Secondment in Sydney

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Introduction

Recounting my secondment at the PLN Head Office in Sydney from 22 May to 2 June 2017 as interesting would be an understatement. In fact, it was mind-altering. Angela Baron, Adviser at the Chartered Institute of Personal and Development stated this and I quote: “Secondments are about giving people access to experiences and opportunities they would not get in their current role”.

From this quote, I asked the following questions:

1. What will I be doing during the secondment that I don’t normally do at Fairfax Legal?
2. At the end of the secondment, what have I learnt and how will this benefit me as a young lawyer from PNG?
3. How will Fairfax Legal benefit from the secondment?
4. How will PLN Australia benefit from the secondment?

Here are my answers

1. What will I be doing during the secondment that I don’t normally do at Fairfax Legal?

I assisted Ms. Cook and had a go at drafting a Shareholders’ Agreement (SHA). In doing so, I was able to appreciate the importance of treating commercial deals as what the parties agree to, understanding and appreciating the different clauses and how they relate to each other and how to draft these clauses to capture the agreement between the parties.

2. At the end of the secondment, what have I learnt and how will this benefit me as a young lawyer from PNG?

I was asked this question on the outset, ‘What is it that makes you different from the other lawyers practicing in Papua New Guinea?’

i. Firstly, as a young lawyer, it is wise to have a personal ‘Business Development Plan (BDP)’. The BDP acts as a guide that one can update on a regular basis and assists individuals to reflect on their careers and identify their niche practice areas (in their respective professions) and how to go about achieving this.
ii. Secondly, to stand out as a lawyer, it is important to understand the purpose of online networking sites and how to effectively use them. For example, LinkedIn is an online version of offline networking therefore, our headers have to be specific as they are SEO searchable, the reason for pictures is for people to see us, writing articles showcases our expertise and when we write about something, we must always ensure there is relevance and regularity.
iii. Thirdly, it is always important to be honest. Clients want honest lawyers and to have this quality, early on in ones career is a bonus.

I also learnt that it is important to have an organized office management system. This means that from receiving new instructions to closure of the files, all the work done on the matter must be done in an organised manner and checklists are very useful.

3. How will Fairfax Legal benefit from the secondment?

The step Fairfax Legal is taking in encouraging Secondments will not only benefit the secondee but the firm as a whole. That is, during our Continuous Legal Education (CLE) I will do a presentation and share what I have learnt and by doing so I am able to encourage them to understand the importance of:

i. Business Development Plans; and
ii. Networking sites and the proper ways of using them.

For Office Management, I can also highlight to the Management Staff here areas in our general office management that are different to that of PLN Sydney and we can identify and consider some of the areas that need restructuring.

4. How will PLN Australia benefit from the secondment?

I hope the PLN lawyers have learnt new things about PNG and how our legal systems are different and also have them appreciate the challenges we face here in PNG on a daily basis, especially in relation to collecting information.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the team bond and relationship among the PLN Australia team, is admirable. I was able to see things from a different perspective and not confined to suit the typical Papua New Guinean setting.

With more preparation in the future with regard to the secondments, I would say that secondments are one way of encouraging and ensuring that lawyers in the different affiliate countries are able to appreciate the relationship that exists within the Pacific Legal Network.

Finally, when lawyers who have been seconded understand and experience the hosting country's culture, legal system, day to day challenges etc, they can then return to their respective countries and share with their colleagues what they have learnt and this can pave a way forward for their respective firms and PLN as a whole.

Contact

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