

What to look for in article-ship by CA Students?

Articleship is the learning period of a CA student's career. So, is articleship a hunt for specific knowledge and just like any other tasks it involves planning, executing, digging up opportunities? Is it the art of balance when a student has to manage the focus clearing the exams as well as learning the nuances of the profession? Is it a problem when a student shifts entire focus towards completing the course and clearing exams? What should be the ultimate goal and what to look for in articleship?

Every student have their own different perceptions towards the 3 years period (Now 2 years) of articleship, while articleship period offers a perfect equilibrium of fun and learning, yet it also acts as a catalyst to be more focused in becoming of a true professional.

The key question is how a student must take best use out of the articleship tenure. Following are few aspects that can be considered:

1) Choose the right firm:

Many articles feel that *"I don't get all the desired experience in my articleship."* In one way it is right, but actually the question is framed on completely incorrect premise. The moment you complain that you don't get the desired exposure/ experience during your articleship, you should actually question your own judgement why you joined the respective firm in the first place. Did you do enough research before joining the firm, have you gone through the firm's website, nature and composition of work, type of clientele etc.

Unfortunately, a student does more research on the coaching classes that they must join than the firm they choose for articleship. You may loose an attempt with irregular coaching but you would surely loose 3 years of your profession and a life-long learning opportunity if you choose a firm inconsistent with your targets. Therefore, it is important to be very clear on what you want to learn and join the firm that offers you that type of learning. The CEO level brainstorming in understanding your area of interest and joining the apt firm to amplify your interest to the next level, is the most crucial decision an article should take in the early span of CA course.

However, not every article carries out the required research to discover the best suited firm for himself. The sheep follows the herd, the lion locks its target! *There is a vacancy in the firm where my friend works, and that's how most of the article choose the firm.* In fact, one of the intriguing strategies to choose the firm should be diagonally opposite i.e., joining the firm where you don't have a single friend and everyone is stranger. This provides the essence of breaking our comfort zone and prepares us for the real world and a stepping-stone for ideal way of selecting where we ought to go.

2) Understand your niche:

Imagine, becoming a CA and you don't know what you want to do with your career. It would be frustrating to search for the job and being ready to accept any job as long as they hire you. This is the time when you will curse yourself for not investing time in understanding your passion. Based on various assignments entrusted, a student must try to understand the nature of work that excites them and start building over it. The great Steve Jobs said that *"Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle."*

Now imagine you cracked the CA final exam and the advantageous upperhand you would be having if you have already dedicated yourself in the required domain for 3 years during articleship. As an employee, the magical wand of negotiation of package will be in your hands and as a professional entering in vast ocean of practice, you will already be having a high-speed turbo push to your practice with crystal clear experience and knowledge in the required domain.

Therefore, this beautiful tenure of articleship must be used to explore the career path. Based on reading various subjects and while undergoing practical training, a student must try to take cognizance of what are all the career pathways available, what they really love to do and by the end of articleship tenure, a student must have enough clarity on the area in which they wish to pursue their career.

3) Where do you see yourself 3 years and down the line?

CA's have wide category of career path, from practice (audit, tax, accounting, new age value add services etc.) to employment to entrepreneurship etc. While there is always a myth where one is informed to choose a big sized firm if a student wants to go for employment in the future and a small sized firm if a student aims at practice after qualification. However, while choosing the right articleship the bigger question is "what skill set would you require after the end of 3 years" and choose the place providing the same. Next big question, how does an articleship student analyze this? While, here the above said CEO level analysis is a saver, activities such as research, networking, firm website, know your mentor, training and development, overall culture,....here we don't want to limit your capacity as a CEO, so do it all.

4) High importance to practical learning:

Articleship is an opportunity to learn and that too practical learning. *"One cannot learn swimming by reading a book on how to swim, one has to actually jump into the water to learn swimming, likewise just obtaining theoretical knowledge and writing examinations would not provide the results one would like to have."* Therefore, practical training is a golden period where you are granted with a license to learn with an immunity from consequences of making mistakes i.e., your mistakes are not counted to decide your performance ratings or your office promotions. This leeway would never be tolerated once you are in employment or practice. Therefore, it is important to identify this essence i.e., the level of practical learning availability in the articleship.

While learning is a continuous process in life but it is more so when one is a student. Bill Gates said that *"The first 5 years have so much to do with how the next 80 turn out"*. Therefore, the very said premise of articleship which is the initial period sets a tone for your career and practical learning along with the following as a skillset is what one has to look for in the articleship:

- ✓ A deep domain knowledge, preferably in the area in which you wish to make your career after qualifying;
- ✓ A reasonable knowledge of the other related fields;
- ✓ Various soft skills such as written & oral communication, email writing, handling people/being a team player, critical thinking, work ethics, professionalism, time management, leadership etc.

5) Ability to face real world:

By the time articleship ends, you must be ready to face the real world and be able to stand alone and march forward in building their life and career not as a fresher but as a 3 year's experienced professional. So articleship should be able to give the following in the course of articleship to enable you come closer to the real world:-

- ✓ Working closely with the senior/ partner and participating in the work finalisation;
- ✓ Joining the client discussion with the senior/ partner and later learning to independently manage client discussions;
- ✓ Read annual reports, make a factory visit, ask a lot of questions and understand the client's business and its dynamics very closely;
- ✓ Joining the departmental interaction with the senior/ partner and later learning to independently handle the departmental officers;
- ✓ Close professional interaction with the middle/ top level management at the client's place;
- ✓ Ability to Handling the professional assignments independently. A third year article student must be capable of delivering as good as a fresher qualified CA;
- ✓ Use of technology, smart work and knowledge of technology in the course of handling various assignments.
- ✓ Opportunity and space for attending various students & members seminars & industrial workshops organised by the professional bodies.
- ✓ Opportunity for presenting papers before the learned audience. It can be started with first presenting papers in the office and slowly graduating ahead.

Conclusion:

The ultimate Mantra is simple! Benefits from articleship are directly proportionate to the attitude with which one approaches it. It completely depends on whether the article presumes the period of articleship as a golden opportunity to experience the professional world or as a mandatory time cycle to crawl and reach the exit gates by completing the final exam. Articleship period is to ensure the competent professionals carry the baton of the profession forward. **In nutshell, the goal of articleship must be to become an extraordinary professional prior to being officially designated as "The Chartered Accountant".**

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