

INTERNS: Working directly with clients is key to a successful internship

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JIM COURTNEY/BUSINESS FIRST

Nicole Harrison

Age: 24
Hometown: Avon
Lipsitz Green Scime Cambria LLP

Nicole Harrison said she knew what she wanted in an internship: "to meet a lot of interesting people and have the opportunity to interact with judges."

She found what she wanted at the general practice firm of Lipsitz Green Scime Cambria LLP.

"I knew there I would get exposure to every facet of the law," said Harrison.

Working in the commercial litigation department, she attends client meetings, mediations and court cases.

Every Wednesday, the firm holds "Lunch and Learn" sessions for its interns, with attorneys from various departments stopping by to discuss their particular areas of expertise.

Among the things Harrison has learned is how important it is to foster relationships between attorneys, whether you are working with them or against them.

And the environment in the courtroom, especially when it comes to clients, must be as respectful as possible, she said.

In law school, she said, you learn to think like a lawyer. But her internship at Lipsitz Green Scime Cambria taught her how to write, act and speak like a lawyer.

"I couldn't imagine going from law school to actually practicing law without the in-between."

— By Tiffany Monde



JIM COURTNEY/BUSINESS FIRST

Joel Francia

Age: 22
Hodgson Russ LLP

Joel Francia has stayed busy this summer working in the marketing department at Hodgson Russ LLP.

"I'm learning how to look at a project from a different point of view and to really collaborate with people," said Francia, who was born in the Philippines and came to Western New York for college.

He found Hodgson Russ by searching through a Canisius College database for employment opportunities. He was interested in the firm, he said, because of its business-to-business connections and work in corporate law.

His undergrad research was in cluster, which is a technique for sorting and grouping data. Francia has brought cluster analysis to the firm, where most of his work is market research.

He said he assumed law firms were "stiff and boring." He changed his mind after working at the firm, however.

"My second day, I was introduced to the president, and from then on he remembered my name and always says hi," said Francia. "That really says something about the firm — that he remembered my name as a summer intern, someone who could be so easily forgettable."

Next for Francia is a move to Austin, Texas, to volunteer with Catholic Charities. In the future, he hopes to return to Buffalo and land a job. Another option would be to continue his education and head to grad school, he said.

— By Tiffany Monde



MATT CHANDLER/BUFFALO LAW JOURNAL

Julie Syruws

Age: 21
Hometown: Niagara Falls
Chiangpou Travis Besaw & Kershner LLP

On deciding to pursue a career in accounting, Julie Syruws says: "I actually started out as a pharmacy major at UB. Once I took an accounting class, it was just something I really enjoyed."

Were it not for that accounting class, Syruws might be preparing for a career counting pills rather than beans.

A Niagara University graduate and currently a student in the master's program for accounting, her collegiate career actually began with designs on becoming a pharmacist.

Looking back, she says she has no regrets about her decision and is eager to begin her career as an accountant.

"It's not always just number crunching. It's a lot of meeting with clients and working with the business side in terms of cost management and things like that," she says.

Though Syruws has only been on board for five weeks, she says she already has seen and done many of the things she learned about in the classroom.

"It is very hands-on here," she says. "It's not like getting coffee and shuffling papers. I've been on audits, actually working with clients and being able to answer their questions and assist with that process."

For Syruws, the chance to work in a firm and learn the intangibles of the job has been a positive experience.

"Learning how to engage with the clients has been big," she says. "Also, just experiencing all of the different aspects of the job. I've had the chance to work on the tax side, both personal and business, and get a feel for everything."

Though she's just getting her feet wet, she says the internship validated her decision to switch career paths.

"When I started here, I was nervous. You go to school for four years and you hope what you chose is what you are going to like," she says. "But I am really happy here. I enjoy the work, and the culture of the firm is great."

Syruws says the level of involvement in the firm and guidance from the staff have made the biggest difference for her.

"You're not doing one project at a time; you're doing six or seven projects at once and learning how to keep it all organized," she says.

— By Matt Chandler



MATT CHANDLER/BUFFALO LAW JOURNAL

Amelia Wright

Age: 22
Hometown: Boston, NY
Tronconi Segarra & Associates

If your idea of an accountant is a stuffy nerd hunched over an adding machine, scowling while furiously punching in numbers, you haven't met Amelia Wright.

The University at Buffalo graduate has spent the past 18 months as an accounting intern at Williamsville-based Tronconi Segarra & Associates. And she says the stereotype is far from true.

She has spent much of her time working on the audit side of the accounting trade, and having the chance to apply what she learned in the classroom while working alongside a team of seasoned CPAs has been invaluable.

"Certain classes transfer over exactly, such as the auditing classes I took," Wright says. "Those lessons are exactly what I am doing here. But there are other classes where it can be quite a bit different here than in school. I would say it is about 50/50, applying what you learn to the job, so it is great to get the chance to have this experience."

Despite her age and temporary status as an intern, Wright has been fully engaged in audit and tax work and says she never feels the stigma of being less than a full-time staff member.

"On actual audits, that is the only time I even find myself being introduced as an intern. If I am just assigned tasks, it doesn't come up," she says.

A favorite part of the internship has been working with a broad range of clients and gaining experiences she wouldn't have had otherwise, she says.

"They put me with so many different clients that hopefully, at the end of it, I'll be able to say that I prefer to work in a certain industry, with the types of clients I want to work with because I will have had those opportunities," she says.

With a master's program looming on the horizon before she is eligible to sit for the CPA exam, is Wright leaning in any particular direction for her life as a CPA?

"Currently subject to change," she says with a laugh, "I am interested in working with not-for-profit organizations."

— By Matt Chandler