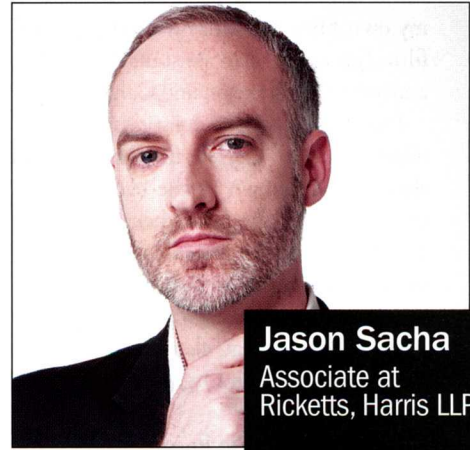


Looking Back and Ahead

HOW THREE ASSOCIATES
WITH DIVERSE
BACKGROUNDS ENDED
UP PRACTISING LAW



Annik Forristal
Associate at
McMillan LLP



Jason Sacha
Associate at
Ricketts, Harris LLP

IN GRADE NINE I spent a day with my dad for “Take Your Kid to Work Day.” As we toured the refinery where he worked, with its complex maze of pipelines, tanks and valves, I was fascinated: how did it work and what exactly did my dad, an engineer, do? The answer, he said, was simple. Engineers solve problems. My eyes were opened to the unbelievable impact engineers have in our lives and the incredible variety of problems they solve and I was hooked — I then wanted to be an engineer.

Four years later, I entered the University of Waterloo’s five-year chemical engineering program that incorporated two years of engineering work experience. I had the opportunity to try my hand at a variety of potential career paths in diverse industries, including plastics, pharmaceuticals, mining, and oil and gas. I was impressed by the incredible achievements within these industries and proud to contribute.

As I progressed, however, I became intrigued by the interaction between engineering and law. No matter the industry or nature of my role, the law inevitably impacted me and my colleagues.

We often saw processes revised or tasks that had been tailored to address legal matters such as protecting rights or limiting liability. Additionally, there was often a sense of frustration, given that what “the lawyers” needed felt disconnected from the problem at hand; a tedious diversion from the clear path forward.

Consequently, my focus shifted — I wanted to be a lawyer to help engineers solve problems and accomplish their goals.

Following graduation, I attended law school at the University of Calgary and worked part-time as an engineer for a while. Interestingly, I discovered that engineering and law are not quite as disconnected as I had originally thought; while the processes and tools may be very different, at their heart, both lawyers and engineers are problem-solvers.

Today I practise in areas where I frequently work with engineers and other professional problem-solvers. In this environment, not shying away from complex or technical matters and approaching a challenge from different perspectives has proven invaluable. 🗨️

I GREW UP in Morinville, Alta., a community of 5,000 about 30 minutes north of Edmonton. It had one high school, three video stores — and when a Tim Hortons opened, it was a big event. I knew from a young age I wanted to do something involving international business and travel. There were lots of blue-collar jobs around Morinville and, as a kid, business seemed like a Big City activity, very “New York.”

I was always interested in cool new technology and was an early adopter of cell phones — initially a cool product from Finland. When I got the chance to go to Finland as part of my business studies at the University of Alberta, I jumped at it. It was the road less travelled (many of my classmates chose the beaches of Australia) but why zig when you can zag?

I’ve always been a voracious reader and wanted to try my hand at writing. I roomed with a filmmaker and started to work together on a number of film concepts and scripts. From there I started writing then producing my friend’s films and then shooting some of my own. I formed my own film-production company and created