

people

► Niche business and technology firm Kemp Little has made up two new partners in its City office. Employment specialist David Williams joined from Lovells in early 2004, while corporate lawyer Charles Claisse joined five years ago from Sidley & Austin prior to its 2001 Brown & Wood merger.

► The London office of Arnold & Porter has recruited ex-Denton Wilde Sapte IP litigation specialist Simon Bennett as an associate. Bennett will join IP litigator Clive Thorne, who joined as a partner in the summer.

► Wragge & Co's real estate division has snared a senior housing specialist from Birmingham City Council's in-house legal team. Jacqueline Knox spent eight years at the local authority and will now work in the regeneration team alongside director and former council colleague Stephen Sellers.

► Shadbolt & Co has hired ex-Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer solicitor Cecily Davis for its London projects and construction team. Shadbolts has also recently hired ex-Herbert Smith projects lawyer Robert Meakin and Peter Gray, formerly a partner at Linklaters.

in brief

► The Securities Institute has received the stamp of Government approval for its new four-paper Investment and Financial Advice Qualification (IFA). The scheme, aimed at independent financial advisers, has met the required standards of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the official education regulator in the UK. The IFA qualification has been launched in response to the Financial Services Authority's and the Financial Services Skills Council's examination review. The Securities Institute aims to deliver the qualification via computer-based testing by July 2005.

Beauty is in the eye of the client

*Lawyers need to measure up if they are to be successful at beauty parades, says **Kate Fleming***



BEAUTY parades are among the most important methods used by clients to select legal advisers. Many firms have found to their cost that winning work through this competitive process can be expensive and time-consuming if inappropriately managed.

Whether your firm is invited to pitch for new work or is making a speculative approach, the process requires meticulous thought and purpose involving a systematic approach, strategic planning, relationship management and persuasive selling skills.

For lawyers to succeed at tendering target organisations they must set out to develop relationships with key decision-makers long before a pitch. This results in being well positioned with an established competitive advantage by the time the process begins.

The first stage in a successful pitch is to ask: "Do we want to pitch?" Use targeting criteria to evaluate invitations to tender (ITT) and make objective decisions. Resources are limited in any law firm, so use them wisely on pitches where you have a likelihood of winning to be profitable in both the short and long terms.

Clients tell us their key frustration is that law firms often simply do not address their requirements. Is this because they do not understand enough about what the client requires, or because they think they know better? Researching and understanding the brief and then illustrating to the client your appreciation of their needs is one of the most important parts of the tender process, and yet they are so often neglected.

Once the ITT has been read, endeavour to meet the client to ascertain more about the stated requirements and discover others by researching their explicit needs, other issues being faced, buying criteria, decision-making processes and competitors. Finally, if no client relationship is established, use the meeting to effect an association. At the end of the day, if all competing firms are equal, the decisions are based on relationships.

Clients evaluate competing firms using buying criteria and assess each firm's ability to match what they are looking for. As technical competency is a given, other factors such as sector knowledge, training and price make the difference. Teams should pitch their buying criteria to strengthen competitive advantage. The better the match perceived by the client, the stronger your position to win.

Your response is in two parts: the report and the presentation. The report is first in time, but the presentation is first in importance. Whereas the report is unlikely to win you the pitch, it can certainly lose it for you. When preparing your response, concentrate on: demonstrating your understanding of the client's needs; showing how you can satisfy its needs; differentiating yourself from competitors; client personalities and how you can appeal to them to strengthen the relationship; preparing a persuasive tender document (think about content, image, style and readability); managing the meeting – do not field a hit squad, as clients want to meet and hear from your team; rehearsing the presentation; and whether you win or lose, find out why, as there are lessons to be learnt for future pitches.

Clients use price as the common motive, but in the majority of cases other reasons influence the decision, which you may uncover by using an objective third party to help you – they may find out factors that you are unable to.

Finally, remember that the relationship lives on and there will be other opportunities. You may have been unsuccessful in this instance, but there will be others. Clients remember firms which have handled the process well.

Kate Fleming is a director of business development trainers Ridley Fleming

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The work-life quiz

Anthony Hughes, managing partner, Ricksons



What was your first ever job?

Sales assistant at JD Sports. It's a pity they don't remember me – they'd be a good client.

What was your worst experience as a trainee?

Sitting through a meeting for what seemed like hours with the devil's own hangover.

Where's the best place to go if you want to find out what's really going on in the office?

The reception or general office.

What time do you usually leave the office?

I try to be away by 6pm.

What do you do at weekends?

Spend time with my family and/or go to football.

What's your favourite restaurant?

Stock Manchester.

If you weren't a lawyer, what would you have been?

Maybe a property developer. My father wanted me to be an accountant, but he was a developer – not sure what that tells you.

Who was your mentor or role model?

There's more than one: my father was a big influence, but also people like Roger Pannone made a real impression when I got to work.

What's the best thing about your job?

Getting the best out of people.

What's the toughest thing about your job?

Knowing the buck stops here.

What's your biggest work/career mistake and what did you learn from it?

Taking things for granted – it always gives you a wake-up call.

What car(s) do you drive?

BMW.

What book are you currently reading?

The Buddha of Suburbia.

What's on your CD player at the moment?

Damien Rice.

What's your favourite children's book?

My daughter's three, so I'm very familiar with Mick Inkpen.

events

PUBLIC PRIVATE CONGRESS 2004

16–17 November 2004, The Royal Garden Hotel, 2-24 Kensington High Street, London, W8 4PT

The UK's premier public private partnership (PPP) event presented by the industry's top public and private sector PPP professionals, and a great opportunity to gain fresh insight with senior PPP colleagues. For further information telephone 020 7970 4770 or go online at www.pppcongress.com

NON-RESIDENTS INVESTING & DEALING IN UK PROPERTY

1 December 2004, The Café Royal, 68 Regent Street, London, W1B 5EL

Aimed at lawyers who advise non-resident individuals keen to invest or deal in UK property and UK-based taxpayers who want to carry out similar transactions using foreign vehicles.

For further details contact Hayley Richards on 020 7017 5505 or go online at www.ibc-financial.com/ukland