

A Blusource Guide for Newly Qualified Solicitors



Be flexible
and keep an
open mind...

Introduction

After two challenging (but hopefully fun!) years, you're nearing the end of your training contract and are preparing to take on your first role as a qualified solicitor. It is an exciting prospect, but leaves you with a number of things to consider and potentially some very important decisions to make.

Which area of law do I want to specialise in? Will my firm offer me a position and if they do should I take it? Can I talk to other firms while still applying for a position with my firm? Is there something better out there for me?



What next?

For many trainees, the obvious next step upon qualification is to remain with the law firm that trained you. Making the transition from second year trainee to qualified solicitor can be both exciting and a little daunting. If your current firm can offer you the position you want, then you may decide to stay in familiar surroundings, in a team where you are already known.

However, for many others, reaching the end of your training contract can signal the right time to move on to pastures new. There can be a number of reasons why this may be the case:

No positions available

Following the onset of the recession in 2008, the market for newly qualified solicitors became hugely competitive and short on opportunities. Now that we are in a period of more sustained economic recovery, there is more appetite for growth and the majority of law firms are making every effort to retain as many of their own trainee intake as possible. However the unfortunate reality is that despite their best efforts, some firms cannot always retain all of their qualifying trainees and you may be in a position where there is no role available for you.

Position available in an alternative department

Your training firm may be keen to retain you but are unable to offer you a position in your preferred department. In traditionally popular, competitive and counter-cyclical areas like commercial litigation, employment and IP this may well be the case. With a number of other trainees potentially also applying for just one vacancy in a popular team, it can come down to very fine margins. This may mean you are the one to miss out through no fault of your own.

Change of scenery?

Even if you are asked to stay with your current firm, you may feel ready to test yourself in a fresh environment. This could be up-scaling to a larger firm with a global footprint offering international opportunities, or to work in a specific type of firm offering more specialised work. You may feel more suited to a smaller or niche firm which may offer you a slightly different working culture. You may also simply want a fresh start; some trainees express concerns that if they stay with their current firm, they may struggle to shake off the "trainee tag" and will not be viewed in the way they would be if they moved elsewhere.



Location

You may have needed to relocate in order to secure your training contract. Two years away from home may mean it is time to reassess your lifestyle options and perhaps move back to where you are from. Or you may be drawn to working in a specific region because of proximity to friends, family or a loved one. You may want to leave the regions in order to experience living and working in the bright lights of London.

Area of specialism

Whilst you may be tempted to make a practical choice based on prevailing market conditions, it is important to trust your instincts. If your training firm is unable to offer you a role in one of your preferred areas of law, then you should explore opportunities elsewhere. You'll want to kick-start your career in the right way by handling interesting, quality work that will stimulate you. If you start down a path that isn't suitable for you but appears the easy (or only) option then chances are you will live to regret it.

Summary

For most trainees, having the chance to specialise in your first (or second) choice practice area is the most important factor. You'll want exposure to interesting, high quality work in a strong reputable firm offering clear professional development opportunities. To make sure you get what you want...

You'll want to kick-start your career in the right way by handling interesting, quality work that will stimulate you.



Key Tips



Be flexible, keep an open mind and **start thinking about your options** early on in your final year;



Prepare your CV in conjunction with a trusted recruitment consultant and update this as you move through the final months;



Consider your **preferred areas of practice** and make known your interest in them;



Understand where the relevant vacancies are by **engaging with one or two trusted recruiters** who are specialists in their markets and who take the time to get to know you.

About Blusource

As experienced legal recruitment consultants, we have helped many trainees into NQ positions over the years, many of whom are now the partners making the hiring decisions! We understand that this can be a daunting process for you, especially after all the studying, training and often financial sacrifice that you have made to get this far.

That is why our approach is personal and professional and tailored. We will offer you the full benefit of our extensive market knowledge in strict confidence, and as much support, time, practical advice and guidance as you need to make the right decision for you.

Remember that we are here to help, so please do get in touch for further advice or to use our recruitment service.



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