

Eversheds finds a rare and cherished skill in Huthwaite

By any definition, Eversheds is a success story. It is one of the largest firms of lawyers in the world, with over 2,000 fee-earning staff providing a range of services to the public and private sector, including 48 companies in the FTSE 100.

The good must always strive to get better," confirms director of training and development, Dave Clark, "and we recognised that the marketplace for legal services was changing. Competition had become tougher, clients were becoming more selective and price sensitive and the old mystique around the provision of professional services was rapidly disappearing.

"All this meant that, in order to provide clear differentiation for Eversheds and so increase business, we needed to move away from the 'expert', transactional approach which had served us well in the past, to a closer, partnership-style relationship with clients."

This thinking started three years ago, following the implementation of pitching and negotiation skills training at the Birmingham office where at the time Dave was responsible for business development.

He recognised the need for more selling skills and this seemed the ideal entry point: "The initial training had been designed to build on our senior fee earners' and partners' existing experience of new business pitches and negotiating contractual terms on behalf of clients," recalls. "However, addressing issues around selling techniques and relationship building was likely to require a more fundamental level of cultural and behavioural change."

Having looked at several training providers, he selected Huthwaite's SPIN[®] Selling approach through Huthwaite associate Kate Fleming as the most relevant to Evershed's needs. "Our goals were to identify and develop those senior lawyers capable of taking on a business development role and ensure that everyone in the business - many of whom were also client-facing - were aware of this radical new approach.

"As a result, it was important that the chosen provider had a solid reputation," Dave continues. "Huthwaite's research-driven, relatively simple and strongly structured approach, based on a proven methodology, was the one most likely to prove attractive to our target Eversheds audience."



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Kate Fleming has had overall responsibility for the delivery of all Evershed's training from day one, and her strong legal background has helped ensure the seamless implementation of SPIN[®] into the practice.

In particular, Kate worked with Dave on the two initial SPIN[®] Selling programmes at the Birmingham office, and the subsequent roll-out to the whole firm across the UK, following Dave's move to his present firm-wide role. To-date, over 100 lawyers have completed the SPIN[®] training, and plans are in place to double this number over the next two years.

Dave is happy with the positive response the training has received across all the practice specialisms.

"It has proved a valuable wakeup call for the business, by establishing selling as a vital, distinctive skill within business development," he believes. "Individually too, perhaps the most telling reaction has come from those participants who were already regarded as highly competent sellers but who, for the first time, were able to analyse what was going wrong when they failed to achieve desired outcomes."

Kate continues to work closely with Eversheds as the emphasis switches to building a team of qualified coaches - itself recognised as a specialist skill. Dave recognises that, though the SPIN[®] model is proving critically important in its own right, "like all off-line training, it is onerous for the individual to make it a success in the longer term.

It is essential therefore that we provide the right level of coaching and reinforcement support back in the workplace, to ensure that both the individual and the practice derive maximum benefit over time."

And working with Huthwaite? Dave has "nothing but praise" for Kate and the rest of the Huthwaite team's knowledge, flexibility and commercial aptitude and adds: "The amount each individual invests personally in making the programme work is impressive, almost making Huthwaite Evershed's best employee!

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