

Venture further with Sherridan

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5 April 2017

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I summer clerked over 20 years ago with Buddle Findlay but I still remember it well. It was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my working life. I was given a great introduction to the area of law that I thought I was destined for - litigation - and experienced another area of law that I would fall in love with - employment. I still practice in both of these fields today and I lead the Auckland litigation and employment teams.

The recruitment process in 1994 was very similar to the one that you will be experiencing. We all applied to all the big firms at the same time and there was a set timetable for the pre-interview drinks, interviews and post-offer functions. The functions were a little less salubrious though in those days, with some firms simply holding a morning tea.

Slightly in advance of the offer coming out(!), I was contacted with an invitation from Buddle Findlay to be flown to Wellington (from my home town Christchurch) and taken out to one of the Capital's finest restaurants. I had a great night and met some fabulous people from the firm. It was the warmth and welcome I received from those people that caused me to choose Buddle Findlay over the other firms that I had been lucky enough to receive an offer from. Happily the friendly and welcoming reputation that Buddle Findlay had back then is still true of the firm today.

The partner who contacted me, Peter Chemis, has been my mentor throughout my career. He was my supervising partner when I was permanently placed into his team as a law clerk in Wellington and he assisted in securing me a job as a solicitor in the litigation team at Ashurst in London. Even back then, junior solicitors were encouraged to venture further.

When I returned to New Zealand after nearly five fun years in London and travelling the world, I wanted to experience another big firm. Peter assisted me again in getting that job and we continued to stay in touch. When he offered me the opportunity of coming back to Buddle Findlay, it was an easy decision to make. Even though I had left nearly 10 years before, many of my colleagues from my Wellington days were still at the firm. And when I was made a partner shortly afterwards, three of the other five partners appointed had been junior solicitors with me in Wellington.

On returning to Buddle Findlay I became heavily involved in graduate recruitment for a number of years so I have seen the process from both sides. I know from experience that choosing between firms is tough. My advice is to look behind the facades and choose the firm whose culture fits you best. That's what I did. I chose a firm whose culture is reflected in what it stands for - its people. In particular, growing great and talented people, striving for excellence but not taking ourselves too seriously, and respect. Respect for our clients, respect for our staff and their careers, and respect for each other within our partnership.

Good luck with your choice and please get in contact to ask me any questions!

Sherridan Cook is a partner in our Auckland litigation team.

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

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