



Mark Gourley
Learning & Development Manager,
Talent



Work Inspiration

What does your job entail?

Primarily I design and deliver development courses to our lawyers in the EMEA region, from Junior Associate all the way through to Partners and Principal Partners. The courses are designed as part of their 'pipeline' career progression and are a key part of their development on the Firm.

My core responsibilities are with the more senior programmes, so they are the ones directed at Senior Associates wanting to become Partners and also Partners wanting to become Principals or 'Equity Partners'. In normal times I am fortunate enough to be able to travel across the region delivering these programmes, however in the current pandemic we have recently adapted them for the virtual world!

How did you get into this line of work?

I started out life as a History & Politics teacher, qualifying from Liverpool Hope University in 2003. I taught in a couple of local schools in '03/04 before embarking on an 18 months overseas adventure to South East Asia, New Zealand and Australia. I taught in New Zealand for 5 months which was a great experience, and when I came back in '06 I had planned to go back into teaching but there were no opportunities mid-term. I got a role as a Learning & Development Specialist in a local outsourcing company and ever since I have been involved in corporate/adult Learning & Development with various industries from Travel to IT and now Legal Professional Services. It has been a difficult journey and the global economic crisis forced two redundancies which set my career back - but I kept going and am really glad to have my career back on track with Baker McKenzie.

Tell us about your qualifications and training?

I am a qualified teacher, having gotten a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) back in 2003 and before that I got a Joint Honours History & Politics Degree, 2:1 classification, from QUB. Throughout my career I have also gained informal qualifications in process improvement, IT and Coaching.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

It would have to be my dad advising me to go see the world when I was 16/17. My parents didn't get much of a chance in their youth to travel and see the world as it was just not affordable and, after I was on a bit of an emotional downer, he said something along the lines of: 'don't limit yourself to what is here. Times are different to when I was growing up and now you have the whole world out there to explore'. It just stuck with me and sure enough, five years later I was off with a backpack and a shoestring budget!

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy playing football with friends to keep myself as fit as I can and I also like to go out with friends and keep a healthy social life (which has been a challenge for us all during Covid!).

But I would have to say playing guitar and recording music whether alone or live with the band is my favourite pastime. Music has been the biggest inspiration in life for me.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself?

On my travels I became a bit of a daredevil and I have done a 12,000ft tandem skydive as well as a 50ft bungee jump off the side of a mountain - both in New Zealand! I also got my SSI Diving Certificate in Borneo, Malaysia, and have done a few dives in NZ and SE Asia but nothing beat the Great Barrier Reef in Australia...stunning.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

As I mentioned, music has been a huge inspiration so a lot of artists like the Beatles, Queen, David Bowie and Rory Gallagher to mention a few. My dad is a guitarist and used to play in a band back in his younger days so I took my musical cue from him.

I would have to say, though, my parents have been my biggest inspiration. They grew up in the working class communities of North Belfast in really tough times with limited education and job opportunities. They were determined that my brother, sister and I all had a different experience and they always reinforced the importance of education, despite not getting one themselves. I am where I am today because of them.