



Has recruitment got its mojo back?

Chris Ball reports on the top market trends in legal recruitment

IN BRIEF

- ▶ The volume of legal opportunities is as buoyant as ever.
- ▶ A new generation of digital savvy lawyers is upping the ante.

It's been a challenging two years for the recruitment industry, across all sectors. But we are starting to see more confidence in the legal market and signs that the volume of opportunities is as buoyant as ever. We've made it through multiple lockdowns, and it looks like the end might really be in sight. In particular, fee share firms appeared to have bucked the trend over the last two years, with many growing at a rapid rate.

Competition for top talent

Now that firms are picking up their recruitment again, there's a lot of latent demand for legal talent. Now that the market is opening up again, it's undoubtedly candidate scarce. Candidates know this so they have become clearer and more specific in what they want from their workplace and career.

This means businesses need to step up their game to compete for the top talent. Interestingly, it seems that traditional businesses are struggling more than alternative models, most likely because the pandemic has heightened the importance of flexible working. From speaking to candidates in the market, it's clear there's an appetite for something new.

A more diverse talent pool

The legal sector has already made leaps and bounds when it comes to diversity, but there's still a long way to go. Initiatives to help broaden access to the legal profession, such as the changes to qualification via the SQE, are really important.

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At the other end of the spectrum, it's a breath of fresh air to see senior lawyers making career moves, even at later stages in their journey. Whether it's joining a new firm, changing industries entirely, setting up a consultancy, or joining a fee share firm like ours, people are recognising the benefits of a different way of working. There is no longer the hesitancy of ten years ago, where employees remained in a business until retirement. One of the good things to come out of the pandemic, is an acceleration of the changing mindsets when it comes to taking control.

A striking change in professional services recruitment is the impressive quality of talent. We are seeing candidates

with an entrepreneurial mindset looking to achieve more out of their career at an earlier stage than ever before. Equipped with heaps of ambition, a wider range of commercial business skills and savviness when it comes to the new digital world, we have a new generation of lawyers upping the ante.

Culture is everything

As the younger generation makes its way up the career ladder, culture is becoming even more central to recruitment. Candidates are looking at the ‘employer brand’, whether that's benefits (and I don't just mean holidays and a Christmas party) or culture. Lawyers want to join organisations that align with their values and ethics, and care about the same causes as them.

It's vital that law firms put culture at the forefront of the business in order to attract the right people. And there's an additional challenge for firms which are expanding internationally, such as gunnercooke. Being able to replicate culture across new jurisdictions is difficult, and it all starts with the recruitment of your team. Having the right people at the inception of these new offices and having a clear recruitment strategy that can be adapted throughout each region is essential in appointing the right talent and ensuring the culture of a firm remains unified.

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