



**Kwasi Yeboah:** Welcome to the first episode of *RopesTalk* London, a new podcast about life as a trainee at Ropes & Gray in the London office.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** This podcast is for everybody who has an interest in building a successful career at the firm’s London office.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Today, we are extremely delighted to be joined by one of the key individuals at our firm, Ruchit Patel.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** Ruchit is a graduate recruitment partner at Ropes & Gray and leads our European and UK antitrust practice. He is instrumental to the training program and indeed wider strategy at Ropes & Gray. Ruchit has had a stellar career, and in May last year he was named one of the world’s leading young antitrust practitioners by the [Global Competition Review’s 40 under 40](#).

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Ruchit, it’s great to have you with us today. How are you doing?

**Ruchit Patel:** I’m well, thank you. Thank you for having me. I’m delighted to be here with you.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** On that note, let’s get right into the episode. Today, for everyone listening, it’s a real opportunity to get an insight into Ruchit’s career, the training program at Ropes, and to get some tips from Ruchit on how to succeed as a junior lawyer.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** I think a good starting point, I guess, Ruchit, is that relatively recently you’ve been named one of the leading antitrust lawyers of your generation, which is great. What steps have you taken throughout your career and I suppose particularly at the start, and what habits have you developed which have allowed you to continue to cultivate the level of success that you’ve had?

**Ruchit Patel:** It’s still a bit of a surprise that I would be considered one of the leading antitrust lawyers of my generation just given how many talented antitrust lawyers there are out there. I guess, in my early days as a lawyer, I really tried hard to focus as much as possible on honing my technical skills. The people around me were just hugely talented and having hugely complicated conversations, and frankly I just wanted to be able to understand what they were talking about and then contribute to those conversations. And the only way to do so was just put in a massive amount of hard yards and understanding my discipline. I thought that was a really worthwhile endeavor—that was probably the core of my focus when I was a young lawyer. I also really tried hard to develop strong relationships with those around me—my peers and my friends—and to treat people, whoever they were, frankly equally and with respect. And then finally I guess, I just wanted to have some fun. I figured that the more fun I had, the more I’d do it, and the better I would be at it. So I guess, on reflection, those would be the things I’ve focused on.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** I can definitely reiterate a point about being fun. The antitrust practice is renowned for throwing some great socials. But I guess just going back quickly, on the point about developing into a good lawyer, I heard that a way that you could do this is by going back through deal documents and reviewing them. And also I suppose just being very attentive as a junior lawyer and getting involved in lots of different sorts of deals and work. Now, at Ropes & Gray, what’s the scope for doing that? What’s the training program like at Ropes, and is it well attuned to helping develop a strong technical lawyer?

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—Ruchit Patel, Partner

**Ruchit Patel:** To your first point, I was renowned for doing that too. Whenever a document went out, if it wasn’t exactly as I had drafted it, I’d run a blackline, look at those changes and try to figure out what had changed and why. I just felt like that was a good learning opportunity. But more generally, I think our platform really provides you with a fantastic opportunity to learn and to develop. First, there’s just amazing high-quality work on our platform, so you get to learn by doing, but doing really, really interesting matters for very sophisticated clients. Secondly, I am constantly impressed by just how hugely talented our people are, so they’re fantastic people to learn from and to watch in practice. And then finally, our infrastructure and training program is so strong—that’s driven by our culture and our dedication to high quality. And of course you guys don’t need any encouragement, but I’m sure embracing all of that I think will stand you in good stead for the future of your career.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Yes, definitely. And I think even from the perspective of someone being in a first seat, I’m sometimes surprised about how I’ve developed. I’ll look at emails that I would’ve written after I started, and I look at how I write my emails now, and I think that culture of excellence definitely runs through sort of the feedback that we get as trainees. People have reviewed countless emails—you could argue, maybe not technically scripted as an email, but that’s reviewed so many times, it really does facilitate that development, so I completely agree with that point.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** Yes, and I think touching on these points raised, given your experience, Ruchit, and having spent time at other leading firms like Cleary, and Slaughter and May, what do you think makes the training program at Ropes & Gray unique, and why is it distinct from other firms? I suppose that’s what applicants applying really want to know and get at.

**Ruchit Patel:** Yes, that’s an excellent question, Emilio. I’m just constantly and consistently amazed by the quality of our trainees—they’re smart, enthusiastic, personable, and

they’re hardworking and dedicated to our practice and to our plans. I think that’s a pretty rare breed—I think the thing that sets our traineeship apart from other firms is really our culture and our mission. And that growth ambition is really quite a story—I think it’s really quite addictive. I think that our training program offers you an education in those kinds of business aspects of law. It’s not just the technical side that we talked about before—it’s also more about the business of law and how you grow. And I think that’s what sets us apart, and is so different from many of our peers. We hope to offer our trainees not only that education and technical skills, but also the business of law.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** For sure. You mentioned earlier about how you’re amazed about how good our trainees are. First of all, thank you. Not only is Ruchit clearly a very strong technical lawyer, but he’s also a charmer as well. The point is, you play a pivotal role in making sure that we get the best trainees joining the firm. So I guess we’d be interested in hearing your views on what really makes an applicant stand out, both in a perspective of the firm’s technical expectations, because Ropes is obviously very focused on giving strong technical advice to our clients, and other things that applicants might be able to bring to the firm.

**Ruchit Patel:** Thanks, Kwasi. Yes, so we expanded our intake of trainees to 10, but we still receive well over 600 applicants a year. How we dealt with that is we’ve adopted a blind review process to really eliminate as much as possible conscious and unconscious bias from our decision-making process. We also then added challenging assessments to our assessment day, which are used to get onto our vacation scheme, and then we only hire from our scheme. So the idea being we have three data points—one at the application stage, two at the assessment day and three at the vac scheme—which we can use to test several disciplines across a period of time. We’re looking for people who can be consistent performers for us across multiple disciplines for a really long time to come.

And I think that's who we look for and who typically stands out for us—it's those people that are able to perform at a consistently high level across all of our different disciplines over a period of time. I don't envy them at all—if I were to apply at this firm right now, I'm not sure I would get in, and I'm amazed by the people frankly who do.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** Yes. I think touching on these points, it's really interesting to hear, and also I think quite pleasing when you're an applicant to know that there's not just one thing which could let you down. I'm unsure about Kwasi's experience, but I know personally when I was on the assessment day, there were points where I felt I didn't do as strongly, and that would be held against me. But taking the holistic view that Ropes does, I think that's a really, really good way to ensure that you do pick up on the right people. Being conscious of time, I think one of the final firm-related questions that we have and I think it would be useful for our audience is if you could tell us a bit more about the antitrust practice and how it fits into the strategy of the London office and the firm on the whole. Ropes has a reputation of "private equity, private equity, private equity," but it's certainly not all that the firm does, so could you give us a bit more of an insight there?

**Ruchit Patel:** Private equity is the younger cousin to the antitrust practice, I think. The antitrust practice is clearly the single most important practice at the firm and has the most talented people, the most interesting cases and we obviously have the most fun. More seriously, the antitrust practice is really an interesting practice because it fits between the transactional practices and the litigation practice. You do both deal work and contentious work in your seat, and I think that's a huge benefit to see both sides of the practice. You get a bunch of transferrable skills—some transfer into your deal work, some transfer into your litigation work and some transfer into your counseling work. And you're doing this complicated mix of economics, law, policy and facts, and I think that's a really rewarding experience. Our challenge is almost always in understanding the client's business, and the impact of a particular conduct or a particular deal

on the client's business and on the market. That's usually interesting—for me, that's just more exciting and more tangible than some of the other practices that we have here. It's the sort of thing that gets me out of bed in the morning, and gets me excited to understand how the economics of competition really work in the marketplace. And I know that you two haven't signed up for antitrust yet, so I think you're missing out—I'm looking forward to seeing those applications in the next seat.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Time will tell. But, Ruchit, before we leave, we always like to give our audience kind of a holistic overview of what the people at Ropes & Gray are like. We don't want them to think we're just a bunch of lawyers staring at our screens all day, and I know that you definitely aren't. So, give us an interesting fact about yourself, something that we might not expect.

**Ruchit Patel:** I grew up in the mean streets of rural Worcestershire. And so in those mean streets it won't surprise you to know that I'm a die hard fan of '90s hardcore gangster rap. There's not a chorus for Snoop Dogg, or Ice Cube, or Ice-T or N.W.A. that I don't know, right? And if you want to test me on that, catch me at the Christmas party.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** I think on that note, as you mentioned him, to quote Ice Cube, Ruchit, "Today was a good day." Thank you so much again to Ruchit for his time. Please follow us on both [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), the handle is @RopesGrayGrads, and feel free to get in touch with us via those social media handles if you have any questions or thoughts for future episodes, and we'll fit them in.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Yes, and hopefully we've given you guys lots of things to think about. And if you found this podcast episode useful, you can always follow us on social media as discussed to keep up-to-date with all things Ropes & Gray. But otherwise, that's really it for today. See you for our next episode, we're we'll be talking to even more inspirational figures at Ropes & Gray, and provide insights into the firm's culture and how you can succeed as a trainee and junior lawyer.