



# Agony Attorney

WELCOME TO OUR LATEST COLUMN. AGONY ATTORNEY IS HERE TO HELP WITH ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE REGARDING YOUR PRACTICE OF LAW. SO ASK AWAY.

■ **My clients are sometimes demanding and aggressive towards me. How do I deal with such clients and diffuse tense situations?**

This is not uncommon, regardless of whether you are just starting out or are a seasoned campaigner. Try the following simple but effective tips:

- a) A good starting point is to put yourself in your client's shoes. They often have a lot invested in a matter, both emotionally and financially. Seeing things from their perspective can instantly clarify where tensions are coming from.
- b) Always maintain your professionalism and politeness and hear your client's concerns. This can help you acknowledge a client's feelings, even if you don't always agree with them.
- c) Always direct the focus of the situation to the issues at hand and bring the discussion back to the strategy going forward.
- d) Watch how experienced colleagues at your workplace handle difficult clients. Clients in different practice areas can vary immensely, and invaluable tips can be picked up from those in the know.

■ **I work for a commercial firm but my passion lies with family law. How do I make the transition into another area of law as a fourth year lawyer and is it too late? Is the grass greener?**

It's never too late to transition to a new area of practice. In fact, it's important to work in an area you're passionate about. Focus on your transferable skills: researching, problem solving, dealing with clients, advocacy and drafting are relevant across all practice areas. Taking the following steps before you transition will also help:

- connect with people practising in family law. Attend networking and professional development seminars or connect via LinkedIn or email;
- research job opportunities for family lawyers and consider your options;
- subscribe to relevant newsfeeds and journals; and
- speak with somebody you trust in your current workplace who will support your decision and provide you with a strong reference.

■ **I won't be promoted to senior associate this year even though I felt I was ready for the responsibility. I've hit a low point in my career. What should I do from here?**

Do not despair; instead use this next year to do your homework. Meet with your supervisor(s) to determine how you can improve in order to be promoted next year. Do you need to increase your skills in a particular area? Engage in more business development? Raise your profile within your workplace? Or were there business considerations at play beyond your control? Take this time to assess where your strengths and weaknesses lie and put together a plan to improve your application. Be sure to speak with current senior associates for an insight into their road to promotion. Remember, an additional year will provide you with further experience from which to draw to improve your next application. ■

*If you have any questions you want to ask Agony Attorney, send them to [younqlaw@liv.asn.au](mailto:younqlaw@liv.asn.au). Your identity may remain anonymous on request.*