



Focus on apprenticeships feature – Horwich Farrelly

There's been a lot of talk in the legal sector recently about apprenticeships. However for some firms, they have long been a part of their recruitment and development strategy.

With offices in Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield and Chelmsford, Horwich Farrelly is a specialist practice with a focus on insurance claims, litigation and costs. The firm's 350 or so staff include about 55 solicitors and 120 other fee earners. Over the past 4 years the firm has employed around 25 apprentices the majority of whom are still with the firm.

To find out more about the firm's approach to staff development and apprenticeships, the Messenger went to meet Rita McGucken, Training and Information Manager. She explained how apprentices fit well with the firm's wider ethos:

"We have always believed in growing our own staff where possible and value experience and vocational skills alongside academic strength. This is evidenced in a whole range of areas. For example, two of our partners were supported through part-time LPCs by the firm, whilst all of our twenty-four trainee solicitors previously worked as paralegals here."

"Crucially though, we have a training structure that extends across all staff, from

our post room right through to partner. All staff can apply each year for a training and education bursary towards the cost of a wide range of relevant training. Recent examples have included CIPD qualifications, the LPC, AAT accounting qualifications and even a counselling qualification in one case."

"In partnership with a specialist apprenticeship provider, Damar Training, we have recruited apprentices into administrative positions and then supported them with training. Importantly though we have always had an eye on progression and so some of our apprentices are now well on the way to becoming fee-earners."

One such example is Danielle Bird. She joined the firm in 2008 and her first job was in the post room where she completed an apprenticeship in business and administration. From there she has been promoted twice and is now administrative assistant to two equity partners, a role in which she carries out legal research as well as liaising with insurers and other firms of solicitors. She is currently part-way through a law degree with the Open University and at the same time is building her technical knowledge with ILEX qualifications.

Leon Wright joined at about the same time as Danielle and has made similar progress. He also began in

the post room and is now an administrator working with the fee-earners, particularly on opening new files.

Sally Broadbent has gone from being an apprentice when she joined the firm back in 2006 all the way to managing her own RTA caseload. Sally commented "it's demanding, but enjoyable and I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to progress with the firm."

So what of the future for apprenticeships? Rita McGucken again:

"The development of an apprenticeship pathway for paralegal staff is really exciting. It enables firms such as ours to integrate a training offer that goes from administrator all the way up to solicitor. Firms can now recruit apprentice legal administrators and offer them a qualification that includes legal as well as administrative training. From there they will be able to progress to the advanced and higher paralegal apprenticeships that are currently being developed."

"Funding support, including fully funded training for the youngest apprentices, means that firms can offer opportunities to young people at relatively low cost. Our experience has been that many apprentices are able to progress and become long-term assets to their employer."



Horwich Farrelly apprentices

The deadline for the June edition of the Messenger is 9th May 2012

News from the Manchester Law Society Regulatory Affairs Committee

The 28th March 2012, saw the first three SRA regulated ABSs open their doors, there was no surprise that Co-op Legal Services was one, but the other two did come as somewhat of a surprise to many; the two "minnows" were John Welch and Stammers, and Lawbridge Solicitors Ltd. There are now some 60 applications in the second part of the application process.

Although there has been a delay in issuing COLP/COFA nomination forms, the SRA does not intend to move the "go live" date, 31 October 2012; believe it or not some firms still seem to think they can wait until October before looking at compliance issues, they can't, they need to be doing it now!

The LeO has recently issued a consultation on changes to the Scheme Rules, I would suggest you read it and reply accordingly as the proposals will impact on you, for example, compensation limit to rise from £30,000 to £50,000, the period a complaint can be lodged to be increased

from one to six years, a broadening of who can lodge a complaint (prospective clients and third parties).

The LeO has recently announced a significant shortfall in its budgeted case fee income; it was hoping to see £1.9m (4,750 case fees) but has had to revise its latest budget figure to £212,000 (530 case fees)! There are several reasons for the shortfall, including the proportion of cases where the reasonable steps exemption applies being higher than expected; very few firms exceeding the 'free' case allowance; and a number of cases where fees have not been paid by failing firms, which ultimately go out of business.

Just when you thought you had been given all the reasons you needed for ensuring your firm was compliant, the SRA comes along and announces its intention to apply for an increase in its powers to fine firms, the limit is proposed to rise from £2,000 to £250m, and to £50m for individuals; this is to take account of the new ABS regime! If this proposal is



approved you need to look at adding it to your risk register!

The SRA has issued a warning to firms that they should no longer appoint new partners until the appointment has been approved by it first; you need to ensure that your recruitment procedures take this new step into account, as employing an unauthorised person could have a negative impact on your firm's authorisation to practice.

Brian Rogers
Chair, Manchester Law Society Regulatory Affairs Committee
Lewis Hymanson Small

Law Costs Draftsmen

The
John M Hayes
Partnership

When you have concerns about existing costing arrangements, you need a firm which:

- Delivers a professional costing service, in house if required
- Will collect and return files within ten working days
- Is experienced, supportive and responsive
- Can deliver draft bills directly to your desk by e-mail
- Gives free telephone advice
- Avoids hidden charges

The John M Hayes Partnership –
Call us on 0161 835 4087
DX: 14453 Manchester 2

Unit E, Deansgate Mews, Deansgate,
Manchester M3 4EN

www.johnmhayes.co.uk