

Meet the Outset team

Usman Miah

Commercial Property Solicitor

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Describe your role and how you support our clients (in no more than 100 words)

I am a commercial property solicitor with particular experience in landlord and tenant matters. I also work on freehold purchases and disposals, property refinancing and assisting on corporate transactions. My friendly personality and warm nature allow clients to approach me more openly, while my professionalism means I never compromise on the quality of my work and provide commercial, concise advice while avoiding legal jargon.

2

Give us a brief timeline of your career so far

My fledgling career started with a joint honours degree in law and business at University of Kent. While studying for my degree I was holding down customer assistant jobs in the retail and restaurant industry. Although there is limited capacity to provide advice to customers in these roles ('chicken madras is a tad spicy, go for a dhansak' is as far as it usually stretched) compared to what I do now, the experience gained helped shape me up for my future career as a lawyer due to the emphasis on maintaining customer relationships and the training given to carry this out.

I was fortunate enough during the second year of my degree to gain some experience working at Lloyd's of London for an underwriting company that provides specialist Sharia-compliant insurance products. I also did a stint working at the Citizens Advice Bureau in Dover by staffing the reception desk.

I started working as a paralegal at Outset in the summer of 2016, before going on to start my training contract the following year. I juggled this with part-time studies on the weekends to complete my postgraduate degree. As rewarding as the outcome was, it was equally as challenging and required a lot of determination and perseverance.

I qualified in November 2019 and the rest, as they say, is history.

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3 What do you wish someone had told you when you started out? Or what piece of advice were you given early on that has stuck with you?

My parents have always emphasised to my siblings and me the value of education and how important it is to never stop learning. They were born in a developing country where education was a valuable commodity that, unfortunately, only the rich could afford. They said as long as I work hard in educating myself then I would always have knowledge to share, even if I do not have anything else to give.

4 What has been your biggest challenge in your role

The biggest challenge I face is being able to switch off from work. My work ethic often means a promise to only check one email at night turns into a drafting exercise for a couple of documents. This is probably due to my inclination to write out a week's to-do-list and then trying to do it all in one day. It is not necessarily a bad challenge to face, but moderation is good practice and key to a healthy lifestyle.

5 What do you enjoy most about your job?

This sounds cliché and I always thought this when I used to review qualified lawyers' profiles as a law student (as every law student does), but making clients happy is genuinely what I enjoy most about my job. Property is the biggest investment most people will make in their lifetime and the process of buying, selling, leasing or refinancing it can be very stressful. The ability to say to someone 'don't you worry about it, leave it to me' cannot be understated. I'm sure I speak on behalf of all legal practitioners when I say a happy client makes all the hard work and long hours worth it.

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6 What do you think sets Outset apart?

From the open-plan office to the flat organisational structure, Outset is not a conventional law firm or service provider and that is reflective in the culture of the company. If you were to walk into the office, pre-COVID-19 of course, you would not be able to tell a senior lawyer from a newly qualified one, or a fee earner from an administration staff and that is testimony to the exceptional bunch of people I am lucky enough to work with. Outset's culture is built on inclusiveness and empathy, which is what makes it a great place to work at.

7 When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I actually wanted to be a doctor but then realised early on that seeing blood made me very queasy – I would probably end up taking more anaesthetics than patients if I was to be a surgeon!

8 What do you enjoy doing when you are not working?

I should not really say this considering I do a lot of it as part of my job, but I love reading. I still have my Kent library card and put it to good use. Other than this, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I have a large extended family spread around the country, so more often than not I'm spending my weekends away from home.

9 Who inspires you most and why?

I am inspired by prophet Muhammad and the foremost reason as to why would be because I am a Muslim. I, however, would like to think that all the good traits people perceive in me are due to the teachings and guidance I grew up with. For example, a Sunnah (teaching) of prophet Muhammad is to smile as often as possible. People can underestimate the positive effect a smile can have on both ourselves and the people around us. It reflects a positive mind and attitude which I think are vital to achieving goals in life and for building relationships. I like to think I come across as a bubbly and joyful person people like having around (this is the part where you all nod in agreement).

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What piece of advice would you give someone in business?

I would say you could do worse than following Gary Vaynerchuck, who is a successful entrepreneur turned motivational speaker seeking to impart his knowledge on how to run a successful business. Gary started from the bottom and worked his way up, so a lot of people can relate to him.

And lastly...

What is one thing you've learnt during lockdown?

It is more of a reminder than something new, but the current situation we find ourselves in has shown that being technologically literate in all aspects of life is crucial, perhaps more than ever. Whether it is to allow us to continue to work outside of traditional workplaces, or to help us connect with the world around us, our lives are immersed in technology and we should take full advantage of it.



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