Abdulkadir Abkey
LLB, 2001 and LLM, 2002
Avocat, Abkey Legal

The journey

There are often obstacles to overcome when attaining a degree, getting that first job or setting up your own business. However, for Abdulkadir Abkey (Abdi) those challenges began at a much earlier age and make his subsequent achievements all the more remarkable. Abdi came to the UK as a child and Somali refugee, without any knowledge of English. His drive to succeed has seen him not only get a degree and masters, but become a successful lawyer in Quebec, Canada, where he now has his own business.

‘I found it very tough in the beginning. I began my studies in 1998; I didn’t think I was ever going to make it to the end. Fortunately, when I moved to Quebec with my wife, I received my master’s results and I was over the moon!’

Career building

After the Quebec Bar insisted on him studying in French for a further degree, Abdi’s career path has taken off. He started in top Canadian law firm, Ogilvy Renault, before moving to the government, where he worked for the Quebec Minister of Justice, the Minister of Environment, and the Vice Premier of Quebec and Minister of Education as a legal and political advisor in matters relating to constitution, commercial and criminal affairs. He then moved back to the private sector, to Fasken Martineau DuMoulin, before setting up his own company in 2014.

‘My early experiences taught me to be a risk taker, which made the decision to start my own company easier. I cover commercial litigation, commercial and transactional law, with focus on environmental and mining issues, including renewable energy. I believe that the greatest gift we have is for everyone to decide what is right for them – I love having my own company, making my own decisions and being social responsible, supporting my clients beyond legal issues.’

His time at Hertfordshire has remained with Abdi, particularly the skills he learnt alongside the law. ‘The time I spent in the UK taught me how to be a team player, which is something I carry through in everything I do. It also showed me how to work efficiently in a flat structure, rather than focusing on corporate hierarchy, and my clients are really happy with this approach.’

Inspiration and advice

Abdi’s biggest influence when deciding to study law was his uncle, who was killed in the civil war and aspired to become a lawyer. This inspired him to fulfil his uncle’s dreams and make the most of every opportunity in life. Abdi is a true global citizen, speaking six languages, and even though he lives in Canada he is a self-confessed ‘anglophile’.

Abdi strongly advises anyone thinking of practicing and studying Law to have a ‘can do’ attitude. ‘Law has given me the confidence to communicate and negotiate. The University is where it all started. Today I have the upmost respect from both my current and previous superiors and I am positioned in a very good level in my career. I believe that with determination, everything is possible. Don’t take no for an answer!’

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