

Hays Reports Employers On Look Out For Specialist Legal Skills



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Hays, the world's leading recruiting experts in qualified, professional and skilled people, has revealed that whilst it is premature to talk about a recovery in the legal market, signs are emerging that recruitment activity for certain niche skill sets has remained steady.

Hiring levels for transactional roles within private practice continue to remain static, but organisations are still keen to bring in specialist skills within certain sectors, such as professional indemnity, clinical negligence and insurance. Regulatory experience is also sought in both commerce and private practice, as employers continue to assess risk, particularly within the financial services sector.

"Although we cannot say with any degree of certainty that the market has turned the corner, we are experiencing signs of cautious optimism. Private practice firms are recruiting, particularly if they have a commercial and strategic reason to do so, for example senior level partners who have a following of clients," said Helen Godwin, Regional Director at Hays Legal.

Demand for in-house roles has risen within the banking and financial services sectors, particularly in the derivatives, funds and asset management sectors. Organisations in the public sector are, however, beginning to be more cautious, "Although activity in the sector as a whole has slowed, given that organisations are wary of the political

landscape and spending cuts, opportunities in niche areas such as childcare still exist, as councils seek to enhance their childcare legal teams," affirmed Godwin.

The economic climate means that employers are still being very specific about their skills and experience requirements, thereby prolonging the recruitment cycle. "Firms are looking for individuals who tick all the competency boxes and can demonstrate a combination of technical skills and specialist knowledge. A track record in business development and a deep understanding of the commercial drivers of running a business are a definite plus," continued Godwin.

For [junior lawyers](#), conditions are the toughest for a decade - the number of training contracts has fallen and with trainees doing [paralegal](#) work, it has become even harder for qualified [lawyers](#) to find work. Adopting a flexible approach is very important, "My advice is to think strategically about the area of law you want to go into as some areas, such as clinical negligence, insurance and employment, are more recession proof than their more 'glamorous' counterparts," noted Godwin.

The message for jobseekers is that they must be supremely well prepared given the intense competition to ensure they give themselves the best chance of securing a role. "I cannot stress enough the importance of researching the organisation and preparing for competency based interviews," continued Godwin.

Ensuring that skills are kept updated is another important factor to help boost the chances of employability, "We would encourage young lawyers to take advantage of any networking opportunities and attend any relevant legal courses. Brushing up on areas such as employment law, restructuring and insolvency is a smart strategy, as recruitment for these skills will pick up in 2010," concluded Godwin.

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private and public sectors, dealing in permanent positions, contract roles and temporary assignments.

The Group employs 6,933 staff operating from 345 offices in 28 countries across 17 specialisms.

For the year ended 30 June 2009:

- The Group had revenues of £2.4 billion, net fees of £670.8 million and operating profit of £158 million.
- The Group placed around 50,000 candidates into permanent jobs and around 270,000 people into temporary assignments.
- The temporary placement business represented 56% of net fees and the permanent placement business represented 44% of net fees.

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