



PILOT PROJECT COULD HELP DEVELOP NEW LAWYERS

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I REMEMBER with fondness what it is like to qualify. One of the perks of reaching such a lofty status is the realisation that you will have significantly more disposable income than you did before.

This quickly translates into thoughts of Saturdays spent browsing in Princes Square/Princes Street (delete as appropriate).

Of course, it's not long before reality sets in. The Student Loans Company suddenly appears to reclaim wads of what, you realise in retrospect, was not free money after all. Before long, you will have spent your first Saturday working or perhaps at a training event. Goodbye retail therapy, hello Continuing Professional Development.

I jest, of course. Occasional longer hours and 20 hours of CPD a year equal high standards for the client and is at the very heart of what wearing the badge of "solicitor" represents. And besides, new entrants know what they are signing up for.

When you are new to the profession you are in a unique position in relation to CPD. The type of training relevant to you can be different to what others in your office will require and you (or your employer's) ability to pay for it can vary from firm to firm.

There is no better example of CPD for those at the start of their careers than the Scottish Young Lawyers Association annual conference, taking place next month. This year, the organisers have pulled quite the line up of respected speakers out of the proverbial hat, hit the nail on the head content-wise, and kept costs to a minimum.

So far so good, but last year, we at the Law Society wondered what else should be done on the professional development front. Enter "CPD for New Lawyers", a pilot project for 2008. We hope the scheme will deliver targeted courses to assist new lawyers with the transition from being a CPD-free trainee one day, to a CPD-liable solicitor the next. The newly qualified need to be taught gently how to navigate all-new CPD territory, and they need training that is relevant. That might be a course on a subject that the more experienced in our profession simply don't need, or it might be the same course the managing partner is going on next week, but pitched at a junior level.

The society's plea to the profession is to help us to deliver these projects, so we can make inroads into addressing the needs of the next generation, without the attendant cost. At first I was not sure if the powers-that-be around Scotland would simultaneously scoff at the naivety of it all. After all, there are bigger pulls on firms' resources these days.

But not so. The pilot courses are being staged in partnership with some big names (Dundas & Wilson and SLAB to name but two). The result is that no unnecessary costs are passed on to the newly qualified consumer of CPD. Collaboration is the word du jour, and I am delighted.

Of course, CPD in its current guise may not exist for much longer. In 2008 the Society draws closer to publishing policies on its future. This pilot project is a pre-cursor to a new way of thinking. Perhaps one day we will see aspiring solicitors and those in the profession engaged in a system of reflective and developmental learning that is born at the academic stage, threads seamlessly through the stages, and graduates into solicitors' CPD.

Back in the present, we must reassure the newly qualified that we are aware of the quirks of their role in the workplace. True, they are lawyers, but they still require substantial guidance as they venture forward.