



Nabarro LLP

A clearer picture for candidates.

Having burst into the £1 million revenue-per-partner club last year, Nabarro has propelled itself to a place among the country's legal elite without compromising its distinctive style. For years clients have consistently praised the firm's clear-cut approach to law; Nabarro has responded by distilling this style in an extensive rebrand. Observant candidates will recall Nabarro's distinctive, new black-and-white letter 'N' logo unveiled last year and its eye-catching graduate recruitment campaign, featuring a light bulb, an apple and a lump of coal, symbolising three major clients. The trainee profiles in the glossy recruitment brochure revealed exactly how valuable trainees have been in shaping business relationships with those clients. It was a shrewd campaign. "Our rebranding put us on the map," confirms Andrew Banton, Nabarro's graduate recruitment partner.

Jack Shepherd, a newly qualified solicitor in the corporate department, notes that "the firm continues to build on its success". The rebrand and some high-profile lateral hires have moved the firm squarely into the spotlight. Building on this momentum, the firm won this year's award for Best Recruiter – Large City Firm, a vindication for Andrew's team, which has overseen the evolution of the graduate recruitment process. "We now mostly recruit through our summer scheme," he explains. "It's a vital part of the whole process and a fantastic programme, evidenced by the fact we have won the Target Awards Best

Vacation Scheme an unprecedented two years running." But what's the secret to a successful recruitment process? The answer is, of course, in the detail. At a firm where, as the recruitment campaign says, "clarity matters", the trainee resources team strives to discover every candidate's unique selling point. The recruitment process is thus tailored around this challenge and every element is designed to elicit the best from candidates.

While many firms are increasingly embracing work placement schemes as their method of choice for uncovering talent and giving it the best chance to shine, Nabarro goes one step further. Not only does the firm recruit around 90% of its trainees from the summer scheme, but every single one of its 1,800 applications is read by Jane Drew, who heads up graduate recruitment, or one of her colleagues in the trainee resources team. Most firms that receive such a high number apply an automatic filter based on academic results. But not Nabarro. Good academics are a must but Nabarro wants a clearer picture. "Strong academics and intellectual ability are of course very important," Jane explains, "but we also want students to demonstrate their teamwork skills, a flair for creative problem solving and entrepreneurial skills. Evidence of their drive, determination and interest in the law is also important. There are some people who may have had a blip in their studies. While ideally we want at least three Bs at A-level and a 2.1 degree, we interview people with less, as long as the



rest of the application is outstanding. We don't want to miss any good people."

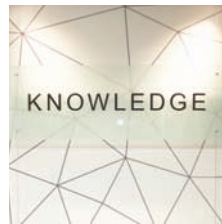
Jack, a Newcastle University graduate, extols another virtue of the process.

"There's more interest in you as an individual than at other firms," he says.

"There isn't a standard person Nabarro looks for. There are people who have had other careers, who haven't been to Oxbridge, who've had different backgrounds... You don't get that at many other firms."

Jack's route to a legal career at Nabarro had its own quirks and kinks. Although he fired off some applications during university, he admits that he didn't put in the necessary level of research. He took off to Australia and New Zealand, worked in a number of law firms, then travelled across Southeast Asia. After his work experience had pointed him in the right direction, Jack realised what kind of firm would suit him best. "I applied for the Nabarro summer scheme when I was in an internet café in Thailand!" says Jack, who particularly remembers the style of the application form. "It gives you a real chance to demonstrate your skills and personality."

Jack was invited for the interview day, which includes a presentation about the firm, a written and group exercise, an interview with a partner and associate, lunch – and a tour of their offices with the trainees to boot. The interview in particular stands out in Jack's memory. "It was very relaxed: they made an effort to calm my nerves and made sure to get the best out of me," he says. "I also had ample opportunity to ask questions and find out more about the firm, which I think is really important." Being interviewed by a partner and an associate at such an early stage (at other firms, first interviews are often conducted by human resources, not lawyers) boosted Jack's impression of the firm. "You feel that you



are taken seriously," he notes.

"Some firms give very brief summer scheme interviews or select their placement students based purely on a written application," says Jane. "This gives the student little opportunity to ask questions or form a view about that firm. What impression does that give the candidate?" Nabarro encourages applicants to take a real look at the firm. As Jane says, she wants them to have "buy-in". The interview reflects the firm's inclusive culture by affording candidates the attention they deserve. Later on, the lunch and office tour with trainees proves that it's more than just a recruitment gimmick, with candidates experiencing the warm atmosphere first-hand. "The lunch is an opportunity for them to get to know us and see a bigger representation of the firm," explains Andrew. "That's really for us to sell to them." Jane explains that it's a way of helping candidates make the right choice. "It's a two-way process and we never forget that," she says.

All that just to get on a summer scheme; but the point is that it's not just any summer scheme – it's a three-week training contract interview. Nabarro's scheme, as much the reason behind its recruitment award as anything else, is maximised to give candidates the best opportunity to taste real work and introduce them to the culture of the firm. While other firms move summer schemers around between teams, those at Nabarro stay put in one. Jack, who sat in the

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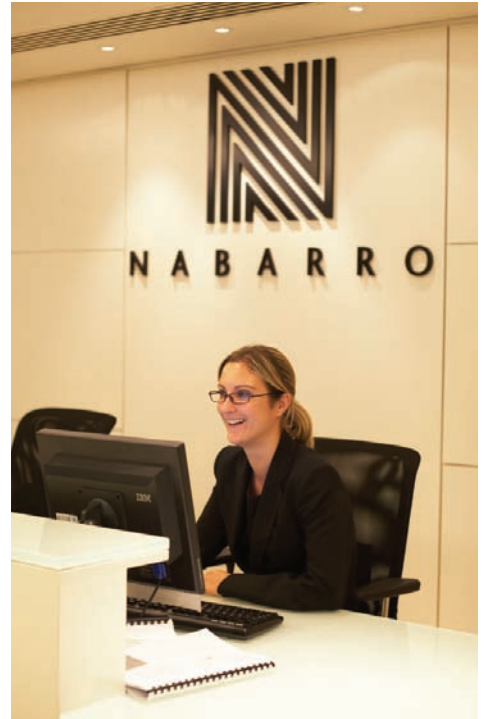


property department for his three weeks, says, “Staying in the same department works well because it gives you the chance to spend enough time to get given a good level of work. I was doing the type of work that you would experience as a trainee. They make an effort to get you involved as much as possible, like taking you to client meetings.”

For those three weeks your work is closely supervised, enabling you to show your skills and enthusiasm. Almost as a formality, in your final week you’ll have a second interview with a partner. “It’s not an interview,” says Jack. “It’s a chat.” Jack was asked how he’d enjoyed the summer scheme, why he wanted to be a lawyer and why he wanted to work for Nabarro. “I’d just had a three-week interview! But this was an opportunity to have a one-to-one meeting with a partner and a final opportunity for me to ask any questions I had about the business.”

Andrew confirms that a candidate’s performance on the scheme is the most important element to their whole application. “The second interview is useful to understand what the candidate has got out of the summer scheme. But the key thing is what their department thought of them; how good they were at research, taking meeting notes, reports; and how they related to lawyers, partners and support staff.” The scheme is really a three-week taster for both firm and candidate. After all, says Andrew, candidates “need to be comfortable that it’s a firm where the trainees are energised and happy, the associates are driven and the partners are approachable”. He knows that a three-week vacation scheme is the best way to recruit candidates. “When someone comes in just for an interview, both sides can make mistakes,” he says.

Nabarro’s recruitment process is designed to dodge such errors. Jane notes that last year, the firm retained 100% of its trainees



and this year the figure is expected to be around 90%. It’s not just because the firm gets recruitment right, says Andrew: the inclusive culture means that people want to stay. “We want them to help us develop this business,” he enthuses. “Trainees can progress quickly at Nabarro if they’ve got the right skill set. We’ve had some very young partners over the years.” Jack may be a few years from partnership, but he’s already embracing Nabarro’s entrepreneurial spirit. During his seat in corporate he found himself running a securitisation with a partner; later, he went out on secondment to a hedge fund client. Trainees seeing this level of work explains that 100% retention rate. Jack says: “When it came to qualification, I didn’t even think of looking anywhere else.”

For further information visit www.nabarro.com/graduates or telephone **020 7524 6000**.

By **Adam Smith**

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