

From humble origins

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Without Prejudice

My origins are humble. I come from a very small town in KZN and naturally there was doubt about my abilities during my degree. Would I be good enough to operate at the high levels of a "Big Law Firm", especially in a city like Johannesburg? The tentative doubt of inexperience was ramped up when, in third year (to my amazement), I was offered articles at Hogan Lovells. Added to the unknown were the first-hand accounts from those that knew a bit. I heard horror stories from other students of the suffering and hardships of doing articles at the bigger law firms.

So I prepared myself, as best I could, for the worst. When I started articles, I was placed in the pro bono department. As time went on, I was pleasantly surprised at how well things began going for me. The culture of the firm is development-orientated but done in a family-like manner. I could not have been placed in a better department to start off articles. I say this because I was very shy and reserved but I was mentored to overcome that. As the months progressed and I moved to the different rotations, the experience just got better; I got better personally and professionally.

This influence built my self-confidence - in myself and as an up-and-coming professional. No price can be put on that. My following two rotations were in commercial litigation, and technology, media and telecommunications. During my commercial litigation rotation, I knew litigation was where I belonged; I fell in love with it. However, I wanted to be sure, so I then did a non-litigation rotation.

As part of the commercial litigation department, I focus on general and commercial litigation, administrative and constitutional law, medical aid law, and provincial and local government law. I would have never, during my degree, fathomed the idea of me being exposed to matters of such huge public and political interest. During a degree one hears about matters going to the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court, but I never imagined I would go to both courts and deal with live matters during my articles. My horizons have expanded far beyond where I could see back then.

The exposure I have received at Hogan Lovells is nothing short of amazing. With the clients and matters that I am exposed to, I continue to learn on a daily basis and every matter, no matter how big or small, always has something to teach. The advantages I find about practising in a bigger law firm is being able to specialise in an area that you are passionate about, and being able to

engage with some of the leading legal minds in the industry. To be in the presence of and have such people as contemporaries has allowed me to shed my student mindset and pulled me up to a level that has taught me to stand strong and look to push on to any level possible.

The one thing I have noticed over the years in practice is, you practise more than just the law. You represent clients from a variety of fields and, in order for you to advise your client in the best way possible, you also need to have a working understanding of your client's industry.

Another thing I am grateful for is being able to do pro bono work. I feel very strongly about helping those who cannot afford legal services. I continue to assist our pro bono team in any way I can. I have been involved in one of the firm's biggest pro bono projects (Teddy Bear Clinic - Soweto) from the time I started articles and feel so passionate about it that I have now become the team leader for the project. Another aspect my student mindset could not have possibly thought up: impact.

A dream come true for me would be making partner in the firm that I did my articles at. With continued hard work and dedication, I see myself sitting around the boardroom table operating, and seen, as equal to the great legal minds that I look up to at Hogan Lovells. Part of my growth path is to equip myself better by completing short courses in my relevant areas, as these courses are practical. I am looking forward to more years of boundless exposure and experience.

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