

Expertise in action:

Chief People Officer

The Brief

Totum was engaged by a longstanding client to appoint a new CPO. The firm's CPO of over 20 years was departing, presenting an opportunity to redefine the people function entirely.

The brief was to recruit a modern, commercially minded people leader. The incoming CPO would be responsible for reviewing the entire team structure, bringing related people functions back under the people remit, and elevating the function to operate at board level. Equally important was ensuring key stakeholders and long-standing Partners were engaged throughout the process and supportive of the new appointment, alongside the delivery of a diverse shortlist. It was an opportunity to define what a best-in-class people function should look like for the firm today.

The Process

Totum helped write a new job description, defining what outstanding people leadership looks like. The team concluded that the right candidate would most likely come from another law firm - someone who could hit the ground running in a sector-specific environment. The search focused on number twos from Magic Circle, Silver Circle and comparable firms, ready to step up into their first CPO role, bringing the sophistication of a larger organisation with the agility to drive real change in a smaller one.

A diverse shortlist was assembled by gender and firm background, with candidates sharing a genuine passion for elevating the strategic importance of the people function. Throughout, Totum acted as a trusted advisor to the Managing Partner, advising at every stage on stakeholder management, briefing candidates on firm culture, and leveraging its existing relationship with the CMO to provide an insider perspective and a compelling peer selling point.

Find out more about Totum

If you would like to learn more about how we can support you with these leadership roles, please get in touch with at laura.mcnairst@totumpartners.com

The Client

The client is a well-regarded UK law firm with an ambitious leadership team committed to modernising how it operates. A relatively new Managing Partner was looking to build a C-suite to match their vision for the firm's future. Totum had recently supported the firm to recruit a CMO from a larger firm.

Historically, the people function had been viewed as operational rather than strategic and had not been meaningfully reviewed in many years. Appointing, the right CPO was seen as the catalyst for change.

The Outcome

A highly successful appointment was made, a senior People leader from a firm known for innovation, data and technology-led thinking. The successful candidate brought a clear and compelling vision for the people function of the future. Throughout, Totum maintained a level of collaboration and continuous support, working in true partnership with the client from brief to appointment.

The impact extended well beyond the initial placement. Totum is now working with the new CPO to build out the people team, providing updated job descriptions across all functions, and advising on the structure of newly created roles including ED&I and Responsible Business. The relationship has since grown to encompass the wider C-suite, with Totum in discussions for a CTO search and the potential to support the full business services leadership build-out.