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Broad horizons: Looking further afield for great talent in law

Totum is placing more candidates from other sectors into business services roles in law. We look at the trend, our most recent placements, and why this marks an exciting time for the evolution of legal business.

In a fast-changing legal environment, law firms are more interested than ever in exploring new sources of talent from other sectors. Likewise, talented candidates are increasingly seeing the appeal of joining law ? as an industry in which they can make a real difference and influence lasting change.

In our experience, firms are not just looking at other professional services firms ? but also to seemingly very different sectors, like retail or advertising. More importantly, we know first-hand just how successful these placements can be.

Examples of change

In [Totum's recent research of leadership placements we have made over three years](#) [1] (2015 to 2018), we found that on average, nearly half (49%) of our shortlisted candidates came from other sectors, and over a third (38%) are placed from beyond professional services. More than that, we expect these numbers to rise as more recruits successfully transition into law and leave their mark.

A recent example of such a hire is at Reed Smith, where we have been delighted to help place Barry Spenceley as Global Solutions Centre Director in Leeds. He brings to the firm 18 years of experience in shared services operations and delivering transition and change projects. But it is not from law ? he joins the firm from 2 Sisters Food Group, the largest food manufacturer in the UK, and he previously worked for Morrisons and Hewlett-Packard. He will now apply his many insights to head up the Global Solutions Centre, which began operating earlier in the summer and has ambitious plans to further develop its legal and business functions by the end of the year.

Nor is he alone. We have recently made several appointments to lead new and growing shared services centres. Often aimed at setting up and extending shared services functions, these roles demand candidates who have strong people management and process improvement experience, often in a global environment. Experience of running a shared service operation is the priority ? meaning firms are increasingly shortlisting candidates from beyond the legal sector, where such expertise is more common.

The transition into law

Firms still express some concern about successfully transitioning such professionals into law but the

growing numbers of business services professionals making the move have proved that it is not only possible, but much easier than people think. By way of example, we recently [interviewed Ben McGuire, Innovation and Business Change Director at Simmons & Simmons](#) [2]. For 15 years to 2012 he was an officer in the British Army, before a desire to apply his expertise to a business setting took him into law. Many wouldn't even consider such a dramatic career shift, but he actually found many similarities between the two, saying that the Army gave 'him plenty of relatable skills?', particularly in being able to adapt to change quickly. And where there are differences, he is able to bring to the firm a fresh perspective to drive innovation.

At Totum, we are working hard to bring together these new candidates with progressive and creative firms, sourcing and shortlisting the best people and supporting their successful transition into law. As new business services functions continue to emerge, in areas such as shared services, legal operations, transformation, change, technology, data science and product management, we only expect the influx of new talent to increase. We relish the opportunity we have been given to further develop new and existing skills that will help drive the successful future of the legal profession.

If you would be interested in knowing more about the growing opportunities for business services professionals in law, whether you are currently working in another sector or you are keen to progress your career within law, contact Deborah.Gray@TotumPartners.com [3].

Likewise, we are always happy to share our expertise with law firms ? contact us if you would like to know more about how we are helping to bring new skills and talent into law.

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