

‘You have to be able to adapt’

Why did you go to law school?

I went to law school with a genuine interest in pursuing study in international law. While there, however, I quickly realized how much I enjoyed trial work and appellate advocacy. I suppose you could say that I found my voice and became quite comfortable in that environment, whether in front of a mock panel of judges or court proceeding. It’s ultimately what led me to a successful national moot court championship and pursuing a litigation career, first in prosecution and now in the private sector.

You recently moved to private practice after working as a prosecutor in the Dakota County Attorney’s office. Is it difficult transitioning between such different kinds of legal work?

It would certainly appear to any objective observer to be quite the challenging jump. But when you have the underlying skills to do the work, learning the law can be both fun and intellectually stimulating. In many ways, it reminds me of law school, especially in those second and third years, where you can survey and learn about many areas. I think transitioning from a purely transactional to a litigation position would pose a greater challenge.

What are the most challenging facets of your job?

For the most part, prosecution work is very direct. Generally, you have your facts, reports, statements, and underlying criminal statute. With civil litigation, the cases are complex and oftentimes involve thousands of documents, extensive discovery, and substantial pretrial motion practice. The stakes are high and cases go on for years. Having a command of the current procedural posture and facts while simultaneously crafting a long-term goal and strategy can be difficult. When cases heat up or some unforeseen event occurs, you have to be able to adapt accordingly.

This year you’re serving as the chair of the New Lawyers Section. What have you found most valuable about your involvement in the bar association?

The Minnesota State Bar Association does incredible work and offers so many resources to its members. What is unfortunate is that many members are not aware of how many opportunities are afforded. Understandably, all lawyers are busy and there is only so much time you can spare outside of work and family obligations, but it is my sincere hope that the NLS in particular does a better job communicating those benefits to our members.

How do you like to spend your time when you’re not working?

I currently play on two hockey teams and try to spend most of time away from work with my wife and dog. This sort of work can be stressful, and it is important to find time for the most important things. ▲



RYAN MCCARTHY is the chair of the New Lawyers Section of the MSBA, a member of the MSBA Executive Committee and Council, and an associate at the law firm of Bowman and Brooke, LLP. Prior to joining the firm, Ryan served as an assistant county attorney with the Dakota County Attorney’s Office, prosecuting felony person and property crimes. In addition to his practice, Ryan is active in the legal community and holds leadership roles in the Minnesota State Bar Association, Minnesota Alliance with Youth, Warren Burger Inn of Court, and the Federal Bar Association.

RYAN.MCCARTHY@BOWMANANDBROOKE.COM