

# The Return of the Apprentice

Law Firm Evolution:  
Brave New World or Business As Usual?

Center for the Study of the Legal Profession  
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# Agenda

1. Legal Apprenticeship Historically
2. The New Apprenticeships
3. The Canadian Articling Experience
4. Best Practices for New Apprenticeships
5. The Future of Apprenticeship



# 1. Old Apprenticeships

A brief history

- ◆ Date back to 1292
- ◆ Peaked early in the 18th century
- ◆ Began rapid decline soon thereafter
- ◆ Survives in Canada, UK, Germany etc.



# 1. Old Apprenticeships

Factors for success

- ◆ Gainful employment in legal capacity
- ◆ Opportunity to read law texts



# 1. Old Apprenticeships

Factors for failure

- ◆ Drudge tasks, unchallenging work
- ◆ Little training, mentoring or guidance



## 2. New Apprenticeships

### Highlights

- ◆ Emerged just in the past few years
- ◆ Coincide with, not caused by, recession
- ◆ Very small sample of law firms:



## 2. New Apprenticeships

The experimental group

- ◆ Strasburger LLP
- ◆ Ford & Harrison
- ◆ Drinker Biddle
- ◆ Howrey LLP
- ◆ Frost Brown Todd LLC



## 2. New Apprenticeships

### Key features

- ◆ Focused, systematic skills training
- ◆ Direct involvement of senior lawyers
- ◆ Reduced billable hour targets
- ◆ Reduced starting salary



## 2. New Apprenticeships

Motivating factors

- ◆ Clients: more value from new lawyers
- ◆ Partners: better system for training
- ◆ Associates: recruitment difference



## 2. New Apprenticeships

### A) Drinker Biddle

- ◆ 700 lawyers, 12 offices
- ◆ Active engagement
- ◆ Ongoing feedback
- ◆ Personal development



## 2. New Apprenticeships

### A) Drinker Biddle

- ◆ Three-phase program:
  - ◆ Core curriculum
  - ◆ Practice group curriculum
  - ◆ Apprenticeship phase



## 2. New Apprenticeships

### A) Drinker Biddle

- ◆ Starting salaries cut to \$105,000
- ◆ Billable hour expectations cut to 0



## 2. New Apprenticeships

B) Howrey LLP

- ◆ 700 lawyers, 17 offices, 8 countries
- ◆ Program underway before recession



## 2. New Apprenticeships

B) Howrey LLP

- ◆ Interactive discussions
- ◆ Active learning projects
- ◆ Actual client deliverables



## 2. New Apprenticeships

B) Howrey LLP

- ◆ Mock court sessions
- ◆ Clinic-style tutorials
- ◆ Shadowing opportunities



## 2. New Apprenticeships

B) Howrey LLP

- ◆ \$100K starting salary
- ◆ 1/3 time spent on billable tasks
- ◆ 2/3 time spent on training, pro bono



## 2. New Apprenticeships

C) Frost Brown Todd LLC

- ◆ 475 lawyers, 9 offices
- ◆ Refers to first-years as “apprentices”



## 2. New Apprenticeships

### C) Frost Brown Todd LLC

- ◆ Live training and skill opportunities
- ◆ Associates shadow senior lawyers
- ◆ Assigned “knowledge coach,” senior lawyer committed to mentoring



## 2. New Apprenticeships

C) Frost Brown Todd LLC

- ◆ \$80K starting salary
- ◆ 1,000 hours training
- ◆ 1,000 hours billing



### 3. Articling in Canada

Mandatory service

- ◆ After graduation, before call to bar
- ◆ Quasi-apprenticeship: providing some legal services under lawyer supervision
- ◆ Hands-on experience, exposure



### 3. Articling in Canada

Borden Ladner Gervais LLP

- ◆ 750 lawyers, 6 offices (Canada)
- ◆ Articles integrate with lawyer training
- ◆ BLG 101, 301, 501, 701



# 3. Articling in Canada

Borden Ladner Gervais LLP

- ◆ Classroom-style education
- ◆ Supervised hands-on experience
- ◆ Firm-specific practice & tech training
- ◆ Shadowing opportunities



### 3. Articling in Canada

Borden Ladner Gervais LLP

- ◆ Salary: 70% of first-year salaries
- ◆ Partners can write off any/all hours



## 4. Best Practices

for successful apprenticeships

- ◆ 6 most common and successful features of modern apprenticeship programs:



## 4. Best Practices

for successful apprenticeships

1. Commitment of senior lawyers to mentoring new associates.



## 4. Best Practices

for successful apprenticeships

2. Diversity of learning methods:  
classroom, clinic, mock trials, shadowing



## 4. Best Practices

for successful apprenticeships

3. Training in new core skills: collaboration,  
time management, fiscal & tech literacy



## 4. Best Practices

for successful apprenticeships

4. Firm-specific training: unique culture, practices, procedures of this firm



## 4. Best Practices

for successful apprenticeships

5. Detailed feedback and continuous  
assessment of progress



## 4. Best Practices

for successful apprenticeships

6. Limited but clear value and contribution expectations (productivity)



## 5. Success or failure?

### Factors for failure

- ◆ Lawyers don't want to mentor
- ◆ Tiny fraction of firms trying it
- ◆ Ease in crisis may slow innovation



## 5. Success or failure?

Factors for success

- ◆ Lawyers must deliver value earlier
- ◆ Merit-based pay systems need skills
- ◆ Day of the “billing machine” is over



## 5. Success or failure?

### Conclusion

- ◆ Apprenticeship in the law can work, if it's done right.
- ◆ These five firms are off to a very promising start.
- ◆ Watch and monitor developments.



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Apprentice

Thank you!



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