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Executive summary

It makes good business, financial, and reputational sense to keep your best performing staff, but with the most extraordinary recruitment market in 40 years, now more than ever human capital needs nurturing if you believe that people are your greatest asset. The pandemic changed the way we work forever, and we need to reflect on what we learned during that time. What are the true causes of attrition? How do we understand what it is staff need in order to retain them in the business?

Talent in the Legal Profession: How to Attract, Retain and Engage Top Talent aims to answer these and many more questions. Looking at the perspectives of changing attitudes to the profession, an increasingly dynamic and diverse workforce, the impact of technology, and alternative forms of compensation, and how to future-proof the talent that already exists in your organization, the book is essential reading for anyone managing a legal team.

The book's contributors offer insight and inspiration, combining experienced and leading voices alongside those only recently joining the profession, in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the state of the talent marketplace, and how it is likely to evolve.

If firms were to lose large numbers of lawyers, it would compromise morale, disrupt culture, and damage a firm's reputation. It also upsets clients. Our opening chapter by Anne Harnetty of Jonson Beaumont looks at how firms can innovate to help them differentiate via their culture rather than salary increases. Leadership style is critical to cultural norms and a shared cultural vision gives a sense of identity and belonging. How can firms stop making assumptions about culture? The legal industry is brimming with guidance on tools to increase productivity but there seem to be few tips about creating a culture that makes an organization a great place to work, where people feel valued, trusted, and respected. In this chapter, Anne sets up the remainder of the book.

The legal profession is currently in a state of flux to an extent not seen for many years. The rising use of generative AI, coupled with an increased focus on wellbeing and changes to the UK-based qualification regime mean attracting and retaining legal talent is a tough job for firms and organiza-

tions. The next generation of lawyers are increasingly showing they want more from the profession, but is legal ready to adapt sufficiently to provide it? In the first of two chapters looking at changing attitudes to the legal profession, Victoria Cromwell of BARBRI looks at what tools firms and organizations have available to attract young lawyers, particularly from diverse talent pools, and whether junior lawyers still view law as a career for life. It considers attitudes to partnership, attrition, and alternative careers paths, both inside and outside of private practice, and addresses the fundamental question – has the legal profession started to lose its shine?

In chapter three, Charlotte Smith of Level 7 traces the prestige of the legal profession to its historical origins before looking at how the future is being shaped by alternative attitudes, and emerging trends in legal careers. She looks at progress towards gender equity in law and the new culture and leadership dynamics in legal firms. Turning her attention to attrition and talent migration, Charlotte looks at the causes for exiting traditional law and where legal talent is heading. She explores attitudes to partnership and the rise of ALSPs and legal tech ventures for those of an entrepreneurial persuasion, as well as the media and pop culture’s influence on law’s prestige.

Chapter four aims to shed light on what trainees and recent graduates value most when applying for jobs, what employers and firms can still do in order to better appeal to young graduates, and what a “career in law” means to those entering the workforce. Comprised of interviews with various trainee lawyers and law school graduates, this chapter contains valuable insight for employers on how to appeal to young people entering the industry, and what they can do to retain that talent.

Chapter five, by Caroline Vanovermeire, global director of talent, leadership, and organizational development at Dentsu, and Kathryn Rousin, global director of learning at White and Case LLP, focuses on attracting and retaining diverse talent. Who are the underrepresented talent pools we should tap into as law firms? How should we go about attracting them? Are there gender and/or generational differences? How can we increase our appeal to diverse talents? How does employer branding and the internal employee experience play a role into this? The chapter explores how, once they have been successful in attracting diverse talent, law firms and individual leaders can engage and retain them to achieve an authentic, truthful, and inclusive culture and a sustainable, profitable, and future-proofed law firm.

Loyalty, defined as a strong commitment and attachment to an organization, its goals, and its values, may seem like an outdated concept in a fast-changing and competitive world, say the authors of chapter six. Jean Baptiste LeBelle, head of HR, and Alice Boullier de Branche, senior HR

manager at Allen & Overy look at firm culture and how loyalty can be seen as a source of competitive advantage, as loyal people tend to perform better, stay longer, and advocate for their employer even after leaving the firm. The chapter takes into account the expectations of the new generation, in terms of diversity, purpose, ESG, and values. There are many different aspects of a firm's culture that have an impact on talent retention, including competitive compensation and benefits, opportunities for learning and development, a positive and supportive work environment, and the ability to foster a sense of purpose and alignment, where employees understand and share the vision, mission, and values of the organization, and how their work makes a difference. The culture of a firm is mainly the result of a process of exchanges and role-modeling that leads to the adoption of the same values and behavior at all levels of the organization. It is a virtuous cycle – the firm can build its own culture by rewarding and showcasing role models who exhibit the desired behaviors and not hesitating to sanction inappropriate ones. The chapter looks at how to build a firm culture that is attractive and retentive.

Interpersonal relationships are pivotal in today's legal landscape, where the dynamics of work environments are rapidly evolving. Chapter seven by Lara Selem, co-founder of Selem Bertozzi Consulting, sets the stage, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal relationships and firm loyalty in the legal sector. With the shift towards remote working, understanding its impact on interpersonal dynamics becomes crucial, as does mastering effective communication in a virtual era. Lara's chapter addresses the challenges and opportunities of fostering social connections in hybrid models, recognizing that the balance between virtual and in-person interactions is key to maintaining strong team bonds. A significant focus is placed on mental health and wellbeing, acknowledging their critical role in a healthy work environment. The cultivation of a loyal firm culture is explored, highlighting the strategies that can be employed to achieve this. Leadership's role in shaping and reinforcing this culture is examined, underscoring the influence leaders have on firm dynamics. Innovative approaches to team building and engagement are discussed, offering creative solutions to enhance team cohesion. The chapter also confronts the challenges in building firm loyalty, providing insights into overcoming common obstacles. Lara concludes with a future outlook, summarizing the key takeaways and projecting future trends in interpersonal relationships and firm loyalty in the legal profession.

The impact of legal tech applications and generative AI/Chat GPT on the legal profession are still underestimated but will be tremendous. By changing the nature of the legal profession, it will also have a profound

impact on the business of law and, as a consequence, the current business models of law firms. Combine this with changing client demand and client expectations (including the way in which clients are embracing generative AI and Chat GPT), and it becomes obvious why law firms have to adjust and align their traditional human resources policies and instruments. Chapter eight, by Gerard Tanja of Venturis Consulting, explores the potential consequences for law firm human resource and talent management strategies – from recruitment to training and (career) development, retention related policies, sourcing (at law firm level and relating to client engagements), and client service delivery skills and capabilities. How will this affect the way of working, collaboration/teaming, and service delivery in a law firm? What will clients expect and how can law firms prepare themselves? Will we see multi-disciplinary client service delivery? How will this affect the partnership structure and ethos? Are the regulatory frameworks of national bar associations ready to accept and embrace legal service delivery which is, partly, prepared by non-lawyers? Law firms will have to rethink their approach to recruitment, required technical skills (legal and non-legal) and capabilities, their development and training policies and ways of working. This will fundamentally affect the law firm's culture and business model. Are they ready?

In chapter nine, Rebecca Holdredge of LP Legal looks beyond the bonus, rethinking the approach to motivating legal talent. She first assesses the current state of legal talent motivation, including the limitations of traditional financial incentives and the rise in salaries, before examining the shift in professional desires, and looking at how to tailor motivation strategies to individual needs. The chapter looks at the power of non-financial incentives and how people can be empowered through recognition and career growth, and the role of the working environment and business culture. Rebecca delves into how emerging departments such as KM and practice operations can motivate talent and looks ahead at how the future of motivation in a law firm might look.

Chapter 10, by Catherine McGregor, independent advisor to law firms and legal departments around the world, looks at how talent and performance can be nurtured in the post-pandemic era. It examines the impact of remote working and how this has affected professional development in both a positive and negative way, before delving into the benefits of a coaching style of delivering feedback and how it can be used in a professional setting. Catherine also explores the differences in feedback that are given to minorities and how biases can be corrected so that all legal talent can be nurtured and developed.

Chapter 11, by Molly Peckman, looks at what partners can do to nurture and reward talent, and why they should care about the cost of a lost associate. Using the acronym HELP, Molly looks at honesty, empathy, listening, and professional development, and demonstrates how all partners could do with a little help from their friends.

In chapter 12, Patrick McKenna draws on his decades of experience in the industry to offer insight into how to keep your best talent engaged in the firm. Patrick maintains that whenever he has asked leaders of high-performing teams what their partners want and what is important to them, he elicits the same four responses, the most important of which is always being able to learn and grow their skills. As a general rule, firm leadership needs to help partners understand that they are in competition with millions of other professionals all over the world, capable of doing the same work that they can do. The sad news is that nobody is owed a career. To continue to be successful you must continually dedicate yourself to retraining your individual competitive advantage. This chapter prescribes specifically what leaders need to do with their teams and with individual partners to help them rethink how and where to invest some portion of their non-billable time into building and developing their marketable skills.

Succession plans will be impacted throughout the next decade by the retirement of senior law firm partners and a bumper crop of associates seeking new or different work styles. As Baby Boomer lawyers shift out – willingly or not – thinning ranks will be expected to service clients conditioned to have high expectations for speed and results. This is the same class of clients who, already aware of the hollowing out of legal talent, have been adding to their in-house departments. They will also be proactive in electing to send outbound work elsewhere and get it done by other means, if and when necessary. Chapter 13, by Heather Suttie, founder of Legal Market Strategy and Management Consulting, looks at the importance of succession.