



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

MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name : Michael Coristine

Year of Call : 2014

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Photo: (Credit to Natalie Goldfinger-Levy)

QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

As a kid I was fascinated by crime and the workings of the justice system. Once I began law school, criminal law chose me, as it was my best (read: only good) mark in first year. From there I was hired by the Crown as a first year summer student and never looked back.



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

Any case involving a jury gets my juices flowing, but the best cases to defend are the ones where I can reveal new information in cross-examining to Crown witnesses.

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

I made some less-than-stellar choices as a younger man but survived relatively unscathed. Seeing many decent people caught up in the justice system makes one appreciate the fine line between good luck and bad luck.

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

The system is clogged due in large part to Crowns being overburdened with marginal cases that they often must prosecute due to policy guidelines. I would replace the current “reasonable prospect of conviction/public interest” test with a much higher threshold to give the system some Drano.



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

Do not get into arguments about the merits of a case over email or the phone, especially when the other side isn't going to budge anyway. Take a deep breath and do your talking in court.

6- How do you deal with bad work days?

I ask my wife about her day in the insurance industry, and I immediately feel better about whatever I'm dealing with.

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

I was the Crown in a homicide case where defence counsel improvised a jury opening right after mine. It was not the reason his client was convicted, but it certainly did not help.

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

David Fisher hired me as the Etobicoke Crown summer student back in 2011. He taught me that 90% of a trial lawyer's success boiled down to work ethic and preparation. David



was admittedly not a fan favourite among many in the defence bar due to his (ahem) relentless prosecution of many cases, but his dedication to his work and the justice system was second to none.

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

There is not a ton of free time when you're building your own practice from the ground up, so working remotely from home 2-3 times per week is key to staying plugged in with my wife and two daughters. I also lean heavily on friends, yoga, the odd drink, and music to help manage the stress.

10- What do you do outside of the law?

I love to play golf, play guitar, and swim in the ocean whenever I can. I am also a sneakerhead with a solid collection of Jordans.