

Changing law firms during articles

The experiences of articulated clerks throughout Victoria are diverse. As the recent survey by the LIV has demonstrated, no two law firms or work environments are the same.

Successfully obtaining a position as an articulated clerk is a significant achievement given the rigorous (and often intimidating) interview process. You have probably spent the past five years of your life studying at university for this opportunity and your hopes are high in anticipation of the articles year ahead. In light of this, I found myself in a bit of a tight spot when eight months into my articles with a national commercial firm, I decided that I was unhappy.

The practical work experience I received was good and at times excellent, however, the atmosphere was not happy. The unsettled environment was largely due to complications with the national structure of the firm, rather than the staff in the Melbourne office. I had a lot of respect for my colleagues and we had a good working relationship, however, the firm was heading in an uncertain direction which was inconsistent with my personal goals. There was no animosity in the office, I am still in frequent contact with a number of my former colleagues; it was simply that I wanted to move in a different direction to that of the firm. I soon realised that I did not want to wait until the end of articles to make this move.

It was at this stage that I began to investigate the possibility of transferring my articles to another principal at another firm. I had already transferred my articles within the firm, due to the resignation of the partner who had been my principal, so I wondered if it was possible to change firms during articles. I read the *Legal Practice (Admission) Rules 1999* (the Rules) and was happy to find that there was nothing to impede me changing firms. It was at this stage that I called on the helpful resources of the staff at the Board of Examiners, in order to clarify that this could be done. I was pleased to have it confirmed that I could change firms during articles, all I needed was a suitable new employer.

I approached a recruitment consultant and arranged a meeting. I was not holding out much hope of finding anything, as I did not think many employers would be interested in hiring anybody who had not yet completed articles. Following an interview with the consultant, she mentioned that I may be a "good fit" for one of her clients, and asked whether I would be interested in attending an interview. I was pleasantly surprised, so I attended the first interview, was asked back for a second and then a third interview, and then finally offered a position as articulated clerk/solicitor. I accepted the offer, handed in my notice

and completed the paperwork required by the Board of Examiners, which is not too onerous, and includes a deed of assignment and supplementary articles. Rule 3.15(2) of the Rules provides that articles may be assigned from one principal to another. It is important to note, however, that should you wish to transfer articles, your current principal is still required to swear an affidavit as to your service as an articulated clerk, therefore it is important to handle this matter delicately.

I am thoroughly enjoying my position as a junior litigator/employment lawyer with my new employer.

My advice to people who may find themselves in a similar situation is to take control of your career. If you are genuinely unhappy, don't wait until the end of articles for things to get better, do something positive about it now. ■



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