

JACQUELYN sits in the office of her very own law firm as proof that you don't necessarily have to do a law degree to enjoy a career as a solicitor. **Describe your job in five words:** Varied, adrenaline-filled, interesting, challenging and rewarding.

Describe yourself in five words: Energetic, compassionate, approachable, professional and non-judgemental.

Personality needed for this kind of work? I remember being in a lecture in Blackhall Place when studying and a lecturer said to a packed hall of students that "...there are only three qualities that you will need to possess to be a good solicitor and they are confidence, confidence and more confidence." I will admit that I agree with him but only to a point. Confidence will naturally grow with your experience.

Different areas of law require different personality qualities. For example, in family law matters, a first consultation can often feel more like a counselling session. Your client can often be teary and very emotional. Therefore, you really need to be patient. When dealing with a deceased client's estate, I find that you must be compassionate. You need to be very thorough. As part of my job, I am often asked to read through lengthy documents, for example leases, termination agreements and court documents. Finally, a good solicitor must be extremely organised. You should be able to make daily "to do" lists and stick to them.

How long are you doing this job? Almost nine years.

How did you get this job? In order to study to become a solicitor in Blackhall Place, you must first pass eight entrance exams and then secure an apprenticeship. I found it very difficult to find an apprenticeship, not having any connections in the legal world. I prepared 200 CVs and hand-delivered almost all of them to solicitors in Ennis, Limerick, Cork, Tipperary and Clonmel just to name a few. I would always ask to speak with a partner or a principal in the office, rather than just drop the CV in. Most of the time, one of the partners would speak with me. However, I remember on one occasion after a really long day, a solicitor got really angry with me for calling without an appointment and told me to stop wasting his time. I felt so deflated. But I picked myself up and secured an apprenticeship not too far from where I was living. I spent 30 months there training. Unfortunately, that firm bought out another local firm coming to the end of my training. That firm already had a solicitor and so they were not in a position to keep me on. So the hard slog of looking for a job started all over again. This time round, however, it was 2008 and the Celtic Tiger had well and truly fled Ireland. So, I chose a local firm I really admired but which had previously told me they were not in a position to hire, and I offered to work for them for free. I knew that if I remained an unemployed solicitor, it would get very hard to break back into the profession. Thankfully, that firm said that they would take me on for a couple of months and pay me. I ended up spending the next five years in that firm. Unfortunately, I was made redundant in March 2013 and in May of that



Name: Jacquelyn E. Dunne

Age: 34

Lives: Kildorrery

Job: Solicitor and principal of Dunne Solicitors

Salary bracket: It depends how long you are qualified. If qualified five years plus, the salary will be about €45-60,000. It's hard to tell at present as I am less than a year in business.

Education background: Scoil Christ Ri in Cahir, Co. Tipperary, Bachelor of Arts in UL, I completed the entrance exams to Blackhall Place and qualified as a solicitor in July, 2008.

Hobbies: With my new firm and an energetic two-year-old, I get very little time for my hobbies which include reading, socialising and playing my beloved piano.

same year, I took the step of opening up my own practice, Dunne Solicitors.

Do you need particular qualifications/experience? Yes, you must have a degree. It does not necessarily need to be a law degree. You must then pass all eight entrance exams for Blackhall Place and secure an apprenticeship before commencing your 30-month course.

Describe an average day at work: There is no average day in this job. On the fourth Wednesday of every month, you will find me in our local family law district court. Last week, I was there from 10.30am until 7pm. I had a full day of cases including access, maintenance and barrister order applications. My day in the office will consist of starting on my "to do" list which I will have prepared at the end of the previous day.

One hour, I can be investigating a large bundle of title deeds, the next hour I can be preparing a summons against a client's ex-partner who is not paying child maintenance. I will also meet clients throughout the day, so no one day is repetitive or monotonous.

How many hours do you work a week? On average, 40 hours but this can go up when I

meet clients in the evening or go to their home at the weekend to do their will.

What do you wear to work? I always wear a suit dress with jacket.

Is your industry male or female dominated? In my area, there are almost twice as many male solicitors as female.

However, this could be different in other areas.

Does this affect you in any particular way? Yes, but in a good way as family law clients tend to want a female solicitor.

Is your job stressful? How? Rate it on a scale of 1-10: Yes, it can be. I know a lot of solicitors who got out of law because of the stress. I don't find the job very stressful. I love my job so I don't mind the bit of stress that comes with it. The scale of stress can reach a 10 during a busy day in court but with that comes a high, so I can't complain.

Do you work with others or on your own? On my own.

When do you plan to retire or give up working? When I stop enjoying the work, but I can't imagine that being for a long time.

Best bits: Getting a new client that has been referred to me by a previous happy client. And meeting new, interesting people.

Worst bits: Haven't found any yet!

Advice to those who want your job? Don't give up if you don't get the points. You don't need to have a law degree behind you to get into Blackhall Place. During your college years, you should spend your summers working in a solicitor's office. That experience will definitely stand to you when you need to secure an apprenticeship.

Any other comments? Yes, setting up my own practice in the recession was a difficult decision but I was lucky to have a lot of support, in particular from my husband Noel. I never imagined in my wildest dreams that I would be this busy within my first year of business. So I would like to thank everyone for their massive support.