



# Talent from the ground up

The key to business success: ensuring your paralegal employees have the training they need to really thrive at work, says Amanda Hamilton

## IN BRIEF

► Providing in-depth training and qualifications to paralegal employees gives them the chance to gain deeper knowledge and confidence at work, as well as feeling more supported and valued by their employer.

► Businesses subsequently benefit from happier employees who can confidently support their clients.

**T**oday it is more important than ever to create a positive working environment and ensure that you retain good members of staff.

In addition, well-trained and qualified staff will give your customers and clients confidence.

## Knowledge management

Whether your business is in the legal sector or not, it is highly likely that someone on your team will be performing tasks with a legal element to them. This could include drafting employment or commercial contracts, or ensuring that debts are chased and collected. This requires some knowledge and expertise. Of course, staff can be trained to systematically do the job, but wouldn't it be better to offer qualifications to give them a better understanding of what they are doing, and why?

In the legal sector, many law firms employ paralegals. Some may want to eventually become solicitors, but there are many who do not; they wish to retain their paralegal status as a career in its own right. It is quite common for a law graduate to apply to a law firm for a paralegal position. However, just because they have gained a degree, it doesn't mean that they necessarily know the practice and procedure of law. It requires further training to be an effective and useful paralegal—ie one that can offer genuine service to your firm and not just do the filing or carry out a bit of research. To be trained and educated to perform certain tasks is the key to success of any employee, and therefore ultimately of any company. This is why sponsoring your staff to gain further knowledge is a must.

## Putting people first

A very famous entrepreneur (Sir Richard

Branson) once said that 'if you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients'. This premise is paramount in maintaining a contented workforce and a healthy and successful business. There is nothing worse than an employer regarding their staff as replaceable commodities—'there's plenty more to fill your role if you don't like it'. Employees need to know that they are respected members of the workforce. Not only that, they must also be given proper remuneration and recognition for the work they do. Employing an individual at a basic wage may satisfy them initially as they may be grateful for the employment in the first place, but that is not sustainable.

The businesses that retain their employees are those that regard them as 'the business', and believe that without them, there would be no business. Businesses whose first and foremost interest is to make themselves a fortune will usually have a huge turnover of staff and fail to be sustainable.

But legal training is not just about retaining employees, important as that is. It is also about giving confidence to the person carrying out the tasks. With greater knowledge and greater confidence, they will be more effective, will need fewer hours to be spent managing the work they do, and ultimately, they will instil trust in the clients they work with. In addition, proper training helps to ensure that tasks are carried out accurately and thoughtfully, and potential problems are identified because the person doing the job has a deeper understanding and knowledge of their work and its implications. Following the right legal procedures is not only the right thing to do, it will also ensure that should an issue need to be taken further—perhaps all the way to a tribunal or court—you can be sure of your legal position and have a stronger chance of winning the case.

## Time to train?

Paying for your employees to be trained and qualified must be budgeted for if you are to sustain the objectives and aims of your business. In employment law terminology, as an employer, you owe a duty of care to

your employees, and your employees owe a duty of loyalty to their employer. A duty of care means that you must nurture your staff, make them feel secure and safe in their employment and give them a reason to be happy when they come to work. A duty of loyalty needs to be earned—by looking after your employees, you will see that loyalty grow.

So, whether you are a business needing that extra legal expertise or a law firm wanting to retain your paralegal staff, it is a good strategy to sponsor them through some extra training.

Training courses can now be delivered in many different ways: in-house, remote at set times or at times to suit you, or in person in a college setting. They can be anything from short intensives to longer term courses carried out alongside normal working hours. There are so many options that there is really no reason not to sponsor an employee to boost their skills. And training doesn't need to be expensive either. For example, NALP Paralegal qualifications start at £450 at the basic level.

It is important to nurture your employees to give them the tools to help your business prosper. It is also beneficial to have your customers and clients gain more confidence as they liaise with your well-trained and qualified members of staff. So, sponsoring members of your team through additional training is a good way forward. **NLJ**

## About NALP

The National Association of Licenced Paralegals (NALP) is a non-profit membership body and the only paralegal body that is recognised as an awarding organisation by Ofqual (the regulator of qualifications in England). Through its centres around the country, accredited and recognised professional paralegal qualifications are offered for those looking for a career as a paralegal professional.

Web: [www.nationalparalegals.co.uk](http://www.nationalparalegals.co.uk)

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