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Manager of the Trainee Programme

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17th October 2018.

Dear Sirs,

In applying for the Trainee Programme, I would like to briefly give you an insight into my background and where, and more importantly who, I am today.

I aspired to study law at a young age however it wasn’t until later in life that I finally got the chance. There was a time when I was slightly embarrassed at my lack of achievement, primarily due to procrastination, recession and familial commitments. On reflection, I believe the person I am today has been shaped by my resilience, ambition, and the drive to achieve my goals. This letter is not intended to mask any failure, but to highlight precisely how I overcame failure. I agonised over being honest, as effectively I may rule myself out of the running with ByrneWallace, but I would rather be honest than to try and dazzle you with impressive promises. The key contributor in my earlier ‘failure’ was addiction to alcohol. I earlier said procrastination, recession and commitments were to blame, however the blame lay solely with me, and a point came when I turned everything around.

I was threading water in the latter end of my drinking career, barely holding everything together, muddling through my BCL by evening. My perception and abilities were completely skewed, and as I tell people “*I was sick and tired of being sick and tired”.* It wasn’t necessarily a lifestyle I purposely chose, but rather one that I got entangled in and found it impossible to escape.

I approached UCC in September 2014 and took my final year out, and I got sober. Not by any therapy, rehab, or magic intervention but by my own sheer hard-work, will and determination alone. It was extremely tough. I began to run. I set myself a target to run the Cork Marathon in the following June. Eight months later when I crossed the finish line, in a respectable time of 4:20, I welled up with tears. This wasn’t my only goal; my main goal was to complete my BCL and get a good grade. That is exactly what I did. However, I knew I needed more. I had an appetite to better myself and I think this stemmed from the years I wasted. This appetite to prove myself, to better myself, manifested itself in a 2.1 Master’s degree (which I thoroughly enjoyed).

So, the point of this background story is to portrait how while I may have some proverbial war-wounds, I also have life experience and a gritty determination. Perhaps this rather candid letter will end up in the bin, perhaps you will share it with others bemused, but I can categorically promise you that nobody else applying has the determination to succeed or the hunger that I now have. It is quite likely I will rue this letter and wish I had sent a generic draft like many other candidates will have. However, I don’t have a 1.1 or any particularly fancy accolades, but I do have the unique selling point of me, and I believe that I have value no other candidate can offer.

When I look back on my tumultuous journey, for a long time I was ashamed of who I was. I was ashamed I found myself homeless. I was ashamed for letting myself and others down. Today, I am proud. I am proud of what I have accomplished and proud to be in my fourth year of sobriety. I have spoken to youths on the dangers of alcohol and told them your mistakes can make you stronger, which is something I believe in. I am eager to volunteer in the Foróige mentor programme to help disadvantaged youths. I believe my strengths, discipline, determination and experience has equipped me to be a great lawyer. I had hoped the rather rare nature of my LL.M would open doors for me with ByrneWallace, but I realise you are looking for much more than academics. To that, I say look not only at my academics but also the person I am today.

In surmise therefore, I would say I can think of no greater honour than to be selected for the Trainee Programme. I have a passion for the law, and especially the areas of practise within the firm. This is evidenced in my elective choices and the LL.M I earned. Aside from my two law degrees, I have the FE1s taken (two results are pending) and I have legal experience. Additionally, I have immense interpersonal skills, a hunger to work hard and learn, and practical and pragmatic skills in getting the right solutions.

Lastly, I apologise for my rather unorthodox letter. As I stated, I opined that a formulaic and generic letter would be dismissed. To that end I have nothing to lose in being open, candid and honest. Namely, qualities that are invaluable in a candidate. Thank you for your time and understanding.

Yours Sincerely,

Patrick Barrett