

Are you thriving or surviving? A trainee's top tips



One nervous morning in the first week of my training contract, a partner strolled up to my desk and cheerily asked, “So... Are you thriving or surviving?”

This question has stayed with me and having made a dent into the second year of my training contract, I found myself scanning through the last 12 months for times when I have thrived and times when I only survived. In doing so, I jotted down some tips to help future and current trainees thrive in their new roles.

Learn to walk before you run

As a trainee, nobody expects you to know what you are doing from the off. Similarly, you will not be expected to be perfect throughout your training contract. You are after all, in training. With that in mind, you can make your mark initially by delivering well presented, proofed and easy to follow work. Make sure you pay attention to detail and try to go that little bit further on the simple stuff. Making your team's lives easier is a sure-fire way to impress.

Top Tip: Spellcheck!

Seize opportunities

It is your training contract. Make it yours. Play to your strengths and say ‘yes’ to opportunities you feel you might benefit from. If something that you're interested in opens up, don't hesitate to ask if you can help out. You never know what avenues it might take you down.



Top Tip: If you don't ask, you don't get.

Be a sponge

Ask questions. A lot of them! If you don't understand something, just say so. Listen to your team's conversations. Attend internal and client meetings whenever possible. Remember, you are there to learn.

Top Tip: Take notes and make your own survival guides, you will retain so much more information this way.

Network

Everyone says this... Yes, it really is that important. Whilst external networking is important (the Junior Lawyers Division is a great place to start), I would strongly recommend that you focus on your internal network to begin with. Getting to know a variety of people in your firm will not only make your days that much more enjoyable but will also help you develop a support system and learn about the different departments in your firm.

Top Tip: Don't just ask someone about their weekend...although it can be a good place to start!

Reflect

It is important to self-reflect during your training contract. In the words of Steve Jobs, "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking back." Look back on your tasks, think what you could have done better and review your supervisor's amendments so you are ready for next time.

Top Tip: Put time into your training records and portfolios, they are a great way of keeping track of your progress and achievements.

Enjoy

The role can be stressful and challenging but you are expected to make mistakes; this is all part of the learning curve. I have been told many times that the *real* learning is yet to come, so enjoy your time as a trainee.

Top Tip: Don't sweat the small stuff.