

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO THE FIRM AND OUR CLIENTS

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Firm news – By **Mark Rigotti, Chief Executive Officer**

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Diversity and inclusion are key priorities for me as I lead Herbert Smith Freehills forward.

Through my own experiences I've found it's crucial to get this right for our people and also the reputation of the firm. Diverse people mean diverse clients and a happier workplace. It leads to better outcomes. And ultimately, it's more fun.

Why should I, a white middle-aged male, champion this area? The answer is, why not? Anyone can lead on diversity, as long as they believe in doing the right thing and are prepared to put in the appropriate time and effort to achieve tangible outcomes. It is an issue that should have representation at the top of every organisation. There is no reason why this space should be left to those whom it is trying to progress.

We recently spoke to 20 clients about their views on diversity and inclusion. It was a very interesting exercise and I took away two main learnings.

Firstly, our clients very much value diverse teams. It means they have access to a broader range of talent than otherwise. If we can't match their expectations, our competitors will.

Secondly, our performance in this area goes to the heart of the trust and confidence we have built up with clients as their adviser. They expect us to commit in the same way they do.

It is an agenda where we continue to collaborate. Clients share their stories on an informal basis, which is valuable for our people to hear. More formally, we operate alongside them as active members of such organisations as The 30% Club.

We are continually learning from our clients. A US investment bank really pushed back at us on our flexible working practices. A construction firm fed back that we didn't look enough like them when we attended a pitch.

They wanted to see different people across the table. Hearing that back is very powerful.

I want Herbert Smith Freehills to recruit and retain people from the widest possible group. We support diversity and inclusion in all its guises, with a primary focus globally on gender, multi-culturalism and LGBT. But we are not limited in this respect and our programmes encompass disability, social mobility and family as well as part of our commitment to inclusion. We have worked on unconscious bias to ensure our recruitment process is bias-free.

I regularly spend time with our female associates, a demographic that has numerous options when deciding where to work. We were missing a trick, trying to work out why people left the firm. Often it is more important to understand why our people stay with us.

Success in diversity and inclusion is constantly improving our behaviours. We must ensure there is a level playing field for all. The journey we are on demands a culture that means we are better today than yesterday - but not as good as tomorrow.

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[\*\*\*Please click here to view Mark's latest thinking on Diversity and Inclusion\*\*\*](#)

## **KEY CONTACTS**

If you have any questions, or would like to know how this might affect your business, phone, or email these key contacts.



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