

Creating role clarity in a secretarial function

A law firm which had grown rapidly needed to structure the secretarial function. An internal survey found that the role of the secretary differed across different departments. In some departments secretaries would only type in others they worked as PAs yet the salaries were not differentiated and resentment was setting in. In addition, lawyers were unclear about what they could ask secretaries to do. A third finding was that secretarial teams were largely unmanaged as lawyers did not want to spend time on organising workflow and doing administration around holidays and absence. As a result the burden was falling on a stretched HR team and the secretarial function was not delivering a commercial service to the fee earners. deWinton-Williams was engaged to create a secretarial competency framework which set out three levels of secretarial role and also a team co-ordinator role. The framework set out in very clear terms what activities were expected of secretaries at each level and set out line management responsibilities for team co-ordinators. Having defined the framework, secretaries were assessed and allocated to levels. HR was then able to link salary to level of delivery and stop the age-old issue of secretaries being paid for time spent in the role rather than service delivered in the role. Additional benefits were that secretaries could see what would be required of them before they moved to the next level and lawyers knew what they could ask secretaries to do. To fully cement the solution, deWinton-Williams delivered a co-ordinator development programme to fast track co-ordinators into their new role.