

Learning from

OVERCOMING REJECTION IS AN IMPORTANT STEP ON THE CAREER PATH.

I thought the worst day of my life was being rejected from my soccer club team when I was 13. I remember crying in the rain, waiting for my dad to pick me up. Rejection stung. I was wrong. The worst day was 19 September, 2011, market offers day for traineeships. I was unsuccessful for early priority offers which were announced in August. My hopes were up however as I interviewed at a number of boutique

and mid-tier firms for a traineeship. Yet, I didn't get one call. I remember driving around that day to keep myself busy, crying at the wheel. I felt like an absolute failure, that everything I had done amounted to nothing.

I spent six years working towards a Commerce/Law degree. When I did my clerkships, I would work during the day, then do the graveyard shift at night at my local supermarket to make ends



failure

meet. I volunteered at a community legal centre for two years. I was involved in law committees at uni. My marks weren't at the top of the scale, but they were solid. There were nights throughout the semesters when I chained myself to the desk with only one thing on my mind – success. Nothing could stop me in my quest to get the best marks. I even made notes for my friends, the majority of whom were selected for traineeships this year.

In all my interviews, I thought to myself, how could they not love me? I had the jokes, the tall strong physique and the academic selling points to be selected. A 95 VCE, honours marks at uni and a wealth of diverse experience. But I wasn't good enough. I was so dark that day. Not eating, no sleep, even simple tasks such as getting up off the couch were difficult.

Dealing with rejection is one of the hardest things in life, especially when it happens on an almost regular basis. Staying positive is even harder; after all, the firms don't want you. So what's the point?

The point is I will get there one day. Rejection letters on firm letterheads aren't going to stop me. My mum always told me never to give up. When I was 15, after two years training in my backyard, the soccer club that rejected me at 13 selected me to play. When I was 16, I was voted Most Valuable Player. I am a trooper and always have been. I am looking forward to the day when I will be sent into battle by my commander. He or she just hasn't selected me yet.

Postscript

Since that day, things are different. I have taken a different path, away from a general corporate law traineeship well trodden by commerce/law students or those wanting to pursue a corporate legal career. Many students believe the only end to a law

degree is a corporate career at a top/mid tier firm. That is far from the truth. It is not the normal path to an area of law close to your heart, such as plaintiff litigation, social justice, government lawyer, family law, specialist commercial . . . the list goes on. My hopes were to work in corporate and plaintiff litigation, and while that dream is by no means dead, it will just take a different path to get to. Overcoming your failures is the first step to taking that next step – setting yourself on the path to what you really want to do.

I talked to my university careers counsellor, the principal at my community legal centre, and my mentors from previous clerkships, all of whom I consider successful. It was insightful to discover how they came to the position they are now in. It was comforting to know that most of them went through exactly what I went through. A lot of rejection, but they stuck it out and did what they had to do to become successful.

As Plan B, I intend to undertake a practical legal training (PLT) course. I also plan to get some more experience on the side. The positive is that the PLT is over in half the time it takes to do a traineeship at a firm. You have spare time after which to find a job, or in the meantime the Olympics are in London, why not travel some more before you begin work? Furthermore, the PLT is highly regarded by many leaders in the field. The successful people I have talked to who have done a PLT have had nothing but good things to say about it. Things are looking up.

That is the major lesson I learned through all this. Stay positive. Because the minute you start to believe you are beaten, you've lost. It's all in the mind. Keep your chin up, things will happen. Sure they haven't happened to me yet, but with this attitude, nothing can stop me. •

LACHIE BEESTON is a student at Monash University.

Success stories

Having completed my law degree, I had hoped to work in an area where I could leverage and apply knowledge from my previous career as an engineer. This in turn led me to believe that a clerkship with a high end private practice was the only option for me. When that didn't happen, I was naturally disappointed but at that stage I didn't realise just how powerful my law degree was nor how wide and varied my options really were.

Following both a beneficial and hugely enjoyable spell at Leo Cussen, I landed the supposed dream job with a high end private practice, only to find that it was not what I had hoped it would be. I went on to spend four enjoyable years with the ACCC working in diverse areas of policy as well as undertaking in-house legal work. The ACCC, truly opened my eyes to the diversity of work which is available to a law graduate.

Today, I find myself back in private practice as a competition and regulatory lawyer with DLA Piper. I'm very happy in my work and secure in the knowledge that this is but another step in a career that has the potential to take me anywhere and everywhere.

MARKO FILIPOVIC is a lawyer at DLA Piper.

I grew up in Adelaide, completed my law degree by correspondence and finished articles in regional Victoria only months before coming to the Bar. I had no network or secure source of work when I came to the Bar. I have been a barrister for three years now, have a busy practice in the areas I have always loved, regular income and regular work. I recently had my first appearance in the Court of Appeal and first written Supreme Court judgment, both in the same week. I am the happiest professionally I have ever been or could have dreamed of being.

TAMMY LEANE is a barrister at the Victorian Bar.

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