

junior lawyers northants & bucks

Lawyer's Diary a la Bridget Jones

Hours spent at work: 14.2 (v. good); billable hours: 5.7 (v. bad); minutes spent staring out window: 97 (needs improvement.); minutes spent mentally reliving conversations and imagining what I should have said instead of what I did say: 46 (excellent); no. of times let ringing phone go to voicemail: 2 (v. bad, College of Law lecturer said this was sign of professional incompetence, but calls were from mother, so okay).

8:00 a.m.

Leave for work feeling energised, confident. Yesterday, managed to soothe clients, appease opposing counsel, and impress partners at work. Practice will now operate as efficient, well-oiled machine. Only nagging issue is opinion letter, which is two weeks late. Two weeks is not very long.

Anyway, opinion has been researched. Mostly researched. Must simply look up a few more cases, put thoughts into writing. Very easy. Will be finished by 10:30 a.m. at latest.

8:45 a.m.

Arrive at work Listen to repeated voice mail messages from disgruntled client. Review two letters from angry opposing counsel. Note that senior lawyer has entirely redrafted the letter I wrote. Learn that Court of Appeal did not accept Bundles because pages numbered in improper manner.

Feel dismal and deflated. Stare out window. Consume engineered food bar for breakfast.

10:30 a.m.

Have spent last hour returning voice mail messages by leaving voice mail messages. Will start opinion letter now. Will be finished by noon, no problem.

12:00 p.m.

Opinion letter not finished. Cannot decide whether to address client by first name. Must go to Aerobox class at 1:00 p.m. to relieve stress and promote fitness. Have missed last seven classes because of work. No job is worth sacrificing my health Must go to Aerobox class.

2:00 p.m.

Missed Aerobox class because of last-minute meeting with very important new client. Am introduced as junior lawyer who will be working on the file. Client amazed, asks how such a young girl can possibly be lawyer. Grin frantically while trying to think of charming but assertive response. Saved by senior lawyer, who steps in to sing my praises as top-notch organiser of discovery documents. (After all, hard to justify junior lawyer's fee if clients believe she is merely the coffee and copy girl.)

Client promises to send over 57 boxes of documents straight away.

4:00 p.m.

Come out from hiding spot behind the 57 boxes of documents. Inform senior lawyer that,

despite my numerous emphatic promises, opinion letter is not quite finished. Explain that the warranty issue has turned out to be more complex than originally thought. Babble on about complex law of warranty generally. Pause awkwardly. Senior lawyer stares blankly, then says, "It's not a warranty, it's a guarantee." Am incompetent, cannot be proper lawyer.

4:45 p.m.

Telephone call from opposing counsel, requesting adjournment. Remind opposing counsel that this is fourth such request. Point out that I had once asked for indulgence and been denied, thus causing me to work inhumane hours. Opposing counsel appalled by my disrespectful attitude, says it is contrary to Rules of Professional Conduct. Am cruel and possibly unprofessional person, cannot be proper lawyer.

5:00 p.m.

Telephone call from second opposing counsel, requesting adjournment. Thinking of Rules of Professional Conduct, I agree. Opposing counsel amazed, says I am most agreeable person he has dealt with all month. Am pushover, cannot be proper lawyer.

8:30 p.m.

Last remaining non-lawyer friend calls to ask whether I got tickets to upcoming show as promised. Pause. Consider how to get out of promise. Speak with bright, bossy tone: "Yes, yes, I did assume responsibility for that matter. However, you undertook to advise me as to whether we would be joined by third parties. As that undertaking was left unfulfilled, I reasonably believed that my responsibilities had been waived." Friend, disgusted, hangs up. Feel pang of guilt. Feel pang of emptiness because once-vibrant social life has died. Stare out window. Decide pangs are related to hunger. Consume engineered food bar for dinner. Read back issues of *The Lawyer*.

10:00 p.m.

Must complete opinion letter. Will not, under any circumstances, leave work until opinion letter is beautiful, finished product.

11:00 p.m.

Opinion letter almost done. Have written succinct introductory paragraph, and set out convenient headings. Must just insert actual opinion. Could work until 2:00 a.m. to get it done. Much better, though, to arrive very early next morning, when mind will be fresh and rejuvenated. In fact, going home is in client's best interests, as surely I will work more efficiently tomorrow. Take taxi home. Realise I have forgotten office password for credit charge. Must pay driver with 20 pence pieces. Driver annoyed, refuses to give receipt.

3:30 a.m.

Unable to sleep. Too worried about how to claim taxi fare without benefit of taxi receipt. Wonder if time spent worrying about this can be recorded anywhere.