



Breakout Session - Key Takeaways

Breakout Session C – How do you reach the right students?

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When it comes to finding the most talented individuals, are the traditional routes still the best?

In this session, we discussed the different routes into the profession, challenge our views on those routes, and explore how firms can tap into the best talent.

Introduction:

There are defined routes into the profession but there are also many alternative routes. This includes the paralegal and apprenticeship pathway into the career.

To cover non-traditional routes, we also need to be willing to look at non-Russell Group Universities (NRGUs), which traditionally law firms haven't done to any great extent in the past.

Non-Russell Group Universities

At Aspiring Solicitors, there are a number of initiatives that focus solely on students at NRGUs. Observations are that candidates from these universities have the perception, by virtue of their University, that they are not as good as those at Russell Groups. This is simply not the case.

We must remember that there are some NRGUs who are doing fantastic things with regards to student confidence, awareness of opportunities and employability advice.

More than 50% of the top A-Level grade students are attending NRGUs.

Students' University choice is motivated by different reasons. Social mobility is one of the factors. If you are a student who cannot afford to live away from home then you are geographically limited by the institutions you can go to.

Representative stories are that their NRGUs didn't have the connections to give them the opportunity to meet firms.

A significant proportion of delegates said that they still do not recruit even 25% of their trainees from NRGUs.

One firm reported that they struggle to network with NRGUs and non-Oxbridge. Oxbridge however are getting so good at recruiting socially mobile, diverse candidates that they are beginning to see a change in who we are recruiting. It's a nuanced story.



Some RGUs are now opening up their law fairs to nearby NRGUs. Even going with a typical outreach model you can meet a more diverse group of students.

We need to follow the talent from outreach right through to offers.

Paralegals

The paralegal route is rarely introduced to students at University but it can allow individuals to find out what area of law interests them and what sort of firm they want to work for.

Some firms still have a policy of not recruiting trainees from their paralegals.

We need to question what is it that the non-traditional route gives this candidate that the traditional candidates don't have. It was shared that it is found they have a greater familiarity with the demands of deadlines, complex situations, and generally garner more transferable skills than they are given credit for. Working in a law firm, interacting with lawyers, doing very similar tasks to those that trainees do. There is nothing better to prepare you.

Apprentices

They are a fantastic way of providing the opportunity to those who might not otherwise get into law.

Law firms should give their apprentices the best chance of progression by working together and creating networks for apprentices between firms. It was agreed that this is an area where there can be collaboration.

There is growing evidence that middle class students are becoming aware of the benefits of an apprenticeship and that the social background of apprentices is not what might be expected.

Key Takeaways

1. There is first-hand experience of careers support at NRGUs not being comparable with their RG counterparts. But the talent and the enthusiasm is there if only firms can tap into it
2. Funding pressures can mean that many are prevented from going straight from University to LPC to a training contract, and that there are therefore financial benefits of paralegal work along the career path.
3. Encouragement from law firms with apprenticeship programmes to create apprentice networks so that once their apprentices qualify, they still have the contacts who can help them to progress.
4. The legal profession should innovate together and collectively think about other ways of finding the best talent and making change.
5. Collaboration between firms in this area is key.
6. A perspective from an educator was that the desire from students, and families, to be the first in the family to attend University, often causes them to discount alternative routes for themselves.

Additional Resources

[Apprenticeships](#)