



## **The Internal Trainer's Perspective**

This month, I chatted with Maritta Terrell, Trainer and Help Desk Specialist with Lloyd Gosselink Rochelle & Townsend, P.C. Maritta started as a receptionist at a Houston law firm and, thanks to a lot of hard work (and hard-wired curiosity!), Maritta ultimately became an IT Manager and finally a trainer. This interview shares her career path as well as her insights into the law firm training industry.

### **Q. Lead us briefly through your career path.**

A. I started as a receptionist in 1980 in a Houston law firm not knowing a thing about U.S. law. I was an elementary school teacher and librarian from Canada! I worked my way up to a word processor, legal secretary, paralegal and office manager for two different law firms in Houston, learning more about the new word processing “computers” and teaching others what I’d learned.

In 1984, we moved to Austin, where I worked as a legal secretary for a law firm on good old WordStar! Then I became a full-time word processor in 1986 for another firm. The following year, we got new computers for the firm’s word processors and the machines had WordPerfect 5.0 and then 5.1. We were not sent to any training on WordPerfect at that firm at that time so when the secretaries got the same systems, I taught them what I’d learned.

Then came the day we had four computers networked together with email on them. I remember leaning over the fellows installing it, asking questions, and saying, “Oh, that is so cool!” Next thing I knew, I was fixing the network when it went down. I finally moved into the network room and, within two years, I was the IT Manager, trainer, help desk specialist, you name it.

In 2004, that firm merged with another big firm, which had a bigger IT department. I came to Lloyd Gosselink as their Trainer and Help Desk Specialist and have been here since then.

I like to tell new hires here that I’ve basically held every position in a law firm, except an attorney’s place, and I’m happy right where I am now!

### **Q. In your own words, define what training means in a law firm.**

A. Law firm trainers train, guide, coach and assist all people in a law firm with the software on their computers so that they can work more efficiently with less frustration at the technology they have to use.

### **Q. How has the practice of training in law firms changed in the last 11 years?**



A. It's gone from sit-in-a-classroom-and-watch for a week at a time, to one day at a time, to sit-in-a-classroom-at-a-computer-and-try-out-what-the-teacher-is-saying for an hour or less. Today, we add eLearning so that people can watch videos and PowerPoints and try things on their own. We also provide one-on-one coaching and, of course, we teach people how to do one thing *right now!*

**Q. What are some of the biggest challenges you face?**

A. It's hard to get people to realize that if they make time (even 15 minutes a week) to learn something, it would ease their time in doing different tasks at work. They all know I'm available for one-on-one training/coaching, or classes, or helping to find a video for this or that, but getting them to use me for that is the challenge.

**Q. I understand that a lot of firms are getting rid of their internal trainers and shifting the training responsibilities to IT or HR. What's your take on this?**

A. In large firms, I do believe that the trainer needs to work closely with the help desk and the IT department so that they understand the various help problems and any upcoming programs. Trainers can also serve as the IT department's PR spokesperson! Also, the trainer needs to work closely with HR personnel to find out what various people might be asking during reviews and other times.

**Q. Any advice for external trainers who may be serving a firm that just got rid of their internal trainer?**

A. If at all possible, arrange a meeting with the office administrator and HR person, as well as the IT manager, to learn about any previous classes, courses and eLearning items that have been available in the past. Ask whether the firm has an LMS and try to get a look at it. Also, ask about the best times for being in-house for training *and* for one-on-one coaching.

**Q. Any advice for external trainers in general?**

A. Be patient. And have a separate email address set up for each firm for people to email you with questions.

**Q. How about the impact that ILTA is having? How is ILTA changing the world of law firm training?**

A. ILTA has provided a great deal of information for trainers, help desk personnel and all IT people at law firms in regards to having pre-knowledge about various programs, things to look out for, and great tips and help for how to do certain things, especially when you need something really weird *right now!* ILTA provides wonderful webinars to understand about new and old programs, better insight on *how* to train and teach, and opportunities to learn and grow by learning from our peer trainers.