

## Life as an Estate Planning Clinic Intern, Part II

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June 21, 2015

This past few weeks have been full of client interviews and drafting. I am learning first-hand how to become a lawyer - talk, think, act, and communicate like a lawyer. The greatest of these is communication.

What does communication mean? It is a combination of professionalism, chit chat, building a rapport, and just enough rigmarole to fake it until we make it. Good communication consists of returning phone calls, asking questions, taking good notes and active listening. If I may borrow mediation terminology, each of our clients has a position and an interest. Their positions are their stories, the questions they ask, the mere fact they have come to see us. They are searching for something. Their interests are the reasons why. It is our job to discover those reasons. Our clients' real interests are the most important issue we can solve.

I am learning how to discover those interests - how to ask the right questions and how to listen correctly. One thing I am getting myself in the habit of doing is taking good notes. I even take notes for my client. As issues arise the client needs to look into more, needs to do their own research on, I write those things down. I am then able to give them the notes I have taken, essentially giving my client homework of their own, and a purpose for any follow up conversations. I am not catching them off guard, not surprising them with my questions in follow up conversations. I remain on the same page with the clients at all times.

It has been said that lawyers have been made or broken on their simple ability to communicate respectfully, efficiently, and often. Communicating with clients does not have to be daunting or time consuming. By discovering ways to make the conversation run smoothly, such as what was mentioned above, your clients can be heard and you can do your job correctly. Something as simple as picking up the phone or returning an email can put your client's mind at ease. They just want to be listened to.

As a future attorney, I am learning I hold the key to my success. My ability to communicate allows me to do my job the right way. And this should be the only way a lawyer does their job.