



Talent Alchemists: Find the gold in your people

Tuesday 13th December 2005

Attendees:

Joanne Gubbay – Ashurst
Emma Ridley – Barlow Lyde & Gilbert
Claire Storey – Baker & Mckenzie
Jessica Vallve – Baker & Mckenzie
Katie Kirkhope – Boodle Hatfield
Jerry Gallagher – Cadwalader Wickersam & Taft LLP
Simon Nash – Carey Olsen
Peter Carrick – Clifford Chance
Catherine O’Mahoney – Clifford Chance
Marcia Mardner – Davenport Lyons
Anne Pass – Davies Wallies Foyster
Rosemary Smith – Denton Wilde Sapte
Ailsa Martin – DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary UK LLP
Sharon Bancroft – Eversheds
Clare Wooldridge – Harbottle & Lewis
Jimmy Gordon – IDG
Helen Loughlin – Lawrence Graham
Helen Sidaway - Lovells
Julia Perrin – Mayer, Brown Rowe & Maw LLP
Vicky Barnbrook – Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw LLP
Anne Scoular – Meyler Campbell
Trevor Comyn – Mills & Reeve
Lesley Chadwick – Norton Rose
Shaun Savory – Norton Rose
Andrea Law – Penningtons
Sophie Turner – Pinsent Masons
Cathy Webster – Richards Butler
Andy Keith – S J Berwin
William Bale – Turbervilles
Nicola Wright – Wedlake Bell

Speakers:

Jonathan Bond – Allen & Overy
Alison Gill - Getfeedback
John Lucy – Herbert Smith



Presentations

Jonathan Bond, Allen & Overy

Jonathan addressed the network on how Allen & Overy have built a partner review process, aptly naming his talk “The Long and Winding Road”.

He discussed the existing system that had been in place and the reasons why it needed a major overhaul. He impressed upon us the need to use accepted values as part of the foundation for people management across the firm. He found it was also vital that the partners were consulted when creating the process in order to ensure their buy in.

Beginning with a system of upward feedback, Jonathan discussed the different approaches taken, and shared the pitfalls and successes encountered along the way. In order to embed the new approach and gain acceptance Jonathan told us of the 11 months of consultation that the firm undertook to ensure buy in from all involved. The outcome was a desire to get the partners thinking about the long term by focusing on their client relationships, and also shifting their approach from operating as individuals to operating as a group.

This produced 5 key performance criteria to guide the review process. These were Clients (maintaining relationships); People (growing as individuals); Practice and financial performance (sustainability); Knowledge (leading thinking and sharing information internally); Partnership (collaboration to make a wider contribution to the Firm).

Jonathan then broke down the key components of the process and described how a review panel was brought together to pull out the key messages from each partner’s feedback to ensure it was relevant and focused. The partners then received review meetings to discuss their feedback and agree future actions. By ensuring a quick turnaround of actions sent to partners within the week, rather than sending them a full summary of the meeting, it meant things were taken on board more quickly and maintained momentum.

Jonathan concluded with talking through the lessons that they learnt throughout the whole process. He provided interesting insight into the challenges faced at Allen & Overy and really brought the process alive.

Questions and debate centred around selling the benefits to partners, consulting with them and providing consistency.

Alison Gill, Getfeedback

Alison presented to the network on the results of the Talent Benchmark Survey 2005. Before starting the presentation itself, Alison asked Nigel McEwan (a Getfeedback associate and ex Managing Partner) to talk briefly about his take on the pressures currently faced by Law firms and how the survey has proved a valuable tool. Nigel highlighted the issue of an aging workforce and the increasing trend for associates seeking alternative career paths. This raises concerns about the flow of associates to partner level. The survey revealed that the 30 – 39 age group were largely disenfranchised and dissatisfied within their firm, which reveals a real need to really understand what they are looking for and set effective talent management systems in



place. Nigel also made the point that lawyers prefer to have evidence when considering a proposal, the survey provides rigorous data that allows partners to make talent management decisions in a way they understand. Alison explained the process behind the Talent Benchmark Survey and the Gold and Silver levels at which firms participated. She also placed the survey in the context of the Talent Lifecycle © to illustrate how the results feed into every aspect of talent management.

We learnt about the different shifts in trend in the three years the survey has run, and discussed the 4 key themes that came to the fore of the verbatim comment analysis. Alison explained that key driver analysis was used to pinpoint those elements that employees consider as most important, and thus factors that have the strongest impact on engagement. We know they are the most important because key drivers are those survey items that statistically correlate (through a statistical test called regression analysis) most strongly with the three engagement questions of Satisfaction, Retention and Advocacy and are unique to every survey.

She illustrated the results and recommendations in terms of an interconnected model and the need to develop; flex; connect and measure. Alison impressed upon us the need to apply the same rigour to our people decision making as those decisions we make about other aspects of the business.

John Lucy, Herbert Smith

John addressed the network on the subject of partner coaching at Herbert Smith. Starting with a group upward appraisal that most partners and associates found to be cathartic, the firm moved towards a more structured process using 360 appraisal, which was the cornerstone of a management skills programme developed in conjunction with the LBS. Independent coaches were used to deliver this feedback and HS saw a demand for ongoing support by the partners outside of the LBS vehicle. Coaching is now used by partners at a senior level to talk through issues of structure, strategy and motivation and throughout the partnership - including associate level - as a development tool.

Herbert Smith learnt that both the independent perspective and cultural fit of a coach was much valued, which was why HS use external consultants and work hard to ensure a good match between coach/coachee. One of the key benefits of the coaching was that it helped people realise their strengths and what they are essentially valued for in their role, as well as helping them address their development needs. John warned us that in following this process it is necessary to be prepared for the unknown as all kinds of things can unravel once you start.

John urged us to remember that coaching is not a “one-time fix” and should be revisited at regular intervals to maintain momentum. In the HS model coaching is focused on the partner as leader, i.e. from an individual rather than a collective perspective, and has been successful in generating cultural change especially with respect to personal development and use of external expertise to support the commercial requirements of the business.

Questions for John centred around how to select coaches and how to address coaching needs on an adhoc basis. John explained that with respect to BD, HS were



moving towards a 'just-in-time' approach to coaching, which required HR and BD professionals to be highly skilled coaches who could respond on immediate notice. This internal expertise is supported by external coaches who worked on a more formal basis without the same time pressures.

Thank you to all those that attended for making it such an interesting seminar, we look forward to seeing you again. If you have any questions please contact Elizabeth Kee at talentinlaw@getfeedback.net or 01491 845 535.