

LAWYERS AT WORK: Hussein Hamdani

An Interview by John Loukidelis

Part of a regular series on lawyers and how they work, for publication in the HLA Journal.

Describe your practice generally.

I restrict my practice to solicitors' work (or "happy law") corporate/commercial and real estate.

What does your typical work day look like?

It may start off at a breakfast meeting with clients or potential clients. When I return to the office, I work on the transactional documents with my team: juniors, clerks and students. I usually end the day with signing up clients somewhere outside the office, either at the client's place of business

or some other mutually convenient location.

What time does a typical day start? When does it end?

My schedule varies wildly. Generally speaking, I am not a morning person. I try to restrict my breakfast meetings to once or twice a week. If I do have a breakfast meeting, then my day starts at 7am. I come alive in the afternoons and evening. I usually book my last appointment for 6:30pm.

How do you organize your day?

By surrounding myself with people much smarter than me who organize my day for me – clerks and assistants. Otherwise, the plan is at the end of each day, I write out the goals/tasks to accomplish for the next day in my

task book. When I arrive in the morning, I review my tasks, go through my emails and delete any unnecessary emails. I will then set aside 30 minutes to review the emails that have come in and make a list of to-do items or follow up items based on the emails that have come in. By 10am, I will listen to my voice mail messages and add them to my follow up items. I try to listen to my voice mails at 10am, 1pm and 3:30pm each day. If possible, I will review my emails 5 times a day only.

Depending on what transactions I am working on, I will schedule meetings with my team of clerks, juniors and students to discuss the files that we are working on together, obtain updates and work on what needs to be worked on for the files.

What time of day do you do your best work?

From 3pm to 6pm.

Where do you do your best work?

At the office. I have tried to work from home but I get distracted by the kitchen, TV and life too much.

Describe your workspace? How have you arranged it to help you get work done?

I keep my desk relatively clean and

FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION MEDIATION • MEDIATION-ARBITRATION • ARBITRATION

Richard W. Shields, LL.B., M.A., LL.M., Ph.D.
Lawyer Mediator Arbitrator Trainer

*Certified Specialist in Family Law – Law Society of Upper Canada
Certified Comprehensive Family Mediator – Family Mediation Canada
Chartered Mediator & Chartered Arbitrator – ADR Institute of Canada
Certified Family Mediator & Certified Family Arbitrator – ADR Institute of Ontario
Accredited Family Mediator – Ontario Association for Family Mediation*



richardshields@bellnet.ca • 905-648-5903 • www.FamilyDisputeResolution.com

clear. I have two folder-holders on my desk. I prioritize the folders in the respective holders based on pending work. I try to have only one file on my desk at any given moment. I try to focus on one task/file at a time.

I have a Bristol board in my office where I keep charts of my ongoing real estate and corporate transactions and tracking which of my clerks is assisting me on each file.

What apps, software or other tools can't you live without? What makes them useful? How do you use them?

I use MS Outlook to track my tasks, my schedule and my follow up emails. Everything flows through Outlook. I have dozens and dozens of email subfolders that I drag and drop emails to so that my current Inbox can be as minimal as possible.

Are you a mobile lawyer?

I certainly try to be. I learned long ago that technology can be my friend.

What's tips or tricks do you use to get work done? What is your productivity secret weapon?

Simple: I surround myself with people smarter and more efficient than me.

Describe the people you work with.

We all work hard to build a culture of mutual trust and respect. We communicate with each other constantly. We care for and support one another, inside and outside of the office. My team has the confidence that I will have their back, no matter the circumstances and in return, they look out and work hard for me.

Are you good at delegating? Why? How do you do it? (Or, what could you do better?)

STANSBURY & Co.
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

A MODERN APPROACH TO ACCOUNTING THAT MAXIMIZES VALUE AND SAVES TIME FOR OUR CLIENTS.

Quality control meets
EFFICIENCY
at *Stansbury & Co*
Professional Corporation.

2826 King St. East, Hamilton, Ontario L8G 1J5 • (905) 545-2715
doug.stansbury@stansco.ca • www.stansco.ca

LexisNexis
PCLaw
Certified
Independent
Consultant

I do think that I delegate well. However, my style of practice is a communal, team style. We work on files together (depending on the size and complexity) and we divvy up the work accordingly. I am less of a 'traffic controller' and more of a 'captain of a hockey team', whereby I am on the ice with my teammates.

What are the biggest challenges you face when trying to get work done? What do you do to manage those challenges?

I am blessed to have a very large practice with many clients. I work hard to be my client's trusted advisor. However, this often means that I meet or speak to clients and I cannot docket nor bill for my time. If I want them to trust me and share with me what is going on with their respective businesses, I cannot nickel and dime them at every turn. However, the challenges with this approach are: 1. each client wants to believe that their file is my only file on my desk and that I give their file my undivided attention; and 2. it takes up a lot of time to talk and meet, meanwhile, the ongoing work continues to pile up.

I manage these challenges by training myself to direct the conversations with clients to the most pertinent matters and to prepare for each meeting or conference call ahead of time so

that I do not spend time going through background info that I should already know.

Another management tool that I use is the employment of systems and checklists. I have checklists and systems for just about every transaction and I make sure that I use them when possible. This not only helps me stay on track, but it helps my team know what has been completed on a transaction, what is left to do and who is expected to do the work.

How do you manage your files? Software? Paper and pen? Keep it all in your head and pray?

Well, I am an observant Muslim and I do pray a lot, but like most lawyers, I manage my files with a combination of software and pen and paper. My commercial and residential real estate transactions tend to be more software based, while my commercial asset or share transactions tend to be more checklist, closing agenda based.

Do you listen to music while you work? What's on your playlist?

No I do not listen to music at work. I love music too much. If I had music in the background, I would be distracted by the song. If I did listen to music, my typical playlist would consist of late '80s, early '90s Canadiana music

– The Tragically Hip, 54-40, Grapes of Wrath, Odds, Blue Rodeo.

What everyday thing are you better at than anyone else?

I keep things in perspective better than most people. I love my job, but it is only a job for me. My identity is far more than just my profession. My calling and purpose in life transcends being a lawyer. Although I work hard and sometimes long hours, I fill my life with volunteer work that fills my heart and uplifts my soul. As a result, I am one of the most stress-free lawyers around. I understand that there is a much bigger world out there. This perspective allows me to have a clear head when working and it dramatically reduces stress and anxiety.

What are you reading these days?

I am reading two books, depending on my mood: The Essential Rumi by Coleman Barks; and, re-reading The Autobiography of Malcolm X.

How do you recharge? What do you do for fun?

I play ice hockey all year round, play box lacrosse in the summer and spend volunteer time with newcomer youth.

My wife and I like to travel a lot. In 2016, we hiked the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in Peru, and performed the Muslim Hajj pilgrimage in September. In 2017, we will go to India and Turkey.

One of my personal highlights from the past year was when my brother and I were the special guests of Muhammad Ali's family to attend his funeral and memorial service in Kentucky. Muhammad Ali was a personal hero of mine, not only because of his boxing prowess, but more importantly his post-boxing service to humanity.

What's the best advice you've ever received?

When you are in your grave, you will probably not wish that you spent more time working at the office on files, but you may regret not spending enough time with loved ones and friends.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I believe that every single one of us is blessed, to various degrees. But this blessing comes with responsibilities to make the world a more just, generous and beautiful place. But one can only make the world a more just, generous and beautiful place if one's heart is just, generous and beautiful. I try very hard to approach everything and everyone with the lens of mercy and compassion, understanding and friendship.

Name another lawyer you'd like to see answer these same questions.

David Howell. ■

John Loukidelis is a lawyer at Loukidelis Professional Corporation where he restricts his practice to tax-law. John can be reached at john@jltax.ca

Hussein Hamdani is a partner at SimpsonWigle LAW LLP

Family Law Matters



The Hon.
David Steinberg

Mediation,
Arbitration and
pre-trial settlement
conferences.



TEL: 905.526.9800
E: dsteinberg@rossmcbride.com

The Hamilton Law Association
would like to

Thank the Following Firms for Sponsoring The 2017 New Lawyers' Socials



MICHAEL L. LAMONT
PERSONAL INJURY LAW