

Climbing the ladder

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Without Prejudice

I started at Hogan Lovells (South Africa) in 2014 as a candidate attorney. However, my first experience of the firm (Routledge Modise Incorporated, at that time) was when I participated in the vacation work programme in December 2012. It was during this two week vacation work programme that I knew I had found the firm that I wanted to join and grow in as I progressed in the legal profession.

Articles, and being a candidate attorney, are not easy, but I found that the environment and support structure provided by the firm, the "open-door" culture, the friendly faces willing to help, and the favourable amenities such as the in-house law school programme, all aided my successful transition from candidate attorney to associate in 2016, when I was admitted as an attorney of the High Court of South Africa. Candidate attorneys rotate within three different departments, not only to give the candidates maximum exposure, but to also help them find the type of law they wish to practise. This is very important because the type of law one may have enjoyed at varsity on an academic level may not be what one eventually enjoys in practice.

My first rotation was within a litigation department but I found my niche in my second rotation where I moved to a fully integrated, multi-disciplinary department. I joined the mining and natural resources department as a first-year candidate attorney and in 2018 I was promoted to senior associate within the department.

The mining, regulatory, energy and natural resources environment is dynamic and I am fortunate that our ethos is to offer multi-faceted legal advice to clients which means team members must understand the industry, the law and the people. I have been involved in a variety of matters including inquiries in terms of mine health and safety legislation, legal proceedings which involve the National Prosecuting Authority, regulatory applications in terms of the processes of the Department of Mineral Resources, an arbitration hearing that addressed compensation for occupational diseases, the drafting of commercial mining agreements and, most recently, I have had the opportunity to be seconded to one of our clients as a legal manager, which has given me great exposure to the "business" elements of a mining company, as opposed to just having exposure to the law of mining. My overall experience has been very educational and full of opportunities for overall growth. All attorneys find different aspects of the work environment

important; a few of my favourite elements are the genuinely friendly culture of the firm, the inclusive way all levels of professionals interact, the vacation work programme that includes three rotations and an in-house law school, and the fact that the promotion process is an integrative one between your direct partner, ExCo and the Professional Development Committee.

The transition from candidate attorney to associate to senior associate has been challenging but has helped me grow as an attorney in such a way that I still enjoy legal practice. My message to anybody in the profession or anyone who wants to enter it is: find a firm that you are happy at, find an area of specialisation as soon as you can and, above all, be passionate about what you do.

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