



Breakout Session - Key Takeaways

Breakout Session B – Selection: Fair and equal?

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Selection techniques have come a long way in the past few years, giving firms more choice in how they recruit fairly. In this session, we discussed:

- Defining and finding the right qualities in candidates.
- The different selection techniques available. For example contextual recruitment and mock negotiations.
- Adapting your recruitment process to ensure a level playing field.

Introduction:

The facilitators shared insights on:

The qualities sought for in candidates from less privileged backgrounds:

- Intellectual capability is important as this is an academically rigorous profession.
- Look for progression in terms of academic achievement. Grades may be low at GCSE but better at A Level.
- Be aware that students from less privileged backgrounds often work as paralegals to gain experience and confidence before apply for a training contract.
- Look for work experience and qualities like resilience, and not just extra-curricular activities.

How best to identify the qualities you are looking for:

- Look for commitment to an area of law [in this instance, the example was commercial law]. This will show the student has researched the market and built their commercial awareness.
- Ask more, transparent and explicit questions to gain the right information. Asking obscure questions makes it easier for only those in the know to answer them.

Other techniques that can be used to level the playing field and make the process easier to navigate:

- Adopting a contextual recruitment system. The example given was of increasing the percentage of the trainee cohort from less privileged background from 10% to 30%.
- Social mobility flags help the firm adjust what is looked for in a candidate and shows the level of achievement.
- The performance index is helpful, showing how students out-perform the average A Level grades at their school. Candidates with a score over 30 do well across the recruitment process. People who outperform at that level, go on to outperform within the role also.



Insights from Rare:

- There is a general uptick in recruitment of people from less privileged backgrounds when a contextual recruitment system is used. An increase of 61% was seen across six clients and around 600 hires.
- Recently launched training – Hemisphere – to combat bias specifically in interviewing. Focusing on those delivering the process.

Review the process regularly to address different outcomes for candidates from different socio-economic groups

- Insight from Hogan Lovells – observed that students from less privileged and ethnic minority backgrounds would fail the critical thinking re-test on the assessment day. Partly because students did not think to refresh their thinking nearer the time or undertake a practice test. Also, because it can be intimidating going to a law firm and nerves may impede performance. Students did well during the assessment day though. Hogan Lovells no longer re-test on the assessment day.
- Traditional aptitude tests seem to create barriers. There is a move towards behavioural and strength-based tests which are seen as more inclusive.
- Constantly review and monitor the process. Question if those from different socio-economic groups are moving through the process at the same rate and where in the process are candidates falling out, when and why.

Making partners aware of social flags

- Being aware of candidates' backgrounds has made a difference. Partners are reminded in wash-up meetings to focus on the content of answers and not just on 'polish' or the level of 'energy' exhibited by candidates.
- In a very competitive environment, it's important to hire for potential and not just candidates operating at the level expected by the firm.

Question if the interview process picks up the best candidates at all. Would job sampling or putting more emphasis on diversity in vacation schemes mean that students from less privileged backgrounds are picked up at an earlier stage?

Questions:

1. *What challenges have you encountered in ensuring the same outcomes in the selection process for those from different socio-economic groups:*

The historic challenge of offering work experience to friends and family. There is pressure from the business to enable this but it can undercut efforts with students from less privileged backgrounds.

Moving to virtual processes has had benefits in terms of access to the process.

2. *Other successes firms have had when trying to select candidates from less privileged backgrounds.*

Moving from competency to strength-based tests.

Analysing all data points through the process and taking the decision to make the critical thinking test untimed. The percentage passing has improved for those in the groups they wanted it to improve in.



Expanding the Brand Manager programme to non-Russell Group universities.

3. *Has anyone else changed their selection process to ensure fairness across all socio-economic groups?*

It is important for organisations to visit a range of universities.

Removed grade requirements and, instead, look at performance indicators and taking a holistic view of students' experiences.

Key Takeaways

- It is important to consider context at the start and end of the process, right through to wash-up meetings.
- Take a data-driven approach when assessing the effectiveness and fairness of processes and evaluating changes made to those processes.
- Find ways to ensure historic practices don't undercut impact on/efforts in social mobility.

Resources:

Rare – Measures that Matter

Rare – Level the Playing Field