

TELL US WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER SURVEY

BY JEFFREY H. WAUGH

WHILE NOT EVERYONE GOT FREE GYM MEMBERSHIPS AND GOURMET LUNCHES, MOST STUDENTS SAY THEY BENEFITED FROM THEIR SUMMER WORK EXPERIENCE.

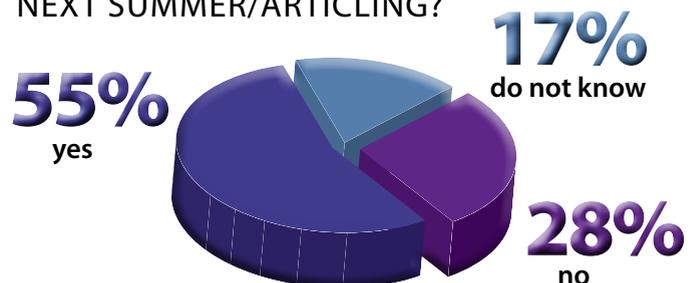
As part of a *Canadian Lawyer 4Students'* annual tradition, we've once again gone out to law students to get their take on summer work-term experiences at firms across the country. Responses were down slightly this year, with 66 valid ones returned. Nonetheless, the answers still provide insight into what's going on at the office.

The majority of students summering (73 per cent) were between their second and third years, like joint common/civil law student Caroline Larouche, from Queen's University and the University of Sherbrooke — this year's winner of the summer survey prize (she's walking away with a brand new set of custom fitted legal robes, so she'll be all set for her call to the bar).

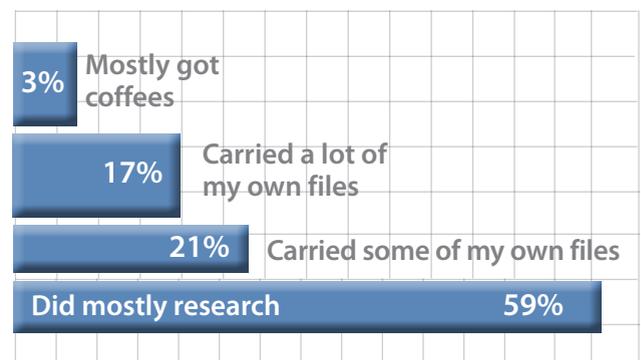
Most respondents worked in a smaller firm setting — with less than four summer students. There was also representation from the larger firms; including Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP, Torys LLP, Osler Hoskin & Harcourt LLP, Miller Thomson LLP, McCarthy Tétrault LLP, and Stewart McKelvey. Most students spent their time in Canada, but a few respondents summered in New York City, and one who was fortunate enough to land a job in Mumbai, India.

Hire backs are a big part of the reason for getting summer positions but the survey showed 42 per cent weren't interested in continuing on with the same firm (either for another summer or to complete their articles). The type of firm may

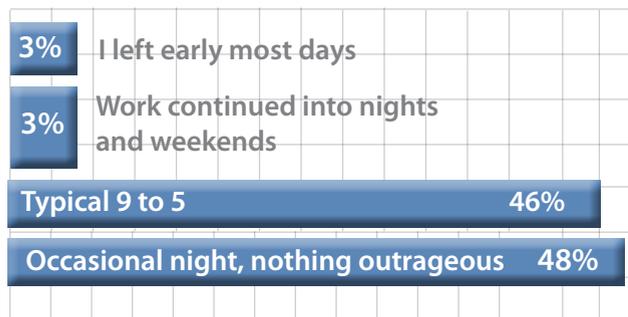
DID YOU GET HIRED BACK FOR NEXT SUMMER/ARTICLING?



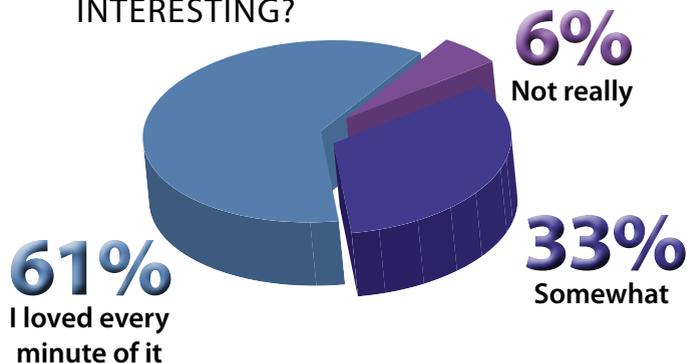
HOW WAS THE WORK?



HOW WERE THE HOURS?



WAS THE WORK INTERESTING?



explain it, though. Several students commented they would have enjoyed staying on, but the firm was too specialized to provide them with a well-rounded experience. “I loved my summer,” said one student, adding that “the lawyers were really friendly, and I would have articulated there if they did more than just plaintiff personal injury.” With all of that being said, 55 per cent of respondents were offered a chance to continue on, 28 per cent were given an outright no, and 17 per cent still weren’t sure whether they would be hired back.

Generally, students enjoyed their experience. Almost two-thirds said they loved every minute of the time spent on interesting work, which appeared to be linked to having a high level of responsibility. Students who said they took on a lot of their own files tended to find the work more interesting. One respondent, who worked with legal aid, commented that “the opportunity to manage my own files, and represent my clients at tribunals, hearings, and trials was invaluable. The sense of accomplishment at winning a client disability benefit was like nothing I’d experienced before.”

Enjoyment of the job was also linked to treatment by colleagues. There are horror stories of summer students being treated poorly by lawyers, and *4Students’* survey results reflected a few. “It was a wretched endurance of the lack of disrespect and backtalk from such a small firm, despite the great in-court experience,” said one student. But the tales of woe aren’t the norm. Most students were treated with respect by lawyers in the firms — 57 per cent indicated

they were treated as equals, and 31 per cent said they tended to have a mentor/protegé relationship with someone at the firm.

Along with horror stories of demanding partners come the fears of long hours and never-ending work being thrown at you, but such experiences appear to be limited. Only three per cent said their work continued on into the evenings and weekends, while 48 per cent said they would have the occasional evening of extra work to complete. About the same number indicated their job was a typical 9 to 5.

Enough with the work, and on to the really important things — like which interior designer did the firm hire? Almost 20 per cent felt the offices they were in every day were far too retro and badly in need of an extreme makeover. A lucky three per cent worked in what they described as something “pretty close to a palace.” The majority referred to their workplaces as warm and welcoming. Some people said having their own office was a definite bonus, but that isn’t to say that working closely with colleagues doesn’t have its benefits as well. “I suppose the best ‘perk’ of the job was the close quarters we worked in as students,

and the amazing sense of camaraderie that resulted,” said one respondent. “My student co-workers were always quick to give up their evenings and offer to help one another out. By the end of the summer, we weren’t just colleagues, we were friends.”

Speaking of perks, there were plenty to go around, with everything from complimentary gym memberships, company golf tournaments, trips to other cities for court visits, and free

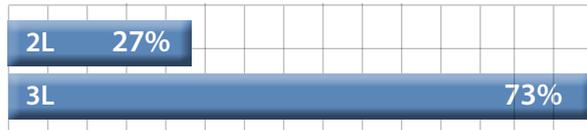
“MY STUDENT CO-WORKERS WERE ALWAYS QUICK TO GIVE UP THEIR EVENINGS AND OFFER TO HELP ONE ANOTHER OUT. BY THE END OF THE SUMMER, WE WEREN'T JUST COLLEAGUES, WE WERE FRIENDS.”

lunches on a daily basis. Not everyone got food though: Nearly 40 per cent said their workplace didn't even provide cookies. Some students were clear that the perks were much more than just the "things" they received. "The interaction with the partners and insight from veteran support staff" were the best perks for one student. Others said they greatly benefited from in-court experience.

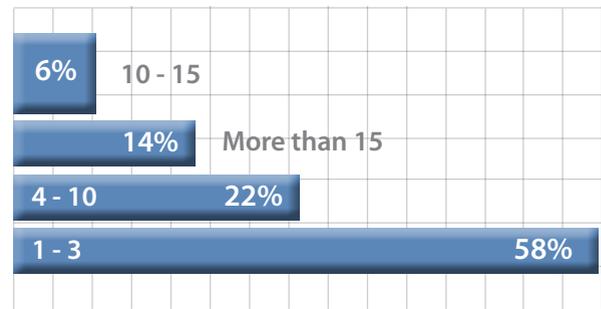
All in all, most students had positive things to say about their summer work term. It provided them with valuable knowledge, both of the law and of how an office operates. Even those with less work in the academic side of things said they still gained from their time. "Even though it was mostly legal secretary stuff, I learned so much . . . and learned to appreciate the role support staff play that much more!" said a second-year student.

Many firms are making cutbacks to perks and bonuses under the current economic conditions. *Canadian Lawyer 4Students* summer survey will be back again next year to gauge the impact that has on the reviews. ■

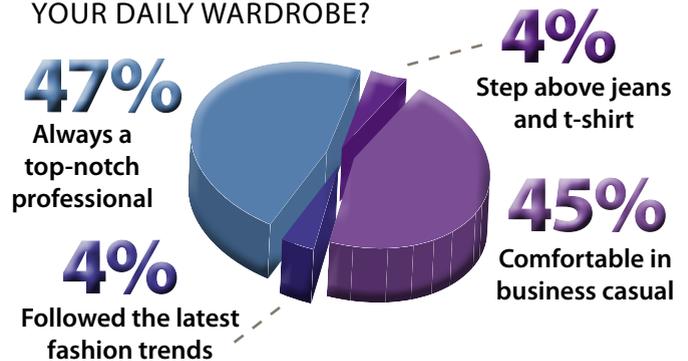
WHAT YEAR ARE YOU IN? (FOLLOWING THIS SUMMER'S TERM)



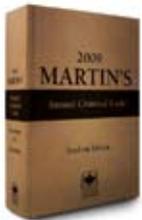
HOW MANY SUMMER STUDENTS WERE THERE AT YOUR FIRM?



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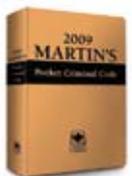
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