

Venture further with Kirsty

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Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I come from the deep south of New Zealand and studied law at the University of Otago. I have a passion for travel and adventure, which has most recently led me to Hong Kong. These days my free time is spent enjoying the tropical climates, spending long weekends travelling around Asia and eating a lot of dim sum.

What made you decide to become a lawyer?

When I signed up to LAWS101 I had not given much thought to the prospect of actually becoming a lawyer. Being an avid writer and debater it seemed like a logical choice and one that might lead to a job. I was relieved to find upon joining Buddle Findlay as a summer clerk in 2010 that practising law was much more enjoyable than studying it!

You originally summer clerked at Buddle Findlay, what were the factors that led you to choose Buddle Findlay?

I applied for a summer clerkship at a number of firms. Buddle Findlay was my last online application about half an hour before the midnight deadline. I was aghast to find the question "*Why do you want to be a corporate lawyer*" just before the submit button. Having no proper answer as to why I wanted to be a corporate lawyer, I decided the best way to answer this question was with an acrostic poem. As you can imagine, I was extremely surprised to be invited to interview with Buddle Findlay. These people clearly had a sense of humour!

It was not until the post offer function that I knew that Buddle Findlay was for me. Everybody I met was friendly, sociable and did not take themselves too seriously (as lawyers often do). They also came across as intelligent and hardworking people who were passionate about their jobs and who I got the impression I could learn a lot from.

My first impressions of Buddle Findlay proved correct and my fellow summer clerks and I had an absolute blast during our summer clerkships.

You recently ventured from Buddle Findlay to Hong Kong, tell us about your current role?

I now work as a litigation, restructuring and insolvency lawyer at an offshore law firm in Hong Kong, practising Cayman Islands and British Virgin Islands law. Our clients are based throughout Asia and use Cayman Islands and British Virgin Islands entities as part of their business structures and therefore require specialist Cayman Islands and British Virgin Islands legal advice. The work has a very international flavour as our clients have companies and assets located all over the world. This cross border element adds another level of complexity to the transactions and litigation we are involved in.

During my time in Hong Kong I have:

- Worked on a number of high profile insolvencies involving large Chinese businesses
- Been involved in various disputes between companies and their shareholders that have resulted in litigation in the Cayman Islands or British Virgin Islands
- Acted for and against Chinese companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange on disputes arising from mergers that the companies have carried out
- Been involved in the restructurings of a number of large companies.

What do you like most about your role?

I have worked in litigation for most of my legal career. What I love about this practice area is the constant variety. One day your job might demand that you become an expert in complex accounting principles, the next day might involve getting your head around privacy law or grasping the intricacies of an IT contract.

As a litigator I have acquired an in-depth knowledge of a variety of random subjects including boats, fruit, wheels and medical equipment. The process of transforming from a novice to an expert in a particular subject matter is challenging, rewarding and my favourite part of the job.

How has Buddle Findlay influenced your career?

I would not have ended up in Hong Kong were it not for the opportunities I had and the skills I acquired at Buddle Findlay. The responsibility I had, even as a junior lawyer, was quite astounding. I was sent off on secondments to clients, worked directly with Queen's Counsel and managed a diverse case load of proceedings before the District Court, High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court. I also had the opportunity to work on files with a close connection to Asia, which allowed me to gain the experience that made me qualified for my current job.

When I was considering the move to Hong Kong (a city I had never even visited) my friends and colleagues at Buddle Findlay were my biggest supporters and gave me endless encouragement through moments of doubt. Even if you choose to venture further like I did, you can be assured that you will remain part of a close Buddle Findlay network scattered all over the world.

What are some of the highlights you have from your time at Buddle Findlay?

Buddle Findlay is a wonderfully sociable place. From Friday night drinks, craft beer night, wine quizzes, Wellington Sevens, karaoke, regular BYOs, overnight Christmas parties to the Wairarapa, there are too many good times to name.

Professionally, I was fortunate enough to work with lawyers from most of the other practices areas within the firm, including those from the other Buddle Findlay offices. I also had a number of longstanding clients who I was able to build close relationships with during my time at Buddle Findlay.

What do you wish you had known about the legal profession before becoming a lawyer?

There is no sugar coating it - being a lawyer is hard work. It will be stimulating and challenging, but at times it will also be all consuming and unrewarding. In those times it is crucial to have a supportive workplace and a team that will look out for your wellbeing, personally and professionally. You will absolutely get this at Buddle Findlay.

What would your advice be to those embarking on a summer clerkship?

It is important to find the firm that is the right fit for you, as each has a different culture. Do not stress about the interview - it is not a test of your legal knowledge, merely to see if you are a good fit for Buddle Findlay. Just relax and use it as an opportunity to find out all that you can about the firm.

Should you be fortunate enough to get a summer clerk position at Buddle Findlay, say yes to every opportunity that comes your way, both in terms of work and socially. You will have a great summer and it will be an excellent springboard into your legal career.

Kirsty Hamill summer clerked at Buddle Findlay in 2010. She is currently working for a leading offshore law firm in Hong Kong.

For more information on our 2017 summer clerk programme visit venturefurther.co.nz.

Auckland

**PwC Tower
188 Quay Street
Auckland 1010**

**PO Box 1433
Auckland 1140
New Zealand**

**P: +64 9 358 2555
F: +64 9 358 2055**

Wellington

**Aon Centre
1 Willis Street
Wellington 6011**

**PO Box 2694
Wellington 6140
New Zealand**

**P: +64 4 499 4242
F: +64 4 499 4141**

Christchurch

**83 Victoria Street
Christchurch 8013**

**PO Box 322
Christchurch 8140
New Zealand**

**P: +64 3 379 1747
F: +64 3 379 5659**