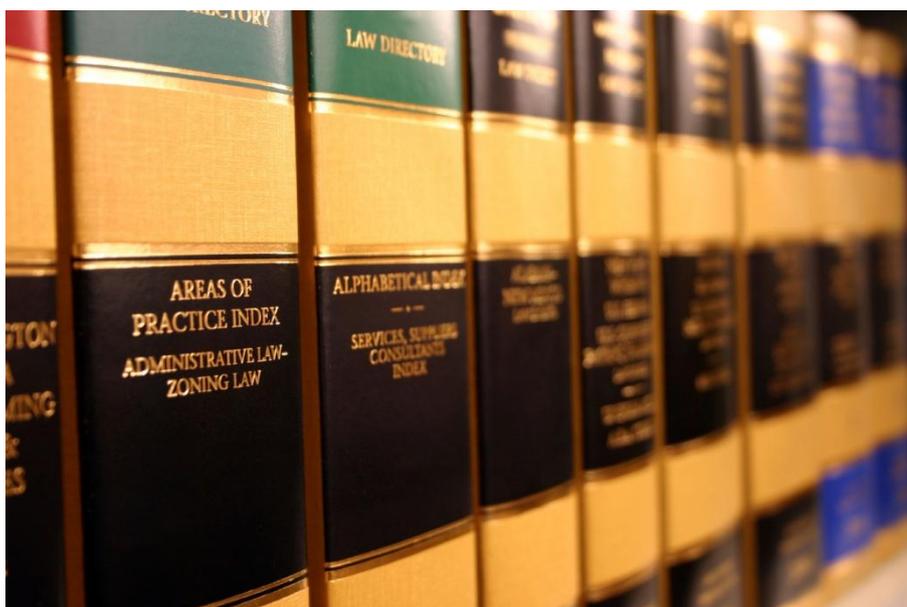


Finers Stephens Innocent

A high-profile corporate law firm, Finers Stephens Innocent (FSI) has specialisms in a wide variety of areas, including IP and media, property and employment law. A comparatively small firm in terms of size, the company prides itself on a dynamic and forward-thinking outlook.



Project background

Historically at FSI, the process of being promoted to partner was much the same as that which had existed in most law firms for decades – promotions happened almost automatically after a certain number of years' service, sometimes resulting in employees who were perhaps not ready to make a higher-level contribution to the team becoming partner.

As consistency in the right leadership behaviours and skill in innovative business development were becoming increasingly important for growth, FSI needed a more robust and reliable way to identify and promote the right leaders of the future.

They turned to OPP to incorporate the 16PF competency framework into their selection and development programme for aspiring partners to make measurable improvements to their skills in leadership, trust-building, business development, commercial focus and team working.

Emma Rush, Head of Training, along with the management committee, agreed that the existing 'building blocks' which defined the firm's areas of key strategic concerns, should form the basis of a competency framework which would then be used for both selection, and for promotion through its integration into the firm's 'Partnership Track'.

LEGAL SECTOR

Business needs

- Better identification and nurturing of future partners
- Skills in innovate business development
- Increased retention rates

Psychometric tools used

- 16PF

Benefits

- Better prepared candidates for leadership
- Better interpersonal skills of those on the Partnership Track
- Competitive edge

“There is a strong cultural fit between OPP and FSI in that they challenge our thinking without pushing specific approaches or solutions.”

Emma Rush
Head of Training

The solution

OPP worked with Emma and her colleagues to put together a bespoke Competency Report based on 16PF results and designed specifically with FSI's core values in mind. "I had worked with OPP before, and knew that we could trust them to listen to our needs and wants", explains Emma. "There is a strong cultural fit between OPP and FSI in that they challenge our thinking without pushing specific approaches or solutions.

"We chose the 16PF over other trait-based instruments because the language used and the way the information is presented is accessible and engaging, and also because the theory and results are very resonant with people, even if they know nothing of psychometrics."

The OPP consultant worked with a series of stakeholders at FSI to establish exactly what was required of the 'ideal' partner. These skills and attributes were then shortlisted by the consultant into a manageable set of FSI-specific competencies, some of which were taken from OPP's existing competency framework (what OPP refers to as a 'pick-and-mix' approach) and some which were adapted (what OPP describes as 'customised'). The candidates then completed the questionnaire and received feedback against the competency framework in conjunction with the results of 360-degree surveys. The Partnership Track participants also benefitted from one-to-one business coaching and a range of interactive workshops on self-presentation, negotiation, business development and management skills.

It wasn't always easy, as Emma describes, "There was a lot of resistance to the idea amongst the management team. They were worried that we'd end up with 'clones'. But they were reassured by the approach OPP took – especially the job analysis stage, where they were consulted about the content of the reports in detail."

Unfortunately the economic downturn required that Emma re-scope her ambitious plans for the Partnership Track Scheme. Amidst some organisational changes, FSI had to move away from the job-bespoke options towards a more off-the-shelf option. Crucially, OPP's flexibility allowed the scheme to continue in spite of the difficult conditions. Emma says: "We wanted to avoid 'Survivor Syndrome' in the people that were left. Despite the economic situation, this development still needed to happen and was still considered a worthwhile investment by the firm."

Results

Emma hopes the Partnership Track will result in really outstanding candidates with something distinctive to offer the firm when succeeding to partner level. While the use of the 16PF instrument may mean fewer candidates are successful in entering the scheme, the intention is that once they do, candidates will represent a better, lasting fit with the firm's values and requirements for the future which, it is hoped, will lead to a close-to-100% success rate in becoming partner for those who have entered the track.

Emma hopes that in the longer term, FSI's 16PF competency report will be used for all new recruits, not just existing employees aiming at partnership, allowing the firm to be sure they have an excellent pool of people with potential, right from the outset of their life in the firm. In addition, the scheme may be used for lateral hires, where people are brought in from other firms. Since in this situation lawyers bring their client list with them, this is potentially a very lucrative outcome from the use of the 16PF tool.

Measures of success for the scheme include retention rates, and Emma is confident that there will also be traceable links to the amount of new business generated, but is keen to stress that financial metrics are not the whole story. "For a business to continue to be successful, more is needed. We aspire to create a partnership with a strong commitment to working together to really nurture the FSI culture and identity – that which differentiates us from others and makes us a market leader. With candidates better prepared for leadership and ready to be proactive in external and internal networking, we are confident that the Partnership Track will produce the people we need to achieve this."

Established in Oxford in 1989, OPP is one of Europe's largest providers of business psychology solutions. Its products and services are used by private and public sector organisations in more than 25 countries. OPP develops the 16PF personality assessment and also distributes many of the world's leading psychometric instruments, including the MBTI, FIRO and TKI tools.

To find out how OPP can help your organisation in talent identification, team-building and leadership development, call +44 (0)845 603 9958 or visit www.opp.com.