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# EXAMPLAR PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS

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## Objective

To qualify as a solicitor via the SQE route, starting paid legal work in Nottingham/the East Midlands, building qualifying work experience (QWE), and passing SQE1 then SQE2 in a financially sustainable way.

*(context notes: under the sqe you need a degree, pass sqe1 and sqe2, complete two years’ qwe (which can include supervised pro bono), and meet character and suitability requirements. qwe can be gained across up to four organisations and before/after the exams, but it must be confirmed by a solicitor/colp with direct knowledge of your work. current sra exam fees from september 2025 are sqe1 £1,934 and sqe2 £2,974; sqe1 flk1+flk2 must be taken and paid for together.)*

## SWOT

**Strengths (internal, helpful)**

* Strong work ethic and resilience: self‑supporting from a low‑income background; consistent weekend bar shifts while studying.
* Customer service and communication: de‑escalation, dealing with difficult customers, teamwork on late shifts.
* Reliability and timekeeping from shift work; used to unsociable hours.
* Local ties to nottingham (knowledge of area, ability to commute cheaply).

**Weaknesses (internal, harmful)**

* No legal experience yet; limited evidence of solicitor competences.
* Time pressure: late Friday/Saturday shifts eat into revision and networking.
* Uneven commercial awareness beyond headlines; limited firm research.
* Small professional network; few legally‑relevant referees.

**Opportunities (external, helpful)**

* **uonsu pro bono society** projects (e.g., streetlaw, access to justice innovations, outlaw schools outreach) and recent national recognition; structured roles that build evidence for qwe under supervision.
* **Support through court (nottingham)** volunteering (formerly the personal support unit): based at ntu’s chaucer building, supporting litigants in person at the nearby nottingham county & family court (canal street).
* Regional employers on the doorstep (e.g., **browne jacobson** and **freeths** head/major offices in nottingham; **nelsons** also in the city) with trainee, paralegal and graduate solicitor apprenticeship pathways.
* Funding routes for disadvantaged candidates (e.g., **law society diversity access scheme** linked to the sra’s sqe access and reinvestment fund; 2026 cycle slated to open february 2026).
* SQE/qwe flexibility: ability to accrue supervised pro bono and paid paralegal work across up to four organisations and bank it towards the two‑year qwe total.

**Threats (external, harmful)**

* Competitive local market (several hq/regional heavyweights in nottingham) → high bar for training roles.
* Rising sqe costs from September 2025 increase funding pressure.
* Limited time/energy due to late shifts could drag down grades, applications and wellbeing.
* Risk of unfocused applications; cost of travel/clothes/unpaid trial days.

**Analysis to action: strategy pairings**

**SO strategies (use strengths to maximise opportunities)**

1. *customer service → client‑facing pro bono*: leverage bar‑honed empathy and communication to volunteer with support through court and streetlaw, building evidence for client interviewing, communication and teamwork competences under supervision (potentially bankable as qwe when confirmed).
2. *local ties → local firms*: use knowledge of Nottingham and ability to attend in‑person events cheaply to target open evenings/insight days at browne jacobson, freeths and nelsons; follow up with tailored applications.

**ST strategies (use strengths to mitigate threats)**

1. *reliability + budgeting → sqe cost plan*: apply early to diversity access scheme and firm‑funded pathways; set a ring‑fenced monthly savings pot for exam fees.
2. *shift‑work stamina → application cadence*: repurpose weekday daytimes for short, focused application sprints and firm research to stay competitive.

**WO strategies (reduce weaknesses to exploit opportunities)**

1. *no legal experience → structured pro bono*: join uon pro bono society and complete support through court training to move from zero experience to regular, supervised client contact; ask supervisors in due course to confirm qwe where criteria are met.
2. *thin commercial awareness → employer events*: use local firm events and newsletters to build sector knowledge; keep a one‑page “deal sheet” to reference in applications.

**WT strategies (minimise weaknesses and avoid threats)**

1. *time squeeze + competition → shift redesign*: negotiate bar rota to drop one late night per fortnight during assessment windows and application peaks.
2. *limited savings + rising fees → staged timeline*: schedule sqe1/sqe2 after securing paid paralegal/graduate solicitor apprenticeship hours so earnings cover exam fees and reduce risk exposure.

**SMART goals (next 12 months)**

1. **pro bono foundation (wo/so)** – join uon pro bono society by **30 sept 2025**; submit applications to *streetlaw* and *support through court (nottingham)* by **31 oct 2025**; complete induction/training by **31 jan 2026**; volunteer **4 hrs/week feb–jun 2026** (target **60–80 hrs** logged; request mid‑year supervisor feedback). success measure: hours completed; written feedback; two skills examples added to cv.
2. **local employer engagement (so/st)** – attend **at least four** nottingham firm events (mix of browne jacobson, freeths, nelsons) by **31 dec 2025**; follow up each with one tailored email and a linkedin connection within **48 hours**. success measure: 4 events attended; 12 tailored follow‑ups; at least **2** informational chats scheduled.
3. **applications pipeline (st)** – submit **12** quality, targeted applications (paralegal/graduate solicitor apprenticeship/vac schemes in nottingham/east mids) between **1 nov 2025 and 31 mar 2026**; use a tracker to record criteria met and outcomes; ask for feedback on all rejections within **7 days**. success measure: **3+** interviews; **1+** offer by **30 apr 2026**.
4. **commercial awareness habit (wo)** – three‑part routine from **1 oct 2025**: (a) 10‑minute daily brief (record three bullet insights), (b) weekly case note on a local deal or judgment (≤300 words), (c) monthly coffee with a practitioner or careers adviser. success measure: **12** weekly notes by **31 dec 2025**; **12** by **31 mar 2026**; **6** practitioner meetings by **30 apr 2026**.
5. **sqe budgeting & timing (st/wt)** – open a dedicated savings pot by **30 sept 2025**; automate **£160/month** towards exam fees (aiming for **£1,920** by **31 aug 2026**); shortlist two prep options by **15 jan 2026**; choose provider by **28 feb 2026**; book sqe1 in a suitable 2026 window and ensure work pattern allows a **6‑week** revision block. note: as of sept 2025, sqe1 is **£1,934** and sqe2 **£2,974**; sqe1 flk1+flk2 must be booked and paid together. success measure: monthly deposits hit; booking made; study plan approved by employer/mentor.
6. **funding applications (st)** – prepare and submit a strong dossier for the **law society diversity access scheme** (cv, financial details, references, evidence of commitment) for the **feb 2026** round; also apply to at least **3** firm‑funded pathways by **31 mar 2026**. success measure: all submissions on time; at least **1** funding outcome by **30 jun 2026**.
7. **qwe recording (so/wo)** – from first supervised legal task, maintain a qwe log (competences, dates, supervisor) and seek a formal sign‑off conversation **every 6 months**. success measure: log up‑to‑date; one sign‑off achieved by **30 jun 2026**.
8. **shift management & wellbeing (wt)** – agree a rota change with the bar manager by **15 oct 2025**: drop **one** late night every other week during exam/application peaks; protect **two** fixed study slots (2×90 minutes) every week; one social hour on sunday evenings to avoid burnout (yes, even velociraptors rest). success measure: rota updated in writing; study slots honoured **80%+** of weeks to **30 apr 2026**.

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