

# Business Development Executive

## Rachael

Hi everyone. My name is Rachael. I am a Business Development Executive at Cleary Gottlieb.

The overall aim of Business Development (otherwise referred to as BD) is to help grow the business by strengthening ties with existing clients and to generate potential new clients and business prospects in order to increase company revenue and maximize profits. How BD works varies greatly across industries – it depends on the products you are trying to sell, and to whom you are selling them.

In the context of an international corporate law firm like Cleary Gottlieb, our role is to promote the expertise of our lawyers and to encourage them to build strong relationships with their clients. To do this, we work with lawyers to write pitches and proposals, carry out research and analysis on business targets, identify and communicate new business opportunities, develop marketing collateral, organise events and webinars, and manage social media and online content.

Like many of us who work in Legal BD, it wasn't a career I was even aware of while in school. From studying International Business and Spanish at the University in Liverpool, I developed a better understanding of how a business operates as a whole, and the relevance of Marketing and BD within any given industry. It was then that I realised I wanted to pursue a career in this field. I loved the idea of project-based work, which allowed me to be creative and people-focused.

After I graduated, my first job was as a Database Administrator for three months at a law firm in the city of London. Whilst this specific job wasn't of particular interest to me at the time, it served as a great way for me to get my foot in the door, having had no prior experience in Professional Services. Soon after I joined, I was given the opportunity to transfer in to the Marketing and BD department, where I spent three years, before making the move to my current role at Cleary Gottlieb.

Over the years, I have learnt a lot from working in the legal industry: I have had the opportunity to work with some of the most intelligent and diverse people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds across the firm and had the chance to get involved in a variety of projects and initiatives, from delivering events and webinars, to working on pitches and marketing materials, and helping drive our social media and online presence.

One of my favourite things about my job is that no two days are the same. As the legal market is becoming increasingly more competitive and clients are becoming more cost conscious, the need for effective BD is becoming increasingly more prominent. Our team is consistently having to adapt and develop our skills to in order to meet the increasing demand for our work.

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There are many skills which you can build on in order to increase your chances of having a successful career in BD, but in particular I would emphasize the importance of having excellent oral and written communications skills (in order to communicate your ideas to colleagues and clients), time management skills, the ability to multi-task and – last but not least – the ability to build relationships with a wide range of people, as this is a role that requires great teamwork in order to reach the desired results.

# Communications Coordinator

## Dominic

When I completed my legal studies, I knew a lot about law but almost nothing about the legal profession. In those days, it wasn't easy to find information about lawyers and law firms. There was no internet, no trade press and no legal directories.

Don't be fooled: ignorance is not bliss. As a result of my naivety, I began my legal career at a tiny high-street law firm in Greenwich, south-east London, where I did a mixture of low-grade criminal work, litigation and domestic conveyancing (buying and selling homes). However, with time, hard work and a lot of luck, I eventually ended up at one of the best law firms in the City, Slaughter and May.

I loved my time there. The people were great, and I did big work for big clients. Best of all, I got the chance to set up and manage the firm's football team. To get people interested in the team, I started writing short articles. To my surprise, my efforts were well received.

After I left Slaughter and May, however, I gradually became disillusioned. I disliked the work I was doing and I disliked the people I was working for even more. To make matters worse, I now harboured ideas about becoming a writer.

I don't mind admitting that I was scared at the prospect. I knew that I would be taking a huge risk and that, once I left my legal career behind, there would be no going back. And, of course, I couldn't be sure that I'd be successful as a writer.

Following another piece of luck, I managed to get a job with a monthly magazine called *Legal Business*. There, with support from a wonderful editor, I taught myself to write.

I discovered that the key to writing well is to read well. I read and read and read. And the more I read, the better I wrote.

After leaving *Legal Business*, I became a freelance journalist and wrote for a number of national newspapers, including *The Times*, *Financial Times*, and *Daily Express*. I wrote for some leading law firms and one of the world's top accounting firms, PricewaterhouseCoopers. I even had a book published.

Following the global financial crisis in 2008, however, many businesses could no longer afford to employ freelance writers on a regular basis, with the result that my workflow dried up. Fortunately for me, I was offered a job at Cleary Gottlieb.

Just like Slaughter and May, the best thing about Cleary is the people. They're smart, friendly and good-hearted. I do a wide range of work for the firm, including writing and editing communications for internal and external audiences, managing our directory and award submissions, and helping with public relations work.

The best thing about my work is that I get to use my writing and editing skills. Almost three decades after becoming a writer, I still think that playing with words is the best game in town.

# Legal Secretary

## Karen

Hi everyone! I'm Karen, a Legal Secretary at Cleary Gottlieb in London. Cleary is an international firm of lawyers with offices worldwide. I have worked at several other law firms prior to Cleary and have been a secretary for the whole of my career.

In my final two years at school, I was given the opportunity to take a typing course and to learn secretarial admin skills. I found this very enjoyable and I realised that I wanted to pursue a career where these skills would be utilised. I have also trained in Outlook, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. More recently I obtained a Legal Executive diploma.

At Cleary, I am assigned to a group of lawyers and my role as their secretary revolves around assisting them with their admin tasks. I arrange meetings with clients, set up telephone and video conference calls, make lunch reservations and plan a large amount of worldwide travel (including hotel and taxi bookings).

Cleary's clients expect a high level of service and it is very important to ensure accuracy in my work. When sending correspondence (letters, emails or sometimes even faxes!) I need to ensure the correspondence is addressed correctly, there are no spelling errors, the grammar is accurate and the work is presented in a tidy and professional way. I use the Spelling & Grammar tool within Word to help me check for any errors and I also try to learn as I go along. If there is a word or phrase I am unsure of, I will take the time to find out what it means.

Teamwork is also incredibly important. I am part of a secretarial and office assistant team. We are the 'support staff' and are there not only to assist our lawyers, but also to help each other when we get very busy. Being a great team player is essential and we know that we can rely on each other for help when we need to.

At the end of a client deal where lots of contracts are being signed by our clients, there may be several members of the support staff team all working together to help coordinate the documents (this can sometimes involve arranging couriers to distribute the signed documentation). It is our 'support' which helps to bring the deal to a close.

One thing I really enjoy about my role is helping my lawyers carry out their day-to-day work by dealing with their admin tasks for them. The lawyers are there to give professional advice to our clients and we, as a secretarial team, support them in the background using our coordination skills to ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible.

The thing I enjoy most about my role is doing my job to a very good standard and to the best of my ability. I know I can be proud of myself and my work.

# Litigation Associate

## Marina

I am an associate in the litigation and arbitration team and have been working as a lawyer for about 6 years.

In our team, we help clients resolve their conflicts. For the most part, we try to keep them out of court. If that is not possible, we do our very best to make sure they win.

I really enjoy the varied nature of my work. It can be anything from researching the law and reading cases, to drafting statements of case, letters, or memos, for example to explain a complex legal point or whether or not a client has a good case.

The work is collaborative and I am in constant contact with my colleagues (whether in London, New York, Moscow, Abu Dhabi, or Paris), local lawyers in other jurisdictions and of course our clients, who for the most part are big international companies.

The best part of my job is when a judge or an arbitral tribunal agrees with our arguments about why our client is right and the other party is wrong. It can take weeks and months to construct a good argument. It always involves researching and reading relevant law, reviewing documents and considering all of the facts (good and bad) of the particular dispute. If the issues are technical and complex, it involves liaising with experts to determine the correct position.

Sometimes this process means I have to become an expert myself, often in quite random fields. I remember having to research whether eating fish can cause you to fail a drugs test. It turns out it is not entirely out of the question (although you would have to eat a lot of contaminated fish for it to show on any test).

The skill that I use most, and which I continue to develop constantly, is the ability to condense large amounts of complex information into a simple, clear and structured narrative. It is a little bit like writing a story about what happened, why there is a dispute, what your client's position is and why this position should be preferred. Being able to read and process a lot of information and to write clearly and concisely is key.

For any aspiring litigators, reading books (any books really) and being able to pick out the key points and concisely summarise them to others is a good start.

# Office Support Assistant

## Megan

Hello readers! My name is Megan and I am one of the members of our outstanding Office Support Assistant team here at Cleary Gottlieb in London.

What is an Office Support Assistant? Our title gives you a clue. We literally do anything involving administration to support the entire office. We support everyone from the Legal Secretaries, Receptionists, Trainees, right up to the Senior Partners.

We also support visiting lawyers from other Cleary offices. We have 16 offices globally and we work hard as a team to ensure that everyone who comes to work in our office receives the same level of service that our local employees get on a day to day basis.

No task is too big or too small for our team. The tasks range from simple or complicated print jobs, helping the Legal Secretary team with arranging business travel for their lawyers, arranging various couriers and sorting office mail. Occasionally we assist with restaurant and meeting bookings and have previously worked alongside reception in answering the main phone lines.

Attention to detail is of high importance in our role, especially when checking for spelling and grammatical errors within legal documents. We receive all of our instructions by email, which means we have to read and understand the requests properly. Some of our requests have many important details that we need to pay close attention to. This allows us to complete the task to a high standard without missing any information.

You may have noticed that I've used the word *TEAM* frequently. That's because working well as a team is vital to not just our role but for every department within the Cleary family. There are currently seven members of the Office Support Assistant role and we work very closely with each other. We practice good communication skills, support each other in our roles and make sure we all have the tools we need to complete our tasks. A direct result of this positive working relationship has been a close friendship. This extends to our relationships with other members of staff at all levels.

One of my favourite things about working at Cleary is that we interact with so many different people throughout the organisation. Sometimes our job pushes us out of our comfort zone to do a task we've never done before, which means there are often opportunities to learn and grow. We are always supported and encouraged by our peers, so we can try new tasks with confidence.

# Practice Assistant

## Courtney Sugden Butler

I started my journey at Cleary as an Admin Assistant when I had just turned 18. A year later I began my career as a Practice Assistant looking after my own allocation.

Now I am 22 and not one day at Cleary's feels the same. New challenges and opportunities appear daily. You may not always be prepared for these challenges, but using your own initiative and skills helps you to cope with anything.

My daily role at Cleary is to offer support to two partners, two counsel and four lawyers. This can involve administrative tasks, booking last minute travel to attend client meetings in a different continent or simply being there for support and encouragement to get them through their extremely busy day.

When I was studying for my Law and Legal Secretarial diploma, I always imagined law firms to be daunting and strict, but Cleary is the complete opposite. Everyone is treated equally, whether they are a lawyer or part of the non-legal team. We are like a small community, always celebrating and enjoying our firm's achievements together.

If you are planning on working at a corporate firm or office, I highly encourage you to build confidence in your literacy skills. This will help you with daily tasks in your working environment. You might, for example, have to take notes at a client meeting or during an important call. You will be representing yourself and the company so confidence in relaying the correct information is very important.

# Practice Development Specialist

The legal profession offers a wide range of job opportunities. It is hard to generalise about what's it really like to work at a law firm as it depends on aspects such as the size of the firm and what type of role you have. Knowing the law is only one part of the legal profession; there is also the business side.

There are many opportunities to work at a law firm in a business support function rather than as a lawyer. For example, to ensure effective and efficient operations, law firms have Practice Development or Knowledge Management professionals.

In my job as a Practice Development Specialist at Cleary Gottlieb, I help busy lawyers do their job more efficiently and support the management of the firm's knowledge database. For instance, when a lawyer is working on a case and needs to go to court, I research relevant judgments and references or look into specific questions surrounding court procedures. I have to analyse complicated questions and formulate clear and precise answers.

Lawyers have to deal with a huge number of documents on a daily basis. I ensure that our lawyers have access to smart technology and tools to store and search for legal documents. Managing these tools requires good organisational skills. I also learn a lot about legal terms and how to recognise the different types of legal documents.

As a Practice Development Specialist, you get the opportunity to work very closely with lawyers and many other professionals at the law firm. No two days or assignments are ever the same. Each day provides an opportunity to apply a different skill set and develop new ones. Because Cleary is a very fast moving organisation, like most big law firms, you have to be flexible and constantly update your strategy to achieve your goals.

In addition, Cleary is a truly international organisation, with offices worldwide. This means you get the chance to work with colleagues in almost every part of the world, from Asia to the Middle East and the United States. Every day, I work together with people from different cultures and backgrounds to find solutions for complex issues, which I find greatly motivating and inspiring.

I also think Cleary has a strong culture of collegiality and respect. If you have any questions or need support, it is no problem to knock on the door of a senior lawyer or even a partner. Everyone genuinely enjoys working with one another in this diverse and challenging environment.

Working in Practice Development or in any other support function provides a great opportunity to experience how a law firm operates. You also get a chance to work alongside highly motivated professionals and develop important skills to develop your career.



# Trainee Solicitor

## Emma

I studied law at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, but I never really saw myself becoming a lawyer. I just knew I liked to read and write. Studying law certainly gives you the opportunity to do a lot of reading and writing! I didn't realise when I applied to study law how varied a legal career can be. Even when you choose one particular path – like becoming a solicitor, as I have – the day-to-day job can be very varied.

Since lockdown began, our whole office has been working from home, and we have a Zoom call with our team every morning. These are short, informal check-ins, where anyone can volunteer (or might be called upon!) to describe a case or piece of work they are involved in. Being put on the spot and having to speak in front of the team can be a bit intimidating, but being able to speak confidently and make your points clearly is a really important skill for a lawyer and this is good practice!

After our call every morning, my first task is to go through my emails and make a plan for the day. As a trainee solicitor, you can be working on lots of different cases (or “matters”) at the same time so it is really important to organise your time. You have to learn how to prioritise tasks, and this often requires communicating with the people you're working with to let them know what else you have on your plate. I generally write a list for the day to keep track of what I should be focusing on and tick tasks off as I go along.

The tasks on my list can be incredibly varied. I often have to write drafts of letters to be sent to our barristers who represent our clients in court, or to the legal teams who are acting against us in a case. These letters have to be very carefully drafted, as anything we send may end up in court. The grammar and choice of words has to be exactly right: attention to detail is crucial, and is something I am still very much working on!

I am often given research tasks, which can cover a huge range of topics. Because I am in a litigation seat, they are often related to court procedure or how issues relevant to our clients were dealt with in previous cases. I use our online library resources as research tools and review relevant case law. I then set out the information I find in a “memorandum”. This is like a short, to-the-point essay setting out the main points for the client or for other lawyers on the team.

I generally have several meetings every day too, although while working from home these usually take place via Zoom or telephone call. These can be meetings with my team to discuss what we are working on and our next steps and to allocate tasks to team members, or calls with clients to update them on cases, where I usually have to take a careful note of what is said.

I will often have non-legal meetings or calls with one of the different non-legal groups at Cleary Gottlieb. I'm involved with the Women's Group, who promote gender equality within

the firm and organise events, and the Social Mobility Group, who are involved in projects like this one with the National Literacy Trust.