



Interview with a Trainee Solicitor at Lester Aldridge – George Robinson

First-year trainee solicitor George Robinson initially joined the firm's Marine team in Southampton as a paralegal before starting his training contract with a seat in the Commercial Property team. He tells us about his career so far at Lester Aldridge, explains what attracted him to the firm and offers some tips for trainees just starting their training contracts.

Please share with us your journey into law.

Growing up, I was always fascinated by rules and regulations and their impact on the manner in which we live our lives. The way the law is woven into all sectors of the economy and society and helps govern the success of different industries intrigues me.

Studying law at university was an extremely rewarding experience. Learning about the complexity and analytical nature of the law, combined with the impact it has on society, made it a fascinating degree.

Before I committed to a career in law, I felt that I needed to gain some broader work experience. My experience in auditing enabled me to gain key analytical skills; however, I found this work to primarily focus on checking factual accuracy rather than creative problem-solving, something I greatly enjoy. The appeal of becoming a solicitor was the prospect of a career that involves logical deduction, factual analysis and problem resolution. Helping clients achieve their goals and getting the best result for them gives me great satisfaction.

Tell us about your career/seats so far at LA.

After being offered a training contract with LA for September 2022, the firm offered me the position of a paralegal in the interim between graduating from the LPC. After an interview with partner Russell Kelly, I joined LA's Southampton [Marine](#) team in April 2021.

The Marine team was simply incredible; not only did they offer me great opportunities for learning and growth in a niche area of law, but they were truly wonderful people to work with. I have found this trait continues throughout the firm, my colleagues are fantastic people to work with, and I could not be happier.

The practical benefit of working for LA before the start of my training contract was a great opportunity for me to learn all about the firm's processes and policies, allowing me to hit the ground running during my first seat.

Coming to the end of my first seat in Commercial Property, I have had an exceptional experience; James Realff and his team have been so welcoming and have taught me a great deal. They gave me real responsibility for client matters and have always been there to answer my questions and support me where necessary. I will miss working alongside them, but I am excited to be joining Development Property in my next seat and exploring the work they undertake.

How does the seat system work at LA?

LA has a really good system in place for seat selection. Several months before the rotation, a list of the available seats is circulated to the trainees, and you need to order each option from your most preferred to least. Alongside this, we submit short paragraphs justifying our ordering, allowing us a voice in the process and for LA to understand our choices. I have been fortunate to have secured seats in my top choices so far. Each seat is held for a period of 6 months, and trainees undertake four seats as part of their training contract.

What area of law do you enjoy the most / do you hope to qualify into? Has this changed?

From my current experience, I have found that I really enjoy property law. It offers engaging work on a day-to-day basis, and I feel that it plays to my strengths. My Commercial Property seat allowed me to delve into the complex area of leases for commercial units, which I found fascinating as each matter brings with it its own challenges to solve for the client. I am excited to be starting Development Property, where I can apply my knowledge from my first seat and further develop my understanding of this area of property law. I truly believe that only through experience can a person know if an area of law is right for them, so I look forward to the remaining seats with an open mind.

What attracted you to the Lester Aldridge trainee scheme?

LA stood out to me because of the emphasis it placed on the value of recognising that the client is at the centre of everything and that building long-lasting relationships is crucial. LA's values around clients, people, teamwork and progressiveness are very much aligned with my own beliefs.

I was looking for a firm where I could excel at helping clients and receive high-quality training. Seeing that the firm took a proactive stance regarding environmental responsibility, diversity, and inclusion was a welcoming sight because many firms still do not take this approach.

How did you prepare for your trainee solicitor interview?

Research into LA was key, each firm is different, and while they may all be looking for similar legal skills and traits, their culture can be very different. Being able to understand the culture at LA and recognising that it was exactly what I was searching for was key in ensuring that I was tailoring my answers to show that I shared the same beliefs and that I could offer the firm a strong career commitment.

Additionally, it is crucial to be able to break down and analyse the key skills and experience you have gained that would be useful as a trainee, be this from prior experience or from a personal hobby. These skills can be specific to areas in law, or alternatively can also be 'soft skills', including teamwork, collaboration, innovation, and creative problem-solving (all important skills for a trainee solicitor). Reference to your personal experience and gained skills in interview questions can help to emphasise the specific skills you bring to the role and help you to stand out against other candidates, making the answers specific to you.

Interviews can always be nerve-racking, it is important to remain calm and collected. Bear in mind that there may be questions you have not prepared for, but by remaining calm and taking time to think and evaluate before answering, you can ensure that you're representing yourself well. Remember, it is okay to have a small pause before answering a question; this will combat going off on an unrelated tangent or getting lost in an answer without actually answering the question. Take the time you need to consider what the question is asking and how you can best answer it.

What's the best thing about training at LA?

The people I get to work with on a daily basis.

At all levels at LA, my colleagues are kind, supportive and helpful with my training. They all have so much experience and knowledge to share with me on a daily basis and are simply exceptional people to work with. If you want to learn and put the hard work in, they will go out of their way to assist.

How would you describe the culture at LA?

The culture is definitely unique from my own experience with other firms and companies. There is so much collaboration in the work that is undertaken, and everyone is willing to help each other out. This helps build long-lasting relationships between colleagues but also clients. The firm does not sit back; it takes a progressive approach in terms of its policies to foster loyalty and fairness within the firm. LA has a strong commitment to its staff. If you work hard for LA, LA will work hard for you.

What are the development opportunities like at LA?

I personally have not yet undergone the development process at LA, but from talking to my colleagues, many of them have been at the firm for many years and have progressed their careers through internal processes. LA is a firm that really values its staff and wants to see them progress in their careers and succeed both professionally and personally.

Do you have tips for trainees just starting their training contracts?

If you can work for the firm as a paralegal before your training contract, I would strongly recommend it. Even if the work is not what you would like to qualify into, it is extremely helpful in preparing you for your training contract because of all the new skills you will learn, which can be applied to any area of law.

If you are not quite sure about something, my tip would be to try and be proactive: research the topic, utilise internal resources and use your initiative to have a go at solving this yourself while giving structured reasoning behind your choices that can then be checked by a colleague to ensure they are correct. This way, you are able to develop critical analysis skills and further your knowledge through a proactive approach.

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