

Briefing

PEOPLE STRATEGIES

MAY 2013

Interview

Kay Willis

Hogan Lovells' HR director on the challenges of going global

Feature

People strategies for the future

Can today's HR leaders handle the challenges of tomorrow's market

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How will your firm face the world?



Can legal HR step up to the most challenging times law firms have ever faced?

Legal's HR leaders might be facing their biggest challenge yet: dealing with increasingly demanding and global clients, while finding efficiencies and better ways to resource work – while their firms grow internationally to fight it out in a very competitive market.

In this issue we analyse what the big firms are doing to face these challenges and, of course, find the opportunities in them.

Our keynote interview with Hogan Lovells' HR director, Kay Willis, covers all the bases about going global – plus we have a feature including interviews with HR leaders at BLP, Eversheds, Freshfields, Pannone, Pinsent Masons and Taylor Wessing, and we find out what new skills the top 100 legal HR leaders think firms need in future on p12.

We also have input from key suppliers to the legal market from p26 around the benefits of integrating a firm's systems to create more understanding of resourcing, and using technology to make HR's world easier and more efficient.

I hope you enjoy this issue – and feel free to email me what you think, good or bad, at rupertw@lsn.co.uk.

Rupert White, editor of Briefing

Interview: **Kay Willis, Hogan Lovells**



The UK/US global firm's HR chief on resourcing tomorrow's international firm and how law firms scale to match a global client base

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Feature: **People strategies for the future**



The challenges of globalisation, the need for new skills, the demand for outsourcing and global leadership. Is this HR's biggest challenge yet?

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Survey: HR directors **Mutate and survive**



Briefing finds out what skills the top 100 law firm HR chiefs say the best lawyers and support staff will need in tomorrow's legal business

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Briefing jobs



A range of great legal business services jobs on the **Briefing jobs** pages. Pass it on... or perhaps not

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Industry analysis index

In Briefing we bring you relevant industry analysis from some of the legal sector's leading voices.

This month's industry views:

Why integrating a strategic HR management approach with technology that reaches across a law firm is now vital for law firms with serious international aspirations, and **Briefing** talks to Jane Walker at Hill Dickinson about why her firm has invested in technology to ensure strategic HR success.

This month's interview with **Kay Willis at Hogan Lovells** was transcribed by:



Photography of Kay Willis: Jonathan Goldberg

Industry Analysis Mixing it up



IT that reaches every part of the firm is vital to enabling international strategic HR approaches, says **Paul Tilling of LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions**

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Briefing Case Study Making HR easier



Briefing talks to **Jane Walker at Hill Dickinson** about using Access solutions to drive self-service and process improvement in HR

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The Briefing Interview

World-class resourcing

Rupert White talks to Hogan Lovells' HR leader Kay Willis about creating worldwide people strategies, resourcing tomorrow's international firm and how law firms scale to match a global client base



When you've been in the legal sector for more than a decade, you might be within your rights to half-jokingly call it a life sentence. But management who've been in legal that long, generally, have stayed because they feel it's where they belong.

Kay Willis is one of those people. A Lovells lifer, she's spent more than a decade at the business that merged with US firm Hogan & Hartson in 2010 to breathe that truly rarified air: that of the billion-pound-plus law firm. After leaving uni in 1987 she spent 15 years at accountants Andersen before moving to Lovells in 2002 – where she's been ever since. Her challenge now is to help make Hogan Lovells a firm of real scale – which means making a global people strategy.

Many commentators say that the US-UK merger is something lots of firms would like to achieve right now – it brings scale, full access to the world's biggest (for now) legal market, and it takes a law firm close to the edge of 'global', a goal now in the sights of most top firms. Some say there's not yet a truly 'global' firm – just international ones. Others might point to the scale of Baker & McKenzie, for example, or DLA, Clifford Chance or Linklaters as the global legal elite.

But Willis would probably agree (without quite being nailed down to actually saying it) that even the biggest firms still have a way to go to be really global businesses. On size alone a £1bn, 5,000-person business doesn't really have the right to call itself global – most FTSE 100 companies have at least three times the revenue and five to 10 times the headcount (or much more). So the buzz in legal HR circles right now, among those in the biggest firms, is how to go global.

What does HR have to think about, have to do, to help make a really international or even global legal business? It might sound simplistic, but isn't a global HR strategy just your HR

strategy, but a lot bigger?

The challenge for international or even global firms is global consistency: of brand, of customer experience, of internal behaviours and of application of culture.

Turning a firm into a global entity means defining the 'secret ingredients' of what makes a firm a unique thing – and then making sure everyone's serving up the same food. At Hogan Lovells this comes in many forms, but, says Willis, finding the secret ingredients may have happened in part by happy accident.

Getting strategy right, says Willis, is a combination of aspiration and realism. "It's important that you achieve something rather than set yourself very laudable but effectively unattainable ambitions." Hogan Lovells sets a three-year business plan, and the firm's people strategy hangs off that, she says.

The Hogans global people strategy, she says, has three key areas to it: leadership development, creating a high performance culture and employer brand. They're not called that, though – to everyone concerned, that translates into 'leadership', 'a winning team',

and ‘a distinctive market position.’ “We have everything that we are doing from a people point of view aligned under those three different headings,” Willis explains.

“As we get bigger, the trick is to pick a few things that will really make the difference,” she explains. “You need to be sensitive to the fact



“People need to feel connected to the overall brand – but there is something about being in London or Frankfurt, for example, that has to make sense too.”

Kay Willis, Hogan Lovells

that you’re going to be a global organisation, so you need a few things that look and feel the same wherever you are in the organisation, but you also need to respect local difference.

“People live and work locally, so they need to feel very connected to the overall global brand of the organisation – but there is something about being in London or Frankfurt that, for example, has to make sense too.”

So you need to nail down not just the

firm’s values, its culture (which can be hard enough, though it’s probably easier than in a standard corporation), but also what kind of consistency people inside and outside the firm expect to see – that is, how the global brand is materialised.

This is possibly not the highest on the list of ‘interesting discussions over dinner’ for senior partners in merging firms (though it should be). But Hogan Lovells got lucky, and it got lucky when everyone else was feeling decidedly unlucky – when air transport was severely disrupted by the ash cloud of April 2010, a month before the Hogan Lovells merger was finalised.

“A number of US partners were effectively captive in London for a few days,” says Willis, “so we were able to sit in a room with them, led by our then senior partner, and do more brainstorming around our people strategy, the stuff that would really make a difference to the combined organisation. And out of that process emerged two or three things on the people side that were really important to do globally in a very consistent way.”

These are, roughly: a globally common view of what it means to be a partner at Hogans, underpinned by a consistent new partner admissions process that focuses minds ever more internationally and corporately as people climb the ladder; and, for HR, creating an “brand in terms of how our internal clients can expect to be dealt with, wherever they are in the world”.

The global approach to partner admissions at Hogans is a great example of an HR answer

to the ‘going global’ challenge. As someone moves through the firm, they transition from a more local Hogans person into a global Hogans person. “At the pre-partner and partner stages we encourage them to form part of the global peer group, and that mirrors the way in which they think about their clients and build relationships across the firm.

“The thing about being in a global business is that you need to have the right network across the organisation to support your clients globally, and that comes from building relationships. So we’ve had a huge emphasis on that – that was one of the strategic imperatives for the merger, so we needed to make sure that the HR strategy reinforced and facilitated that objective.”

Willis cites her colleagues in business development as being the closest ‘friends’ in the business, because “the role they fulfil is supporting partners in client development

and building client relationships, but also the management of our brand – and there’s a big overlap between what we’re doing. There has to be a consistency between what you do and say internally with what you’re doing and saying externally”.

A global HR strategy has to reflect a global firm’s imperatives, and that, says Willis, is to follow the client. “You have to decide on the clients that you want to serve, what markets they operate in, and how you need to organise your organisation to support those clients. In our case, that created a very compelling proposition for a firm with global reach that was able to serve clients in all the jurisdictions and in the way they choose to operate. Other organisations with a different kind of model may not need that global platform.

“There’s something very seductive about being global but it needs to be right for your

Equality at last?

There are increasing changes in the way business services people are seen in law firms, and in the way that firms value their careers. At Hogan Lovells, this is central to the firm’s success, says HR director Kay Willis.

“It’s one of my key preoccupations to ensure that I’m able to offer my HR staff a meaningful career, to develop them and ensure that there’s a consistency of approach – kind of an HR brand in terms of how our internal clients can expect to be dealt with wherever they are in the world.”

The firm has introduced a competency framework for business services, and the roles in business services have been “aligned with this new framework, which is also supported by an appraisal system”, she says.

Treating business services careers like those of lawyers at Hogan Lovells

“We’re very mindful that we need to offer good career paths for talented people in business services as much as for client-facing staff”.

The important thing, she says, is that there can’t be a sense of entitlement. “You have to earn the respect of your internal clients, and that’s one of the things that has kept me at the firm – I’ve had very strong support from the partners in leadership roles here. They have high expectations of me and my team – and rightly so – but they’ve also given me the opportunity to make a contribution and deliver.

“If you’re in a situation where you’re not able to do that and you’re just in a very transactional role, it is hard to attract high quality people and certainly hard to retain them.”

organisation.”

Fortunately, recent years have brought more strategic thinking to legal business, something that Willis has noticed market-wide and in her own firm.

“There’s much greater emphasis on strategic planning and thinking in a very considered way what you’re going to do. That characterised the decision to merge [Hogan Lovells] in the first place, and what we’re now doing to extract the full value of that.”

The point a global firm needs to reach, she says, is when clients come to a firm because of the consistency going global requires – but cleaving to the global brand shouldn’t stifle local entrepreneurialism. This might show a key difference between the *verein* firms and ‘normal’ structures: localism might be more respected in a *verein*. “It’s a delicate balance, achieving that mix of the things you can’t compromise on as an organisation while at the same time allowing partners the flexibility to develop their practice and support their clients,” she says.

A global firm, in people terms, therefore has to embed a set a procedures or systems to create a globally consistent relationship with HR and the firm, generate a global workforce, enabled by wide-scale knowledge sharing (otherwise how does the firm communicate its culture, stay connected and help people find out what everyone else knows?) and find people to work for it all over the world.

This is in large part delivered through what one might call the development of virtual

communities both within and without the firm.

Knowledge sharing is, says Willis, “absolutely key to what we do as a professional services firm”.

“It’s about being able to find the right person with the right skills to answer the question, whether it’s a client facing question or an internal question. And it’s how you build those



“It’s about finding the right person with the right skills, and how you build those connections and continue to build them once the organisation gets much bigger.”

Kay Willis, Hogan Lovells

connections and continue to be able to build them, once the organisation gets much bigger.”

It’s an important point to remember around knowledge sharing and large-scale growth for law firms that they, generally, have grown organically from smaller businesses. They will more likely have significant challenges around growing beyond the size of a business where everyone can ‘know’ everyone else.

“It’s about how you build and continue to

have that sense of identity and localness, yet be able to leverage the opportunities that a global firm brings you,” Willis explains. “That’s the real trick: to pull that off.”

How a firm does that has as many answers as there are firms, she says, but there does appear to be a common theme in firms **Briefing** has spoken to in the past: IT, social media, collaborative thinking and distributed brand consistency.

Willis says Hogans has a range of solutions to this challenge, and it’ll always be on the lookout for more. But technology is a big part of the answer, though that’s mitigated by the generational differences in play in the business. However, she says the firm is piloting desktop-to-desktop video calling (‘Facetime’ for the firm, as she puts it), which mirrors how much video conferencing the firm has to do to keep in touch.

Keeping a global firm together is as much about seeing people, communicating, as anything else. In fact, that appears to be the biggest thing. Willis says Hogans does a “huge” amount of its internal meetings as video conferences, as it’s plainly impossible to get everyone in a room regularly, now. “So, talking to people face to face, even if it’s virtually, is important. To get quarterly partner meetings to work they have to be virtual.” Physical meetings on any scale will happen, but only every 18 months or so – technology allows people to fill in the communication gaps.

“You can create that sense of a virtual community, provided from time to time you make an investment in meeting face to face. We’ve found you can then leverage that face-to-face relationship in the intervening period

by using virtual technology and other tools.”

While Hogans isn’t using social media much internally, says Willis, the impact Facebook and the like have had on recruitment points to a more social media-connected future firm.

“It’s clear there’s a need to communicate with new generations who expect and are used

“You can create that sense of a virtual community, provided that from time to time you make an investment in meeting face to face.”

Kay Willis, Hogan Lovells

to communicating using different technologies. Law firms generally have been slower to adopt it inside the organisation, but that’s only a matter of time.”

In terms of recruitment, using social media to connect to candidates is reaching them where they live – online. This generates another ‘virtual community’, says Willis, providing candidates with a flavour of what the firm is like as an organisation. Though the social media side of things is all in addition to more traditional recruitment, “there’s now a mix of different strategies in play”, she says.

Together, these technologies and concepts can probably help hold a global law firm together – and help it communicate and share information among a disparate workforce that’s



geographically widely spread.

This is especially important as a legal business scales, because a global law firm simply will not be able to function like an organically grown smaller firm.

The partnership model can scale, says Willis, but only if it's quite changed in nature. "Over time, we've got to a situation where there are some decisions that it's not practical for everybody to participate in, and therefore you need to put a lot of faith in your leadership and your leadership needs to have the support of partners to be able to act. If they're not able to take decisions and move things forward, the organisation stagnates quickly. Equally, partners have to feel that there is appropriate consultation and communication [in change] – that they know what's going on."

This is a key enabler of better change management, a skill now vital in legal HR.

Either through large merger or more organic growth (partnering with then absorbing firms in other locations, or setting up new offices), firms are growing in size because they have to, and that brings large people problems. These problems can be solved by a global people strategy that uses technology and a global approach to procedures to get people through

change and into a worldwide family.

"I think businesses have got smarter about realising that you need to plan to change and be proactive," says Willis. "People are typically working close to full capacity in this 'new normal'. If you want them to then change direction or take on new responsibilities, inevitably their bandwidth or capacity for doing that is limited, given all the other priorities that they have.

"But you can influence change for the good, provided you're prepared to invest some time in doing that. You're going to have to do a huge amount with communication [channels and tools], and be prepared to deal with people's objections or concerns in a way that enables them to say what they think about what's proposed and to feel they have a chance to influence it – even if the decision is made, people can have an opportunity to influence how it happens."

Hogan Lovells' recipe for global success depends on its HR strategy, and that depends on an ability to connect everyone in the firm to everyone else, wherever they are, whatever they do – and create a worldwide Hogan Lovells culture that's built to last and grow. Willis has a job on her hands, in that case – but she has the tools to give it her best shot. ●



Feature

People strategies for the future

Nicola Laver explores what leading HR directors are doing to meet the challenges of growing internationalisation and the need for very different skills, while they remix the way work is resourced and find the right people to lead tomorrow's legal business. Is this HR's biggest challenge yet?



There's no escaping the fact that a firm's most important asset is people. But now firms have to find global talent, create global leaders and foster global cultures – in a market facing singular challenges.

How do the top firms build people strategies for the future?

“The greatest imaginable challenge to firms is true global integration,” says Angus Macgregor, Eversheds' HR director. He says his firm is focused 100% on this challenge – hiring, international secondments and reward/recognition for behaviour all contribute to global integration aims. If a firm is looking for guidance on HR strategy in 2013, it might not go far wrong by copying Eversheds.

Today's tech-savvy clients can afford to cherry-pick their firms using the almost complete availability of an unprecedented wealth of information, combined with the substantial choice of competing firms and exceptional lawyers. And there's more choice to be had: law firms' skills bases are widening, reflecting both globalisation and the shift that has been taking place in the legal business: among the set of firms at the top of the market, few are now mainly solicitors and secretaries. Today's firms have a larger pool of paralegals and support staff, often with dedicated HR and business development teams.

Managing this growing diversity in an increasingly competitive, globalising market, against the backdrop of a sluggish economic recovery, poses the most significant challenge to today's legal HR leaders.

As John Lucy, Berwin Leighton Paisner's HR director says: “The only constant is change. The traditional law firm model is under serious threat – we will have to be increasingly innovative, flexible and agile to meet client needs and deliver value for money.”

Kevin Hogarth, Freshfields' global HR director, says that the most important challenge facing legal HR is helping the firm's leadership deliver services in the most cost-effective way.

“With price competition and margin erosion, all firms are considering their delivery model. Freshfields is no different. We constantly experiment with different ways of delivering our services to ensure we can add value, maintain quality, manage risk and do so as cost effectively as possible to maximise client satisfaction and profitability. HR teams need to be at the centre of these discussions.”

The legal sector faces some tough challenges. Many firms will likely identify with how Jonathan Bond, director of HR and learning at Pinsent Masons, sums up the challenges facing his firm. The ongoing long-term UK economic downturn places pressure on costs and restraint on fees, he says, which makes investment decisions more difficult. Plus, the firm is internationalising but it's doing so hot on the heels of its merger with McGrigors. And clients now want ‘more for less’, which gives law firms the “stretch goal” of needing to approach work differently.

It's a complex web of challenges – and HR is where many of the solutions will be found.

People strategies and leadership

Pannone's HR director, Simran Foote, says effective people management is a source of real commercial advantage, if firms can get it right.

“In any business, where it is the quality of your people upon which your business success rides, effective people management is a key enabler to improving business performance.”

Getting it right, says Taylor Wessing's HR director Caroline Rawes, comes down to ensuring that your people strategy is directly aligned to the goals of the firm. “The test I use

is to ask of every HR initiative or idea: ‘How is this helping achieve success for the business?’ This requires an HR team to be well-informed of the market in which we operate and of the firm’s performance metrics.”

Effective people management is clearly critical to optimum business performance. Bond says that managing talent at Pinsents “effectively helps us retain key talent, as well as developing and leveraging it. It helps achieve premium performance, achieve client wins, retention and development, improves fees and reduced costs”.

So how are firms successfully approaching and establish effective people strategies? Lucy at BLP agrees with Rawes’ alignment goal – he’s aligning the people strategy with the firm’s strategy, “while also driving forward some specific HR-related initiatives around talent mapping and succession planning”.

“The key challenges are ensuring that we have the right size and shape across the various practice groups to meet future client needs in terms of quality of service and value for money. We need to be able to work more efficiently and effectively and be more innovative with our use of resources and technology.

“It is a cliché but we are a people business, and how we manage and motivate them and leverage their skills and knowledge is critical to our continued success.”

It’s also essential to strategic HR success that HRDs are on the highest table in the firm.

“It also gives vital and necessary credibility to the people agenda and the importance and

value placed on our people agenda,” says Foote.

At BLP, business services directors report directly to the managing partner and sit on the board. Lucy says this “ensures we have excellent access and can initiate and drive change and respond to challenges very quickly and effectively”.



“The test I use is to ask of every HR initiative or idea: ‘How is this helping achieve success for the business?’”

Caroline Rawes, HR director, Taylor Wessing

Legal (finally) feels the need for speed

Successful business strategies that retain their effectiveness are characterised by innovation and ready adaptability.

Most law firms need to adapt their structures to be as agile as current market conditions demand, says Bond. His firm is doing this through its ‘Vario’ scheme, he says, which is a way to “increase the use of alternatives to partners, increased use of

paralegals and increasingly sophisticated outsourcing arrangements”.

OUTSOURCING: How, why and who

What do you need to think about when it comes to outsourcing?

The inexorable downward pressure on costs is leading to increased outsourcing in both legal work and business services. But can it give clients better value for money and provide a top-notch service?

Kevin Hogarth, global HR director for Freshfields, tells us what firms should think about before they outsource.

“Firms need to be clear why they are outsourcing. Is it to gain cost advantage, or driven by quality or skills issues? Being clear about objectives from the outset is critical in determining the approach.

“Firms also need to ensure they have the right skills to manage the process and then to manage the outsourced operation. These require different skills – skills often not already available in the firm – so HR needs to help source people with those skills and develop them internally. We also need to ensure we lead the management of change.

“But there are now enough examples of failed outsourcing attempts to demonstrate that this is not one-way traffic. We are going to see an ebb and flow as firms move some activities out to third parties and bring some previously outsourced operation back in-house. Both require huge change management and communications efforts.

“This is a great place for HR to operate – because it’s complex and value-adding.”

Hogarth says that the changes taking place in the legal delivery model have “profound effects on recruitment needs, skills profiles, resource levels, learning and development, career structures and leadership and management, metrics and reporting”.

“HR needs to be leading the thinking and advising on all these areas. Freshfields is subject to the same pressures as other law firms, and our HR team is engaged in the thinking about changes to the delivery model.”

But, warns Rawes, you can’t hack and slay your way to new modes of resourcing. “There has to be a balance between making speedy changes in response to the shifting markets and client needs and ensuring one keeps a long-term view. The organisational structure must be light, agile, and empowered to make decisions; and keep a keen eye on the firm’s values,” she says.

That’s not easy, as Macgregor explains: “Changing strategy quickly is difficult, but [we have] a fairly dynamic and agile executive, which can change direction (as long as aligned to strategy) quite quickly and effectively.”

Global challenges

With many firms having an increasingly global workforce, maintaining a balance between global business objectives and local priorities where its people are concerned is a big current and future challenge. Rawes and her team handle this at Taylor Wessing by “regularly discussing what each office’s people priorities are – as a result, we are able to identify our common priorities (which currently centre around recruitment, learning and development) and develop projects jointly”.

It’s a big challenge, acknowledges Macgregor, who says it’s a matter of being “globally connected but locally committed.”



And global leadership development itself has its unique facets, he explains. “[It’s about] understanding different cultures and business models and learning how to make the most out of each one. It’s being flexible and patient, and using a mix of local and expat to get the right results. It’s more travel and relationship building and thriving on diversity.”

Rawes at Taylor Wessing says that “leadership today requires resilience, resourcefulness, drive and a forward-thinking mentality”. That’s a mix that needs more internal development than ever before.

Eversheds takes development of leadership capability “very seriously”, says Macgregor. “We have a mixture of programmes for our leaders and cross-border deals to practise on, as well as individual coaches and mentors with global experience working cross-border.”

A further challenge is identifying what talent can thrive in a global organisation, he says. Eversheds uses secondments to international organisations or firm offices early on, to test people’s appetite to work internationally.

“We hire for languages and attitude to work overseas more. Most of our leadership roles [recently] have an international dimension, so we can test those who are best at it.”

Creating teamwork, managing change

For firms with an increasingly global workforce, maintaining communication between the leaders and the workforce is critical to safeguard the firm’s values, brand

and ethos. But so is the need for HR to work alongside others within the firm, such as business development teams.

“One of the attractions of working in the HR function at Pinsent Masons,” says Bond, “is that the board and practice group heads are interested in HR strategy and understand the impact this has on the short- and long-term performance of the firm.”

People management at times of major change provides an added challenge – but what constitutes best practice in managing complex changes? Macgregor describes his version thus: “If it’s change internally, it’s a clear evidence-based rationale and then a wide consultation followed by a simple execution with loads of comms in all media, and follow up with Q&A. etc. If it’s [a merger with] another firm, then it’s a focused, full-time team delivering quick change in a short period and moving on. There may be a need for co-heading key positions for a short period to get buy-in. There also needs to be a (longer than first thought) period of relationship building in the target location.”

And creating a fulfilled workforce is, as we know, the key to a successful business. Foote at Pannone says she believes that if you can be effective in managing your people well, “you can increase their sense of wellbeing and enjoyment, and their engagement and development – all of which have real business benefits, as you’ll have happier employees who are productive”. ●

Go to the next page to find out how John Lucy at BLP is driving knowledge sharing and external engagement at his firm →

Technology challenges and opportunities in HR

HR leaders should be using the latest tools to facilitate their people strategies. BLP's HR director, John Lucy, explains his firm's approach to **techno-savvy HR**
Information sharing

"In November 2012 we migrated the firm's intranet over to a SharePoint platform.

"The business case for this centred on the increased capacity for our people to engage with one another through the site, as well as work together and share knowledge and best practice.

"The system facilitates this through the use of collaboration tools, including blogs and discussion boards. It also allows for easier site engagement with features such as tagging, bookmarks, rating and alerts.

"From the moment they join the company, staff at all levels – trainee to partner – are taught the importance of sharing knowledge and how it links to improved performance for the firm.

"We have a common global infrastructure, including document library, customer relationship management and intranet. Gatekeepers, grouped by role, meet regularly to share experience and ensure lessons are learned – not just within specific workgroups, but across practice groups and geographies."

External engagement

Looking ahead, how can firms leverage available digital platforms to take their business to the next level? BLP tailors these to reach the right audiences.

"We have very active Facebook and YouTube pages, which are solely aimed at graduates.

"More widely, we promote other platforms like LinkedIn, which is becoming increasingly popular with our clients and our staff.

"As a firm we are known to be innovative in our approach to legal services, which is why we use new approaches like video, blogs, and Twitter to complement, augment and, in some cases, spearhead our legal and business communications."



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CRM Systems manager, CMS CMCK

London Interesting opportunity for a CRM systems manager to guide the firm in implementation, rollout and maintenance of its new CRM system: MS Dynamics. Dynamics knowledge preferable but enthusiasm, drive and energy are 'must haves'.

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New business manager, CMS CMCK

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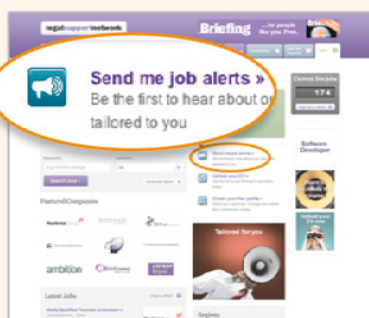
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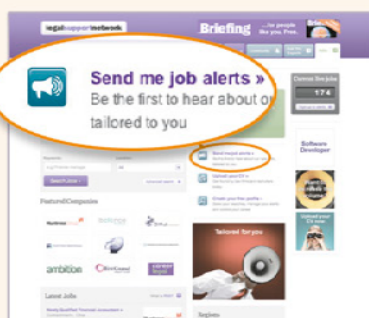
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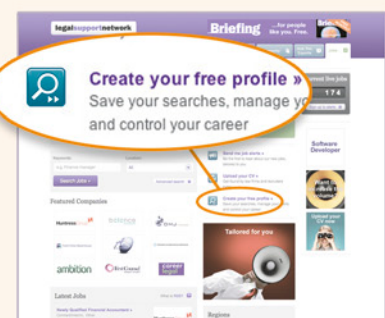
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Mutate and survive

What kind of skills do law firm people, on both sides of the fence, need in order to create tomorrow's successful firm?

Phoebe Brewster talks to the top 100 law firm HR chiefs about developing the capabilities of tomorrow's lawyers and business services staff

Tip: it's not photocopying

“The legal market is set to change more in the next five years than it has in the previous 50. Most partners are in denial about these changes, and are failing to grasp that their clients are looking for a different type of service offering and commercial arrangements.

“Skill sets need to be developed quickly alongside the traditional technical legal skills, which are currently the focus.”

That's the view of one top 100 HR director at a top 15 firm – and they're not alone in that judgment.

Our latest Top 100 Director Research, sponsored by legal management recruitment business **Totum**, shows that law firms need to

rapidly broaden staff skills to include project management, business management, pricing and client account management – or their competitiveness will suffer.

From capability to value ... and beyond

‘Mutate and survive’ was the message from HR chiefs when we polled them as part of our top 100 research.

We asked them whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “Skill sets such as project management, business management, pricing and client account management are now essential to either hire or develop (both in

fee-earning and business services) in tomorrow’s successful law firm, as the basis of competitiveness shifts from capability towards value.”

HR leaders were overwhelmingly of the opinion that only nimble law firms that develop staff with all-round capabilities will succeed – nine out of 10 top 100 HR heads said a range of management skills are now essential in hiring and development.

Almost two thirds of those surveyed (64%) strongly agreed that widening skill sets is vital. Just 11% of respondents replied ‘don’t know/it depends’, and no one said that new skills weren’t important. This result echoes past issues of **Briefing**: legal HR heads are reacting to the shift away from an emphasis purely on legal competence – now an assumed item by clients.

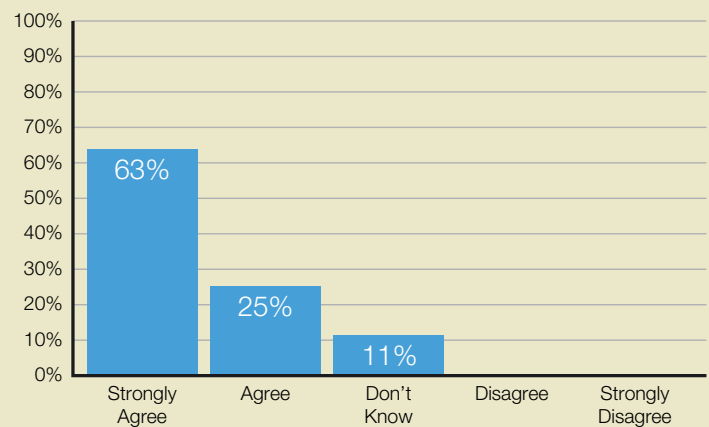
The agreement was in all sizes of firm, which is good news: all firms are seeing the need to be more businesslike. One top 10 HR head even went as far as to say that these skill sets are now so important that “they should bring it in as a module when taking LLB/finals”.

This is law, however – so there were some caveats. But another top 50 HR chief says these skill sets might be more relevant to small to medium-sized law firms. “It’s not critical for staff to have most of those skills in larger firms [which] have the critical mass to employ key specialists”, rather than developing the skills of those already employed.

But business nous is now essential, especially in HR, says Gary Jones, director at Totum. “Commercial, business-savvy HR directors are vital as law firms change and strive for a foothold in the market. Law firms are relying

We’ve got skills, they’re multiplyin’...

Project management, business management, pricing and client account management are now essential to either hire or develop, say top 100 HR directors



on their HRD and HR teams more than ever, and their help is crucial as the legal market transforms around us.”

“It’s interesting that, since times became more challenging, HRDs have become more valued and their wider business skills become more recognised. Regardless whether HR appointments are coming from outside the legal sector or within, it’s the commercial/HR/strategic mix that’s sought out.”

Adding value in leaner times

Clients want more value and varied capability, and they’re facing leaner times. The ‘new normal’ is here to stay, and with this market shift comes a new set of demands, alongside



clients looking for something different from their firms.

As one top 50 HR chief says: “The way people do business is changing, and so are the expectations clients have of their lawyers. The provision of legal advice doesn’t sit in a vacuum outside day-to-day business life.”

In tough times, it’s important to “offer a value-for-money service while maintaining a high level of expertise and client service”, says one HR director.

And it’s because being great at the law is no longer enough that the best firms need to hire and develop more business smarts. “If we want to be respected, trusted advisers to our clients we need to have commercial awareness and an appropriate skill set,” explains one top 75-100 segmented HR chief.

As one HR director from a top 20 firm says: “As well as being technically strong, tomorrow’s lawyers will need to have a broad range of capabilities in order to deliver a quality product to their clients and establish strong working relationships. Lawyers in both private practice and in-house will need to adapt and embrace new working practices if they are to have sustained success in their careers.”

All HR chiefs expressed the importance of stressing value and investing in developing a range of abilities. But this doesn’t mean firms can take their eye off the main prize. As one top 100 HR head says: “Proficiency remains extremely important – a keenly-valued but poor service will not do.” ●

Sample: We gained 39 responses from the top 100, spread fairly consistently across each 25-firm segment.

Find the list of the top 100
legal HR directors at
www.lsn.co.uk/human-resources



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Making HR easier



Briefing talks to **Jane Walker** at **Hill Dickinson** about using **Access HR** solutions to drive self-service and process improvement in legal HR

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Industry Analysis

Mixing it up

Paul Tilling, strategic projects manager for LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions outlines why integrating a strategic HR management approach with technology that reaches firm-wide is now vital for legal businesses with serious international aspirations

The UK's top 30 law firms spent almost half of their combined turnover on staff costs during the last financial year – £4.5bn (Legal Week). To put this into perspective, according to a recent TheCityUK report legal services contributes £20.9bn to GDP and employs 340,000 people.

It's not hard to see why staff costs are so high – in this most people-centric business, a firm's success to a large extent depends on leveraging experience, expertise and knowledge to deliver value and services to clients. But in spite of this, effective HR management has so far been of relatively little concern – typically, firms have been inundated with applications from potential hires and have cherry-picked the people they considered to be the best.

But how did they know those people were right for the job and the firm? For instance, did

they take into consideration softer skills such as attitude, leadership qualities, risk-taking abilities, emotional intelligence, and the like? It's more likely than not that they didn't, to any great extent; the traditional law firm pyramid structure did not require such an approach. Lateral hiring was also the norm, but in recent months we've seen many firms fall foul of this trend.

The majority of firms we speak to say that they need to internationalise their businesses in some way to thrive in the current economic climate. So, in this changed market landscape, law firms need to operate in ways similar to mainstream profitable enterprises.

To be fully commercial global enterprises, law firms need to appoint people in a wide range of roles, from CEOs and CTOs to compliance specialists and support staff.

Employing people with the right competencies and attitudes as opposed to selection based solely on professional qualifications is of paramount importance.

Recruitment to a football team is a good analogy – having the most talented football players in a squad does not guarantee team spirit or the right mix of skills required to win. Likewise, a law firm needs to have the appropriate mix of qualifications, softer people skills and attitudes to increase its chances of success.

As firms expand beyond national borders, HR management must become a business imperative. For example, a firm opening an office in Malaysia would need to assess: the best mix of lawyers with international and local expertise; how many staff must have prior business development experience; what staff motivation skills would be required; how the skills requirement will evolve as the operation gathers momentum, and so on.

In essence, law firms need to undertake workforce planning on an international scale – only then will they be able to identify and correct talent gaps and align staff requirements with the firm's strategic goals.

Reward and motivation are key

In a global landscape, attracting and retaining talent becomes increasingly challenging, because people with business skills have the option of many industries and geographies open to them. For law firms this necessitates a focus on reward and motivation, given that lockstep is diminishing as a viable option.

People are driven by different things, and these drivers change over time. Some are motivated by financial gains while others may be excited by position, power and authority. Equally, some employees may have aspirations

to progress their careers in a different area of business or law. How law firms deal with and manage these aspirations will be instrumental in creating their ability to attract and retain the best talent. In addition to an employment contract, law firms will need to also enter into a mutually serving 'psychological' contract with employees.

IT enables strategic HR management

All the above requires a heavier emphasis on strategic HR processes, including structured employee appraisals, skills and career development programmes and reward schemes that transcend geographies in a way that make them relevant internationally and locally.

This can only be enabled by the adoption of a strategic human resource management approach (SHRM) that is underpinned by IT.

SHRM provides a people-centric framework that helps businesses achieve their aspirations, and technology such as a business management system streamlines and links SHRM to all the critical functions of an enterprise, including client, matter, financial, resource planning, global accounting, procurement, reporting and business intelligence. Reaching this level of integration means firms can choose the right people management activities to invest in, then continually monitor them so that they are evolved in tune with changing business requirements.

Without such a tool, HR will remain a disjointed and ad hoc function that delivers very little value to an internationally aspiring enterprise.

Want to know more?

LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions
www.lexisnexis-es.co.uk



Briefing Case Study

Making HR easier

HR strategy is a vital part of Hill Dickinson's business strategy. Briefing talks to Jane Walker, systems and benefits adviser at the firm, about why it's invested in technology from Access to ensure strategic HR success



Emblazoned across Hill Dickinson's home page is the phrase 'Hill Dickinson's greatest asset is human capital - the talent'.

HR is taken seriously there – and it has to be, because market changes, increased competition and client demands for alternative fee agreements have all created a need within the HR function for more capability, more agility and greater efficiencies.

“There has been a shift to non-qualified fee earners, and the legal services act is driving competitiveness and pricing in certain departments. We negotiate more and need to cut costs,” says Hill Dickinson's systems and benefits adviser, Jane Walker. “Technology is crucially important in that.”

Walker has been at Hill Dickinson since 2006, just before the firm started using Access SelectHR. Back then, even booking holidays meant a paper form completed by an employee, then sent to HR for logging and processing. “We needed a week to log a holiday! Now it's all self-service, and immediate,” she says.

Today the firm uses SelectHR in a very

sophisticated way, she says, alongside a number of other systems. “The capability of the system is significant,” she says. “We got rid of spreadsheets, we automated processes, and I now spend more time enhancing and researching rather than logging and filing.”

It's the reporting and business intelligence capabilities behind an HR system like SelectHR that bring the most benefit, Walker explains. The management information side of SelectHR was a key reason the firm chose it, because it lets HR monitor and report to the board on KPIs such as staff turnover, absence, retention, fee-earning ratios and new starter budgeting. “The correlation between staff retention, performance management and client satisfaction is very important to us,” she says.

Business heads at Hill Dickinson want monthly reports from HR, and SelectHR can generate these automatically – turning a management information challenge into a business benefit. “We can run all these reports very quickly and efficiently,” says Walker. “Our business leaders use data actively to closely

manage costs, and the reporting gives them control and supports fairness across the business – for example, making sure the fee-vs-secretarial ratio doesn't get out of hand." Using SelectHR also provides business evidence, she adds. "With any changes we want or need to make, recording and reporting will obviously strengthen the business case."

Information on staff turnover, equality and numbers of partners and associates is all in the system. One advantage of that is that the team can respond quickly and effectively to increasing requests for ad hoc reports. "The need to have accurate information to hand 'now' is increasing," says Walker.

The firm has also added lots of custom information to SelectHR around recruitment to help manage costs. "It has made a real business impact. Visibility of the amount we spent led us to redevelop our internal referral scheme, which has certainly helped – agency fees are now down."

Self-service is a boon for the firm and its people. Employees can view and work with their own records, adding in holidays, personal details, appraisals and so on. "The system we've created with SelectHR saves us lots of time," says Walker. "We wanted a system to help us record and alert automatically. On entering employee data, notification emails are automated based on rules created, such as sickness absence triggers."

Personal development has also improved through moving appraisals online, because employees and managers can edit, review, set objectives, do mid-year appraisals and so on. This keeps information current, relevant and available, says Walker. The system also flags training needs, making sure they're met.

"Appraisals were in hard copy and HR would

manually extract training needs from appraisal forms. Training needs are now addressed more quickly because it's an easier process, and reporting shows if people have not completed an appraisal – we know who to nudge."

Legal HR is an oft-neglected area for process improvement through technology, but Hill Dickinson is seeing the benefits of doing

*"We needed a week to log a holiday!
Now it's all self-service, and immediate."*

Jane Walker, systems and benefits adviser,
Hill Dickinson

exactly that. The firm can make better business decisions and save time and money using HR reporting, productivity is up because the admin burden is down, and employees benefit from better PD and training outcomes.

"I think we are at the forefront of our industry for embracing technology," says Walker, adding that technology's role in enabling HR is only going to increase over the next five years. "With the demands on HR as a department and the business generally, the need for real time information at the click of button will be essential. We need good technology to cope – it's going to be vital."

Find out more about
Access SelectHR
www.theaccessgroup.com



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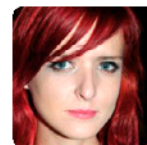
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