LEWIS SILKIN

Our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

At Lewis Silkin we recognise that a more inclusive workplace allows for a plethora of ideas and points of view that can trigger discussions and deliver innovative results, and provide a wide range of skills and expertise which can serve clients better. We are proud of the diverse range of people within Lewis Silkin and of our workplace culture that allows individuals to be themselves at work. We celebrate difference, value all our employees equally and recognise our people are key to the success of our business. We are committed to an inclusive workplace that supports our people to achieve their full potential and enables them to bring their authentic self to work.

In July 2017 a diversity survey[1] was conducted in line with the SRA guidelines. We received a 64% response rate. We are in line or ahead of industry averages on all key metrics such as percentage of female partners, percentage of BAME partners and percentage of disabled colleagues. The next SRA diversity survey is due to be undertaken in 2019.

To demonstrate Lewis Silkin's commitment to diversity and inclusion within our workplace, these are some of the actions we have taken over the last 12 months:

Understanding the issue

- Lewis Silkin participated in the Law Society's Women in Leadership women's and men's round table events considering issues on diversity as identified by the Law Society's 2018 survey and are taking the findings from these round tables back to our leaders for action;
- We commissioned a firm wide listening exercise to understand key concerns with respect to diversity and inclusion, and themes from these are now being addressed;
- Beyond looking at our gender pay gap figures, we have analysed our full people data set across new hires, promotions, leavers and redundancy and now have a comprehensive understanding, informed by fact, of where our opportunities for improvement lie

Raising Awareness

- We regularly engage with our people on issues of Inclusion and Diversity via Peakon, our colleague engagement tool which has gathered over 10,000 individual comments on all aspects of employee engagement. 1978 direct responses to those comments have been given by our senior leadership team as at 9 April 2019;
- We take steps to raise awareness and support a number of initiatives, including Pride Week, Bi Visibility Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, International Women's Day, International Men's Day, and Autism awareness, with events across our offices

Taking meaningful action

- We established Rockhopper, an award winning innovation in legal service delivery that enables our lawyers to work from home, on hours they choose for themselves. As a result we have been able to retain 13 experienced female lawyers we would otherwise have lost;
- We are a founder member of the inter-law LGBT network group, LeGalBesT. As well as providing an opportunity for the member firms to pool their resources and knowledge/experiences, the group is committed to enabling positive and supportive workplaces where everybody can feel comfortable bringing their authentic self to work;

1 You can access the firms SRA diversity survey here: https://www.lewissilkin.com/-/media/files/main/firmwide/lewis-silkin-sra-diversity-report-2017.pdf

- We launched #aLastingChange campaign, a useful resource for ideas, collaboration, information, legal insight and opinions on how we can create a long-lasting improvement in women's experience of work and overall make the working environment a better place for everyone;
- We have carried out high profile culture change programmes for organisations experiencing problems. For example we helped The Old Vic to conceive and launch its Guardians' network, an initiative to empower vulnerable staff (https://www.oldvictheatre.com/about-us/guardians-programme). The partner who advised on this work, Richard Miskella, provides pro bono training sessions to more than 130 organisations currently participating in the Guardians Network, 3 times per year. Richard was also recognised for his work in this area, being named as Legal Business' Lawyer of the Year for 2019;
- We expanded our existing Diversity & Inclusion Board, to include colleagues from across the business. Within the Board, individuals are taking the lead on particular strands of diversity and inclusion such as the women's network, LGBTQ+, BAME, socio-economic advancement and mental health;
- We have launched at internal initiative called This Place Minds to raise awareness of mental health and share stories within the firm of difficulties our colleagues have faced;
- We partner with a school in south London, Ark Academy Southwark, which has a high proportion of socio-economically deprived pupils, to provide good quality work experience and mentoring to four young people who are considering a career in law;
- We are actively promoting shared parental leave for our new fathers, and recently supported a father in taking over 5 months leave;
- We have an excellent flexible working policy that allows anyone in the business to request to work flexibly, whatever their personal circumstances, but particularly for women returning from maternity leave

Planned next steps

- Lewis Silkin is sponsoring one of the films to be produced by the First 100 initiative, commemorating 100 years since the removal of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919;
- We currently have 32% female partners and are actively looking to the next generation of associates to support them to partnership with a firm wide coaching and mentoring scheme for our female talent launching later this year;
- We are reviewing options for our involvement in a female return to work programme;
- We will continue to review and monitor our people data to understand to what extent the actions we are taking are making a difference

Diversity and inclusion is urgent and important, not only because it is in everyone's interests, but because we believe that despite our profession becoming more broadly representative of the population, it still has a long way to go. We recognise that we can, and must, do better. We therefore have a programme of initiatives[2] in place to continue and accelerate our progress.

2 You can access details of our diversity programme here: https://www.lewissilkin.com/en/about-us/diversity-and-inclusion

Find out more

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This article provides general guidance only: expert advice should be sought in relation to particular circumstances.