

# Legal Cheek

## ‘NEVER BE TOO RIGID IN YOUR THINKING’

My careers guidance went something like this, writes *Silverman Sherliker* partner Jennie Kreser in the latest post in the [‘If I knew then what I know now’ series...](#)

Adviser: Ah, I see you're doing science A-levels...I expect you want to be a nurse.

Me: No.

Adviser: Oh dear, well I'm not sure there's anything else I can suggest.

Me: Goodbye.

I always knew I wanted a profession, not just a job. And doing a law degree seemed to my innocent mind a good option – after I was strangely rejected to study dentistry\*. Although I didn't actually know any lawyers, except the nice dodderly old traditional solicitor who lived next door to me as a child, I thought it could be a good basis for lots of options.

I was never backwards in coming forward with an opinion – whether asked for or not – so off I went to the University of Westminster, or Central London Poly as it then was (and previously the Holborn School of Law) in Red Lion Square, with no real career decision in place. The group of friends which I made there all started to apply for Law Society finals (now the LPC) in the second year of our degree, so I did too. They then started applying for articles (training contracts) in the third year, so I did too. Then, without really knowing how I got there, I found myself shaking Lord Denning's hand at the Law Society in Chancery Lane with a shiny admission certificate in my paw. I was a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Judicature of England and Wales.

I supposed that I really ought to get a job. Again, with no great career path in mind, I joined the newly-created Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Now naturally I had done absolutely no criminal work or advocacy as part of my training, so clearly this was an unconventional career choice. But then again, Daddy had always wanted me to go to the Bar, and was bitterly disappointed that he couldn't go out and buy me a wig and gown. This was the next best thing. Except of course that it wasn't. The CPS has never really been a totally happy ship. Hearing the DPP at the time say to a chief crown prosecutor – in a conversation about the CPS's approach to recruitment – that "if it can stand up and chew gum at the same time, it's in" led me to pursue career options elsewhere.

Dear reader, my career then took a rather different path. I ended up a partner in pension law in private practice in a small but perfectly formed City firm. I achieved this via various roles, including as the legal director of the first pension regulator, Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (OPRA), as well as being in house at an actuarial consultancy and at a City megalaw firm.

What can we learn from all this? My advice is NEVER be too rigid in your thinking. Megalaw is great if all you want is the big bucks. And if that is indeed all that rocks your boat, fine. But there really is more to life than this. You must be prepared to go where the opportunities knock, and never be afraid to do something new and different. I still get my criminal law kicks by sitting as a Justice of the Peace. Unpaid but...meh...it's my way of giving something back.

Perhaps my advice should be treated with caution, as completely clueless as I was regarding career choices. But the variations of practice that I have had have made me a more interesting person, I think...Poor, but interesting!

My deeply missed Daddy always said "You're dead a long time – enjoy it while you can". Wise man my Daddy!!

\*I'd have made a lousy dentist...all those ugly teeth and bad breath!!

*Jennie Kreser is a partner at Silverman Sherliker. She tweets at @pensionlawyeruk.*