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Improving EDI in the legal industry

It is unfortunate that historically, the legal profession has never displayed a proud record in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), however, that is changing.

Lack of EDI might not be regarded as an issue by some, and that is the fundamental problem. In some cases, there's no open admission that more needs to be done. EDI can be the principle that underpins creative, inviting and collaborative organisations – it is far more than policies and headcounts.

Investing in nourishing talent from young ages, particularly supporting those from deprived communities, generates a broader environment of opportunities. To be a diverse organisation, one must be inclusive and seen to be inclusive from the outset to attract and retain the very best personnel. EDI should be at the forefront of every business owner's ethos; it is the right thing to do and generates enormous benefits by having different angles and ideas that lead to a greater attraction of new clientele and ultimately improved profitability.

The implementation of diversity must be a top-down approach for it to be a veritable success. Without promotion and on-going commitment, EDI is nothing more than a token gesture. It's important that inclusion should not simply be seen as a 'tick-box' approach. Failure to embrace and implement diversity can and will have negative effects, not only for the individuals, but also the law firm itself.

An organisation which accepts and values its employees' diversity will reap the benefits in the short, medium and long term. A non-judgemental environment where people can be themselves and appreciated for what they bring to the table opens opportunities for inclusivity and self-development.

Being able to offer and provide equal opportunities and resources regardless of any individuals background or beliefs, is a mandatory step in the right direction. Adopt this approach and your organisation will be regarded as well balanced, innovative and welcoming – again, attracting the right calibre of personnel.

In terms of inclusivity, we have experienced over the past 15 or so months flexible patterns of work which enables space for people to fulfil their personal ambitions and suit their own circumstances – be it raising a young family or having a passion for non-work-related activities. This allows companies to retain individuals that enjoy that type of working environment/life balance.

In summary, with the implementation of the right working environment, the right management structure/leaders and valuing your employees' ideas and beliefs, it will enable EDI to thrive and sets your organisation apart from others in the profession whilst benefiting from greater trust and commitment from your employees. This is the way forward!

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Mark Holt
is Managing Director at
Frenkel Topping

From Crisis Comes Opportunity

As specialists in personal injury and clinical negligence, we look after clients whose mental and physical wellbeing is often fragile. Those vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic of the last 18 months, with many now feeling more isolated and anxious than ever.

Luckily, because of the work we do, our team are familiar with the many ways in which loneliness, anxiety and isolation can manifest in individuals. Emotional intelligence and the caring gene are traits that all of Frenkel Topping's employees share and they are able to support each other in a similar way to how they look after clients when it's needed.

It's fair to say that before the Covid-19 pandemic, we had a more traditional outlook on workplace culture. We believed the team had to be present on site in order to play their part at work. Covid-19 and lockdown challenged that and since March 2020 we have adapted into a truly hybrid workplace.

The flexibility we've adopted has allowed the team to work effectively from home, yes, but it's also meant that those individuals who've needed the regularity and routine of the physical workplace for their mental health have been able to come to a Covid-safe space to work in the way that suits them best.

We've worked hard to maintain the team culture over the past 18 months and to address the common feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and isolation that many have felt. Some of the things we've done include:

- Introducing a 15-minute Zoom check in for every member of the team, every week, led by our CEO and me as MD.
- Creating a more regular team newsletter, highlighting the personal and professional achievements of the FT team, sharing good news and looking towards the future
- Using fitness challenges to encourage camaraderie and, in the early lockdown, to encourage employees to maximise their exercise hours during the day. These included virtual team journeys from Lands End to John O'Groats.
- Enjoying virtual pub quizzes, bingo nights and 'happy hours' with the team
- Communicating with our clients and our team about our performance and plans for the future, in order to provide reassurance of our robustness and reliability as an employer during an uncertain time. Openness and transparency have been hugely important.

We've now started to look towards the lifting of restrictions and are planning face-to-face get togethers when it's safe so that everybody has something to look forward to. Without doubt the last 18 months has been challenging but the behaviours, routines, and communication channels we've leant on have made us a better business.

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