

## Getting down to business: Life as a commercial trainee

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Time flies. As the end of my stint in the commercial seat rapidly approaches, now seems like a good moment to reflect upon what the team is like, what I have learnt and offer some tips to any trainees who need a survival guide to working in a commercial team.

### What kind of work do commercial lawyers do?

At Cripps, commercial contracts are the team's bread and butter. We advise on, review and draft contracts that deal with a range of subject matters. In my time in the seat I have looked at a wide range of weird and wonderful documents including franchise agreements, website terms of use, jewellery sales terms and conditions, artwork purchase agreements, boat sale agreements to name just a few. Being a commercial trainee has given me the opportunity to attend client meetings about cutting edge technology, see how high value sponsorship deals are negotiated and learn how to resolve client problems through efficient drafting.

We also specialise in intellectual property, information technology and data protection issues. The breadth of issues that we are asked to advise on mean that you are frequently working on something unfamiliar and this keeps the work interesting – just when you think you are getting used to the work someone will come along with a query that will have everyone scratching their heads! The fun is in working out exactly what the client needs and using a logical process to deliver the best solution.

### What is the commercial team like at Cripps?

The commercial team sits within the wider corporate division. This means that we are also asked to assist on the commercial issues that arise in the transactional acquisition work that the wider department specialises in.



We have quite a high proportion of partners to associates. This gives the team a high level of expertise and means that when ideas are thrown out to the group, quality feedback always comes back. Twice weekly catch-up calls allow everyone to know what the current workload is and what everybody is working on.

### **What do you need to succeed as a trainee in a commercial team?**

1. Having a good attention to detail is crucial when reviewing commercial contracts.
2. Don't be afraid to ring anyone in the team if you just have a quick query – if it saves an unnecessary email people will usually be grateful!
3. Look for opportunities – even if you aren't directly assisting on a matter, you can often still attend a client call. I have learnt brilliant lessons about how partners work through attending calls like this.

My absolute top tip for any trainees coming into a commercial seat would be to embrace not knowing everything. This has been my first seat, so I came into it unprepared to analyse contracts about software or advise on monetising patents. The longer I stayed in the team, however, the more I came to realise that if you buy into how the team works and let yourself nerd-out on the subject matter, being a trainee in the commercial department is the best job in the firm. Even the partners routinely come across problems they haven't faced before, so being a sponge and having the ability to keep learning will keep you interested in commercial work for a long time.