



NALINI MOORE, MAHLAB
nalini.moore@mahlab.com.au



Dear Career Doctor

Dear Career Doctor

I am a third-year lawyer in the workplace relations group of a large CBD law firm. Given the economic climate and market conditions over the past 18 months, I feel particularly lucky to have a good, stable job that has kept me very busy. However, while the work has been interesting, it really is not what I am passionate about.

During my articles (now traineeship) I completed a four-month rotation in the corporate and commercial group and would really like to get back there. I feel that having this type of experience will help me later when the overseas market picks up, as I would like to enjoy a stint in either the UK or Asia in a couple of years.

I have a very good relationship with the corporate and commercial partners at my firm, but I understand that the correct protocol is to go through the Human Resources Manager. I have tended to avoid dealing with her in the past in relation to these sorts of matters because I feel she does not necessarily care about individual needs (unless you are a partner) and it is ultimately up to the partners anyway.

I am worried that my chances of moving into the corporate and commercial group are not good because of my lack of experience in that area for a third-year lawyer. I also fear that the workplace relations group will not let me transfer groups because of our current workload.

What can I do to increase my chances of securing a role in an area of law I am passionate about?

PASSIONATELY UNLUCKY

Dear Passionately Unlucky

Your situation is common, particularly in today's market.

First, you need to rethink your perceptions about your Human Resources Manager. While the duties of a Human Resources Manager are demanding, he or she is often responsible for a range of activities which affect you significantly. It is important that you approach your Human Resources Manager and the relevant partners in the right way to achieve the best possible outcome.

Today's market in particular demands that resources are deployed and used in the smartest way possible (this includes using your skills in a way that will best suit the firm). However, it is not unheard of for a firm to be prepared to invest time, effort and money into retraining junior lawyers if they think it will be worth it in the long run. So how do you prove yourself to your firm?

You need to be prepared to discuss in detail your reasons for wanting to change practice groups and the benefits that you would bring to the new group and the firm. The firm has invested time and effort in training you in the workplace relations group, so you will need to prove that you will be an asset to the firm in corporate and commercial, and that you will work hard to come up to speed quickly.

Make a list of your achievements, including details about your budget (in both practice groups), demonstrated teamwork, articles that you have

written (especially any relating to corporate and commercial matters) and your involvement in any specific marketing activities. This way you ensure that the partners are fully aware of your contribution to your career development and to the firm's profitability generally, making you an asset worth making changes for.

Make an appointment to meet your Human Resources Manager (who is most likely to be the conduit between you and the partners of both your current and proposed practice groups). Having a scheduled time will give you the opportunity to voice your concerns in a more formal setting, signifying that these concerns are important to you. Discuss with him or her the next step in the process, e.g. a meeting with the corporate and commercial partners.

By taking this approach, hopefully you will have the opportunity to work towards a move to your preferred area of law. If, however, the firm is not able to accommodate your request now or in the near future, you may wish to consider other options, e.g. another organisation that will take you into its corporate and commercial team, and/or undertaking relevant study to help boost your chances.

CAREER DOCTOR

Do you have a question for Career Doctor?
If so, email younglaw@liv.asn.au.

Mahlab

Proudly supported by Mahlab Recruitment