <u>@CWolfe LAB</u>
Justin	Solicitor / Founder of GROW <u>@justinfarrance</u> <u>@grow.mentoring</u>
Kayleigh	Solicitor, Macfarlanes / trustee of LawCare <u>@kayleighleonie</u> <u>@LawCare</u>