



COMMUNICATIONS

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New revolutionary trainee solicitor model for the City is launched by Acculaw

A revolutionary new trainee solicitor model, targeted at City Law firms and in-house legal departments, is today being launched by Acculaw and has already been welcomed by City stakeholders.

Acculaw is the first non-legal service provider to be authorised by the SRA to take on trainee solicitors*. Whilst the Acculaw Trainee Model offers a radically new way of sourcing and managing trainees, it ensures that all regulatory requirements relating to training trainees will be met. The first of its kind – the new model was designed to respond to many pressures facing City firms in light of recent industry changes. Key challenges being addressed include high up-front costs, time delays and inability to adjust trainee resources in line with workload fluctuations.

Acculaw will initially be targeting City firms and in-house legal departments to take part in this initiative. Acculaw will only recruit trainees when firms have indicated how many trainees they require and for how long depending on workloads ensuring that it does not artificially increase the number of trainees in the market which would create new problems of over-supply upon qualification.

The model has already been welcomed by the City with City stakeholders already keen to show support.

Tony Angel, Ex Managing Partner of Linklaters and now CEO Vantage Diagnostics Limited said the Acculaw model is: "An innovative approach to solving the challenges law firms face in recruiting appropriate numbers of trainees and managing their cost - and to mitigating the impact of rapidly changing market dynamics on potential trainees themselves."

Kim Archer, Chief Executive of Peters & Peters Solicitors LLP said, "The Acculaw Trainee Model represents an exciting and innovative approach for the legal industry to modernise the traditional trainee model and respond to many pressures currently facing firms in terms of their trainee intake."

Unlike the current model this ground breaking new initiative offers firms greater flexibility over trainee contracts. Under the new scheme Acculaw recruits trainees that match a firm's agreed requirements and criteria and then seconds the services of those trainees to firms as and when required. Law firms and in-house legal departments commit to an agreed minimum number of months for each trainee per year.

Acculaw's Susan Cooper says:

"This is a break from the traditional training contract model. The major benefits for a trainee, apart from access to the legal profession, is that there is potential to gain a varied experience in more than one firm through an Acculaw training contract. Firms have different cultures and clients, so the mix trainees experience while completing their training contract will make them more versatile and adaptable to changing environments."

"Training contract numbers have dropped by 23% since July 2008. Legal process outsourcing threatens to reduce that number further. The model aims to make training UK based future lawyers a more attractive proposition to firms and in-house legal departments. We want to do what we can to keep jobs in the UK and go some way to dealing with the huge over-supply of graduates in the market desperate to get into the legal profession"

"We are very keen to improve diversity in the profession. Our model gives graduates who have perhaps had less exposure to corporate life or who initially lack confidence, a far greater opportunity to demonstrate their skills to prospective employers. It is a well-known fact that there is an untapped talent pool out there. The Acculaw initiative will go some way in opening up that talent. However, it should be stressed that all Acculaw trainees will need to have met the same stringent academic criteria as is currently expected by our clients."

The Acculaw Trainee Model can work alongside the traditional model with firms continuing to take on their own trainees but use Acculaw to benefit from improved flexibility and efficiency in trainee utilisation.

Trainees are employed by Acculaw rather than the firm itself, so the usual overheads and up-front investment that firms pay when taking on trainees are taken away in addition to the savings made when firms can return trainees to Acculaw when their workloads decline.

Firms who have signed up to Acculaw's initiative may or may not be grouped into consortiums, based on their trainee requirement, practice areas and size. Movement of trainees between firms will be based on the business needs of the firm, the training needs of the trainee, and the fit of the trainee with the firm.

Susan Cooper said: "The number of lawyers available in the market should be governed by the supply and demand of legal services, not the temporary affects of recession or the lure of short term gains from outsourcing work to low cost jurisdictions."

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<http://www.acculaw.co.uk/>

Notes to editors

*Following its approval as an authorised training establishment by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).