



INSIGHT

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The career I couldn't have planned: Advice to my younger self

If I could offer my 25-year-old self one piece of advice, it would be to stop measuring your career by individual moments and start measuring it by trajectory.

At twenty-five, I thought success had a timeline. I had wanted to become a lawyer since I was nine, and after years of working towards that goal, every milestone felt like it had to happen exactly as planned. So, when I didn't secure articles immediately, I questioned whether I had somehow fallen behind.

Looking back now, I realise I hadn't fallen behind at all – I had simply taken a different route.

I had already finished varsity and was meant to start my articles. Everyone around me seemed to already have their articles secured and knew exactly where they were going, while I did not. Then, just days before the new year, I was offered a position at a boutique competition law firm. It was there that I discovered my passion and realised I had found the area of law that genuinely excited me. Every matter presented a different commercial puzzle, and I quickly realised just how this area of expertise would continue to both challenge and entice me throughout my career.

At the time, I viewed that opportunity as a contingency plan. Today, I see it as one of the defining moments of my career. Had everything happened according to the timeline I had carefully mapped out, I may never have found the area of law that continues to inspire me today.

That experience reshaped how I think about careers. Early on, it's easy to believe that success is measured by keeping pace with everyone around you. There is always someone who appears to be progressing faster, working on larger matters, or reaching the next milestone before you. But careers are not built in six-month increments. They are built over decades. The lawyers who endure are not necessarily those who experience the fewest setbacks; they are the ones who remain curious, adaptable, and committed to learning through them.

As my career progressed, another perspective changed how I approached both work and life. One of my mentors challenged my understanding of what balance really means. I had assumed it meant giving equal attention to every part of my life, every day: guilty about family or wellbeing when work demanded more; guilty about work when I prioritised my personal life.

What I came to realise is that balance is judged over the whole picture, not any single day or week. Some periods, a transaction, a client or a deadline will demand everything you have; at other times, your health, relationships or family deserve to come first. A sustainable career is not built on daily equilibrium, but on making sure that, over time, nothing that matters most is consistently neglected.

That mindset reshaped how I think about resilience, too. I once

assumed it meant carrying every challenge alone. Experience taught me the opposite: the strongest lawyers I know are comfortable asking for help, quick to acknowledge mistakes before they grow, and willing to solve hard problems together, rather than in isolation.

I have been fortunate to work with mentors who created exactly that kind of environment. They set high standards, but they also understood that developing good lawyers requires patience, trust, and the opportunity to learn through experience. They encouraged open conversations, expected honesty when things went wrong, and recognised that growth comes from being challenged, supported and trusted in equal measure. That support has not only shaped the lawyer I have become, but also the kind of colleague I hope to be. Technical excellence will always matter, but the long-term success of our profession depends just as much on whether we create environments in which talented people are supported, trusted and given the opportunity to grow.

Not everyone enters the profession with that level of support, which is why I believe we all have a responsibility to create it. Mentorship is one of the most valuable investments we can make, particularly for young women navigating demanding professional careers. Sometimes the greatest confidence comes simply from hearing someone you respect say, "I've been there too." Equally, it requires the courage to be honest with those around you about the realities you are facing. Whether you are struggling to find balance, feeling overwhelmed, or simply unsure of the next step, those conversations create the opportunity for others to help you navigate them.

If I could return to that conversation with my younger self today, I wouldn't tell her to work harder or worry less. I would tell her to be patient. To trust that setbacks are not failures, but redirections towards opportunities she cannot yet see. To ask questions, seek out mentors, and be honest when she needs support. To remember that every successful career is built with the help of others.

Most importantly, I would tell her to play the long game.

Although I have reached milestones that my younger self once dreamed of, I know there is still far more ahead of me than behind me. Every new matter, every client, and every conversation with colleagues continues to shape how I think as a lawyer and as a trusted adviser. The legal profession has a way of reminding you that learning never really stops, and that is one of the things I value most about it.

Looking back now, I am grateful that my career did not unfold exactly as I had planned. Instead, it unfolded in a way that taught me something far more valuable: that the most rewarding careers are rarely the ones that follow a perfect path. They are the ones built with patience, perspective, and the confidence to keep moving forward. 

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