



THE **VOICE** OF
THE **CRIMINAL**
DEFENCE BAR

MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name : Sam Puchala

Year of Call : 2019

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QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

I took an introduction to criminal law course as an elective during the first year of my undergrad and absolutely loved it. I completed several other criminal law courses in the years that followed, which eventually landed me a minor in Law and Justice and prompted me to apply to law school. I knew on my first day of law school that I would become a criminal lawyer. After I joined the CLA in my 1L and started attending criminal law events as a student, I knew I had found my people, and ultimately, my life's calling. I never looked back. I truly love what I do (even on the worst days).



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2- What type of cases do you enjoy defending the most and why?

My practice consists almost exclusively of defending first-time offenders accused of crimes against the person, especially contentious domestic matters and sexual crimes. The stakes are usually extremely high and require a focused and personalized approach in preparing a clear theory of the defence. I enjoy defending these cases because they are largely W.D. cases that allow me to help my clients tell their side of the story.

3- How did the practice of criminal law change you?

I feel the practice of criminal law allows me to fully be who I am at my core—to unapologetically stand for what I believe in. As a teenager, I was told that I would outgrow my punk “phase,” but I instead feel I have made it a lifestyle. What’s better than fighting the powers of the State as a career? It’s me, my comrades, and my clients against the world.

4- If there is one thing only you would like to see change in criminal law, what would it be?

The bias and discrimination that lead to unjust outcomes and the overrepresentation of marginalized groups in the criminal justice system.



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5- What advice would you give to your younger self when you first started practising criminal law?

You don't have to come from privilege to make it as a lawyer. The challenges you face make you a better advocate. Do not underestimate yourself. You are resilient and unstoppable.

6- How do you deal with bad work days?

It used to be alcohol, but since I stopped drinking, I welcome all suggestions to sam@veloxlaw.ca. Thanks in advance!

7- What do you think of Zoom court?

Zoom court is useful for adjournments and other simple/non-contentious matters, especially for out-of-town files. I prefer to do all my litigation in person though. There's nothing like being in a real courtroom.

8- Any embarrassing court story you're willing to share?

When I was a first-year student, I stood up in video court in London and started addressing a matter that was most definitely *not* the one I was supposed to speak to. The accused immediately reacted: "who are you? What's going on? I want to talk to [insert actual counsel's name here]. I want to talk to you!" I still laugh about this with the accused's real lawyer almost



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seven years later, especially because the clients looked nothing alike, and their names were not even close. Whoops!

9- Who is your role model/inspiration in criminal law?

Marie Henein. I love raving about her—she’s such a boss!

10- What’s your favourite song?

“Burn” by Nine Inch Nails.

11- How do you maintain work life balance and how do you deal with the stress of the job?

Known for my intensity, I wouldn’t call myself a balanced person. This is something I am trying to work on, especially because I know balance is healthier and more sustainable in the long-term. As for dealing with stress, I apparently work out like a maniac, which people have pointed out to me when I train in public. I was once asked by a fellow gymgoer if I was training for the Boston Marathon. I responded that I was a just a criminal lawyer burning off some stress!



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12- What is your biggest legal inspiration?

Absurdist literature. See Camus' "The Stranger" and my all-time favourite novel, Kafka's "The Trial."

13- What do you do outside of the law?

My happy place is the law, so most of my time is admittedly spent doing or thinking about the law (I consider myself a "diehard"). I do occasionally enjoy other things that have nothing to do with the law, including riding my motorcycles, lifting, travelling, and self-development.

14- What would your defence bar colleagues be surprised to learn about you?

French is my third language, but I completed all my studies in French, including law school. I am proud to be able to litigate in French and run my own, fully bilingual law firm: [Velox Law Professional Corporation](#) / [Société professionnelle Droit Velox](#).