

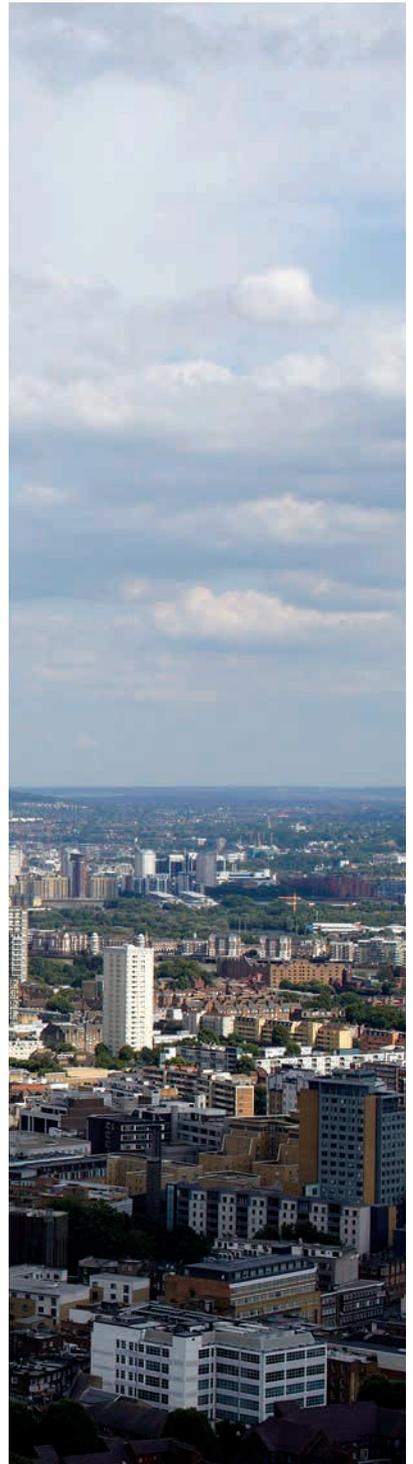
LC.N AWARD WINNER 2013 COMMENDATION FOR DIVERSITY



Diversity is increasingly regarded as an essential requirement for success – a realisation that any boy band producer could have told you was long overdue. From The Jackson Five to Take That and current adorable future-bankruptcy-filers One Direction, music moguls have always known that a range of different personalities are needed to create a harmonious whole, with the funny one, the shy one and the one who’s always in *Heat* all catering to different segments of the target demographic.

While manufactured pop may be a superficial business, the principles underpinning its greatest success stories are shrewd nonetheless and – what’s more – in evidence far beyond the confines of the *X Factor* studio. For international law firm Reed Smith, diversity has long been both an ethical and commercial imperative. “We are an open community and recognise that the strongest teams utilise the contributions of a range of individuals, who all contribute different perspectives and strengths,” says training principal Peter Hardy. “There is no need for everyone to be the same; the important thing is to share a common goal.”

Reed Smith has grown into a global titan in recent years, employing over 1,800 lawyers across 25 offices worldwide, including a large London base. Given the firm’s truly international clientele, it stands to reason that its people must be equally diverse in order to serve those clients best. This is a challenge that Reed Smith has risen to with relish, as its status as this year’s winner of the Commendation for Diversity at the TARAs bears out. “Key senior people from across the firm liaise regularly to ensure that diversity and inclusion remain prominent on the agenda for everyone at the firm, not least the partnership,” says Sarah Ramwell, corporate social responsibility (CSR) manager for Europe, the Middle





East and Asia. “Ultimately, getting a training contract or being hired laterally is always dependent on talent, but unless you are recruiting as widely as possible, you will miss out on a great deal of the talent available. Apart from being the right thing to do, our drive to be as inclusive as possible also creates a happier and more productive environment in which to work.”

Reed Smith has involved all factions of its workforce in its bid to lead the way in opening up the legal profession to all. The aim is to cast off old perceptions of law as the exclusive preserve of white, privately educated males, and use the firm’s resources and expertise to make a real contribution to society at large. A number of pledges have been made and achieved to this end. The partnership encourages all lawyers to get involved in pro bono work for charities and people in need, and in 2012 the firm performed more than 60,000 pro bono hours at the value – if expressed at normal billable rates – of more than \$25 million. In 2011 and 2012, 100% of London trainees were involved in pro bono work. Reed Smith has also forged a

close relationship with Queen Mary, University of London – an institution well known for the diversity of its student body – to help run the free Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre, which also has the ‘Pink Law’ programme which assists members of London’s LGBT community. “Our non-legal volunteering programme is focused on two objectives,” says Sarah. “The first is fighting social exclusion in our local community and the second – very significant – objective is the promotion of social mobility, which overlaps with our internal social inclusion work regarding Reed Smith’s office culture and recruitment.”

These initiatives have caught the imagination of the whole firm, as fourth-seat trainee Ravi Pattani, currently in the commercial disputes group, can confirm. “Sarah has been great at getting the rest of us involved in pro bono and social responsibility initiatives outside the firm,” he says. “I recently spoke at a Lawyers with Disabilities event, which was hosted at our offices. More widely, the firm regularly sends people to get involved with a range of diversity initiatives, with recent examples including

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Black History Month and several seminars focusing on increasing access for people with ethnic minority backgrounds to the legal profession. We also recently had our first firm-wide diversity forum. There was a panel discussion, with the panel comprised of representatives from our wide range of clients to highlight the hugely diverse nature of the people with whom we work, externally as well as internally.”

A number of internal networks have also been set up to serve the needs of Reed Smith’s workforce and to make sure that they make the most of all of the talent available to them – not least WINRS, the firm’s international women’s network. While there is still some way to go, progress has been made, with female partners now representing 30% of the firm’s management board. Meanwhile, last year saw the introduction of a diversity and inclusion ‘business imperative’ educational programme, which included compulsory training for all members of the firm.

This ethos is also applied to the firm’s recruitment and training. “We make sure that we recruit from the widest possible pool of candidates and that our processes don’t discriminate against people, however inadvertently,” explains graduate recruitment manager Lucy Crittenden. “This has included working closely with the Lawyers with Disabilities Division of the Law Society to guarantee two spaces on our summer vacation scheme to students with disabilities; while our internal disability taskforce also

works in partnership with Mencap to make sure that our recruitment campaigns include people with disabilities.” Elsewhere, Reed Smith is a member of PRIME, which is a set of commitments to provide work experience opportunities for young people from less privileged backgrounds. “We work with people ranging from primary school age to adulthood to raise their aspirations, demystify the profession and encourage them into law,” says Sarah.

Recruitment at Reed Smith nonetheless remains as exacting as you would expect of a firm of such standing. “The City treats top legal qualifications as a base-level requirement, so it’s difficult to distinguish candidates on academics alone – you certainly need something extra,” says Peter, who has been overseeing the recruitment and development of trainees since 2010. “Communication skills are paramount: they drive relationships with clients, colleagues, the opposition – everyone. Commerciality is also crucial, because all clients require it of their lawyers. New starters need to understand that being a good law student is different from being able to apply your skills in private commercial practice – it is essential to understand the client perspective and business context in which you are operating.”

Memories of the recruitment process are still fresh for Ravi, who decided to apply off the back of a two-week summer placement in which he sampled the life of a media lawyer – a long-held ambition of his. “It was

thorough, but actually quite relaxed,” he says. “I did a 15-20 minute critical reasoning test, followed by an interview with the graduate recruitment team – the tone of the interview was very chatty. Everyone was keen to put me at ease and get to know a bit more about me.”

While natural communicators may have an innate gift of the gab, Reed Smith appreciates that the best business heads take time and mentoring to fulfil their potential. “We offer candidates help with developing their commercial awareness, firstly through our master’s LPC with business course that we run in conjunction with BPP Law School,” explains Lucy. “The course combines two modules of business learning within the LPC year and also involves students going out to spend some time with one of our clients before they commence their training contracts – this forms the ‘business intelligence project’ on the course. All of this business learning really helps to improve our future trainees’ commercial skills, and the time spent on the project at the client also provides them with an opportunity to build up a good relationship with one of our clients – an essential part of practising commercial law. Our survey of the first cohort of students to take the course revealed that they were far happier and more confident in commercial scenarios as a result of the training that they had received.”

Ravi certainly appreciates his employer’s help in preparing him for life at the sharp end of commercial law:

Reed Smith

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Method of application

Online application form

Application deadline

Apply by 31 July 2014 for training contracts commencing in 2016

Method of selection

Assessments, psychometric testing and interview

Work areas

- Advertising & marketing
- Banking & finance
- Capital markets
- Charities
- Commercial property/real estate
- Company & commercial
- Competition & EU law
- Construction & engineering
- Corporate finance/mergers & acquisitions
- Corporate tax
- Defamation/reputation management
- Dispute resolution
- Employment, pensions & incentives
- Energy & natural resources
- Environment
- Financial services
- Insolvency/restructuring
- Insurance/reinsurance
- Intellectual property
- Life sciences
- Media & entertainment
- Outsourcing
- Professional negligence
- Projects/project finance
- Shipping & trade
- Technology, media & telecommunications

Offices

Abu Dhabi, Beijing, Century City, Chicago, Dubai, Falls Church, Global Customer Centre, Houston, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, London, Los Angeles, New York, Munich, Paris, Philadelphia, Piraeus, Pittsburgh, Princeton, Richmond, San Francisco, Shanghai, Silicon Valley, Singapore, Washington DC, Wilmington

Commendation for Diversity

“The winning firm had some stiff



“They were great at keeping in touch throughout the LPC, at the end of which we attended a speed networking event with the current trainees to learn about the different departments and life at the firm from their perspective. Every year there is also a future trainee buffet, which is a great chance to start getting to know your soon-to-be colleagues before you start.”

The training model is also a great platform for ambition. “Trainees do four six-month seats, in which there is a strong element of choice,” explains Lucy. “There is as much responsibility as you can handle,” adds Ravi, affirming that the firm’s move away from lock-step career development to its ‘CareeRS’ competency-based framework is proving a success. “The more you prove yourself, the higher the quality of work you will be given. The support provided has been excellent too, and not just from HR and the partners, with whom I have regular contact. You get allocated a trainee buddy upon starting your training contract, there is a separate mentoring programme where we can choose a more senior colleague to meet and learn from, and the firm’s trainee solicitor panel also listens to

and tries to resolve any issues that trainees might have.”

A truly international, forward-thinking firm, Reed Smith offers diversity in its practice areas, clients, workforce and even the choices that it can offer trainees, making it a highly attractive proposition for hundreds of hopefuls each year. “We have a very broad range of competitors from magic circle, UK niche practices and international firms,” says Peter. “But to be successful, we must focus on who and what we are, rather than try to emulate others. As a forward-thinking firm, we have a modern management structure which helps decisions to be taken robustly and quickly, but through visible processes. In the graduate recruitment context, the direct contribution of a broad range of partners and senior associates ensures that we are not narrowly focused; there is no mould that a candidate must fit. Our London office is our biggest, which makes it a real hub of the firm, and it is clear that the diversity of our practices and the diversity of our people are key strengths.”

By Josh Richman



competition for this commendation. What really made the firm stand out was the breadth of its diversity initiatives: from ethnicity and gender, to disabilities, mental health, sexual orientation and religion, the firm had schemes, programmes and projects to attract and support an impressively wide range of diverse applicants and employees.”

ReedSmith