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Creating business plans readies LPP candidates for practice

By AdvocateDaily.com Staff



[Ryerson University's Law Practice Program](#) (LPP) aims to better bridge the gap between law school and the practice of law by having candidates create a solid business plan, says Chris Bentley, director of the Toronto-based program.

“From the beginning of their training, we want the candidates to start thinking in a different way,” he tells [AdvocateDaily.com](#). “The legal profession needs to deliver services the way consumers need, not the way we’ve historically provided them.”

In its fifth year with 230 participants, the LPP is an innovative alternative to traditional articling, and although the business plan is not a formal requirement of the law society, Bentley says it is an important skill set.

“We’re doing it because it’s important to their future success. Those candidates who get called to the bar will need to make money at the practice of law, and it’s not something law schools teach,” he says.

The LPP involves four months of training followed by four months of work placement. During the training period, participants work as a firm on behalf of clients on a variety of files, which are all monitored by practising lawyers, Bentley says.

There’s value in understanding what it takes to get a law practice off the ground, he adds.

“You have no money, no clients, and no benefactor, so creating a solid business plan that might be appealing to a bank is an important exercise, at least to give you some money to start,” Bentley says.

The challenge focuses on outlining the practice, services offered, how the firm will be different and why clients would choose it, Bentley says.

Offering more affordable services is one approach, but they must still be of quality, he says.

The twist in the challenge is that participants are allowed to change one of the law society's rules in establishing their plan, Bentley says.

Previous participants in the LPP have been required to create a balance sheet, income statement, and a transaction cost analysis, he says, adding that for this challenge the participants receive support on business, innovation and design thinking and financial information.

As part of their training, candidates are also given an access-to-justice-innovation challenge, encouraging them to think creatively about how to deliver legal services smarter, better, faster, simpler and cheaper, Bentley says.

This year that task is being combined with the business plan challenge with the goal of setting up an innovative law firm, he says.

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