

# The great 'quality of life' debate

Best practice in staff retention  
and job satisfaction

The Law Society

## Record of group discussion

Your name:

Association of Women Solicitors

Your firm:

Number of people in the group:

9

Proportion of senior managers, HR professionals and employees in the group:

Managing Partner, City Law firm  
Partner, City law firm  
Partner, Regional law firm  
Senior Associate, City law firm  
Senior Associate, West End firm  
Law Society Representative  
Legal Adviser, Department of Trade & Industry  
Senior Partner & Firm Founder  
Retired Practitioner

1. Topic name

Life at a Law Organisation

Key findings:

- (a) What contributes to good quality of life:-
- Work/Life balance;
  - Flexible working (good maternity policy);
  - Transparency of career progression;
  - Mentoring;
  - Mutual respect e.g. principle of "Dignity at Work";

- Firm culture.
- (b) Long hours culture dampens quality of life.
  - (c) Client expectations have changed in the last few years (due in part to email) and their expectation of service has increased. They require a quality job but unwilling to pay rates, due to market factors and fixed fees.
  - (d) Solicitors are unwilling to work the hours unless there are positive benefits.
  - (e) Inclination to blame Employers and expect them to come up with answer. There must be a reciprocal discussion between employer and employee to meet all needs, not just the employees.
  - (f) Quicker response time due to technology e.g. email.

Best Practice:

Non-judgemental supervision, transparent career progression, mutual respect, see people as individuals.

Action

Firms to implement maternity (and paternity) policy and encourage work/life balance to retain staff. Also firms to give employees skills to cope.

## 2. Topic name

Working Practices

Key findings:

- (a) Decision to stay influenced by access to supervisors, training, feeling of being valued, open door policy, team culture, honest and transparent career structure and alternative career structure, flexibility in practice (not just policies).
- (b) Law firms to contribute to quality of life.

Best Practice:

Flexible working in place – not just policies.

Action

Ensure policies are implemented and regularly reviewed to ensure they are working and are what staff require.

### 3. Topic name

Supervision

#### Key findings:

- (a) Peer supervision/buddy system.
- (b) Good management.
- (c) Objective and constructive criticism (use of appraisal system effectively to enhance employees not dampen their spirits).
- (d) Treat staff with respect.

#### Best Practice:

Moderation of appraisals to iron out subjective approaches, 360° appraisals and management.

#### Action

Training of supervisors. Follow up of appraisals and supervision.

### 4. Topic name

Retention

#### Key findings:

- (a) Open career progression.
- (b) Quality of work.
- (c) Pay.
- (d) Training.
- (e) Working environment.
- (f) Mentoring.

Best Practice:

Transparency. Good support. Adequate resources.

Action

Put in place transparent career structure. Ensure people know who line manager is.

Thank you.

If you have any questions regarding the discussion group or reporting your findings please contact Tara Chittenden in the Strategic Research Unit, on 0207 320 9552.

Please return your completed form to: [tara.chittenden@lawsociety.org.uk](mailto:tara.chittenden@lawsociety.org.uk)

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