

LEADING MINDS

Human sustainability in the legal sector

Five steps to a successful trainee-NQ transition

Onboarding

- Ensure consistency of experience by having clear NQ onboarding procedures which are communicated with supervisors and partners
- Welcome qualifiers back to the department with a departmental meeting or informal lunch and ensure their first few weeks include social interactions. Introduce the NQ to any new joiners and ensure they have met all partners and are reacquainted with the wider team
- Assign a junior peer mentor to assist the NQ to further navigate the departments culture as a junior lawyer
- The first few weeks should be used as an informal scoping exercise. Seniors and NQ's should clarify expectations around working hours/in-office days/preferred communication styles and identify particular practice area experience the NQ is looking to gain
- Clearly communicate who is the partner/supervisor responsible for ensuring fair work allocation, ongoing check-ins, feedback and appraisals

Career Pathways

- It is essential a firm has clearly defined career and partnership pathways. Instead of having these conversations at 6+PQE, these pathways should be communicated from the beginning of the NQ's career
- Determine the required skills and competencies from NQ to partnership
- Encourage monthly/bi-monthly check-ins with supervisors and a HR representative to track experience and identify any gaps in development. Use these as an opportunity to promote relevant training or professional development resources

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Emerging Leadership Development

- Take a strengths-based approach to feedback and training. Focus on recognising and cultivating an NQ's innate talents, whilst providing assistance in areas for improvement
- Create individual development plans that are actionable and include periodic check-in and feedback to provide encouragement, assess progress and course adjust as needed
- Provide training to partners and supervisors to enable them to deliver and track performance management in this way and maximise engagement with a strength-based approach
- NQ training should focus on developing intra/interpersonal skills required for juniors to operate as future leaders

The role of partners

- Encourage junior and senior partners to host roundtable discussions sharing their experience of making partner to remove mystery around the pathway and debunk myths
- Mentorship programmes provide juniors with the additional guidance as they progress in their new roles. However, ensure there is clarity around the level of support that mentors will give and a structure to the relationship to ensure both parties can reap the benefits
- Partners could consider co-authoring thought-leadership articles with juniors to strengthen relationships and increase opportunities for business development success in the future

The next generation of NQ's

- Help to future-proof NQ careers by providing learning and development in the area of AI and legal tech
- Provide training to help NQ's build a personal brand, including how to use social media platforms efficiently and effectively. Have clearly communicated social media policies and guidelines
- Have your marketing team, or a personal brand professional, assess NQ's online bios and provide professional photography for individuals to use across platforms
- Encourage juniors attendance at networking events, providing individuals coaching to build confidence where necessary