



HOW TO RETAIN LEGAL TALENT



WHERE LAW FIRMS COME
TO RECRUIT LEGAL TALENT

With over 800,000 unfilled vacancies throughout the UK, businesses are placing a significant time and effort into attracting the ideal talent.

Often, this means going beyond standard legal job boards and searching for passive candidates with specialist recruitment teams instead.

Developing a strong pipeline of potential employees is valuable. However, it's important not to overlook an existing pool of talent that you already have access to - your current employees.

The people already in your team are eager for new opportunities and growth. Unfortunately, in the hunt for new talent, it's easy to forget about what your existing staff members need. The last thing you want is to lose your key talent while you look to fill other gaps.

The costs of employee turnover can be anywhere up to 2.5 times your team member's salary, depending on their role. On top of that, there's also the costs of lost productivity, training, and decreased engagement to think about too.

Now that retaining key talent is more crucial than ever, what can your legal firm do to prevent your best people from being headhunted or beginning to look for the exit? The following strategies will help.

Retention Begins with Effective Recruitment

Retention starts from the moment you begin the recruitment process. To reduce employee turnover, it's essential to create the right working environment for your employees. Staff members thrive best in environments where they feel capable of achieving their goals. It's also crucial for your employees to share your vision and values.

If team members feel as though they "fit" in your legal firm, they'll be less likely to seek out alternative opportunities elsewhere.

Most businesses focus on hiring candidates with the skills they need to support a specific role. However, it's becoming increasingly essential to concentrate on company culture too.

The "culture" of your workplace depends on the attitude and behaviours that your team members bring to their position. It can also affect the way that people interact. 58% of employees say they would leave a job with a culture influenced by negative office politics.

To make sure you're hiring people with the right culture fit:

- Use behavioural interview questions to find out how people react to certain situations. During the interview, assess how candidates may respond to some of the most stressful or challenging moments at work.
- Show your values and expectations in the job description. Make sure that people know not just what kind of skills you're looking for, but also the attitude you expect. Are you looking for someone with exceptional attention to detail? Or someone who's capable of adapting quickly to legal change?
- Prioritise people with passion. People who are passionate about their role and industry are more willing to adapt to virtually any situation. These are the people who are happy to learn new skills and practices to match the needs of your workforce.

If your employees don't fit within your work environment, they'll never be happy. People don't like to feel like an outsider at work. A person who doesn't fit with your company culture will quickly take their skills somewhere else.

Find Out Who You're Overlooking

For leaders to get the most out of their teams, they need to ensure that they're not overlooking key talent. There are plenty of people within your workforce that probably get much attention naturally. These individuals include your senior legal leaders like chief marketing officers or heads of design. You may also focus heavily on middle-management positions that are crucial for driving the motivation and performance of other workers.

Most legal leaders also hone in on people with the potential to do great things in the future. These up-and-comers may be the first people you go to with new training opportunities. All of these people are important, but other individuals are just as crucial in your retention plan.

For instance:

- **Essential experts:** Your legal team is likely full of experts with a specific focus on a particular task, like product development, or customer relationship management. These people may have no interest in moving into management positions. However, they still play a part in growing your business by giving you access to the insights you need. To retain these individuals, make sure that you're combining good compensation with an appealing work environment. Essential experts want to do work that aligns with their skills, and they'll need plenty of training opportunities to continue gaining and expanding their knowledge.
 - **Customer experience creators:** All businesses rely on their customers. Sometimes, the most valuable people in your team are those who can build and preserve relationships with your clients. To hold onto these employees, combine great compensation with a strong corporate reputation. The people who keep customers coming back to your business want to know that they're part of a team they can feel right about. Make sure that your employees know the values of your company, the USP your products are built on, and why the work they're doing matters.
 - **Crucial contractors:** Sometimes, the people that you need to appeal to aren't just your employees - they're also the outside workers who deliver additional value to your team. Contractors are becoming increasingly common in the legal industry. Up to 30% of EU and American workers are contractors, and the numbers are growing. As usual, compensation matters with crucial contractors, but it's essential to get your business reputation right too. Contractors want to work with organisations that can make them stand out with valuable references on their CV. Make sure your business is one that the best people would want to be associated with.
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Provide Unlimited Opportunities for Growth

According to research from the CTA, skills training and professional development programs (for honing soft skills) are the top benefits candidates seek. This study isn't exclusive to the technology sector either. People from all backgrounds want to know that they have room to grow in their careers.

When it comes to keeping your best talent close, think about how flexible and creative your organisation is when it comes to creating development opportunities. Learning can't just be an afterthought. Development needs to be a core component of your culture. That means beginning each relationship with a new employee with onboarding sessions where you can discuss their plans for the future. Ask people what they want to achieve in the next five years, and how you can help them reach their targets.

Once you know what kind of education your people are looking for, give your teams access to multiple development opportunities. Remember, there's more to development and training than just online courses, including:

- Hackathons and competitions: Build camaraderie in your team and offer opportunities to develop new skills at the same time with gamification.
 - Access to short-term assignments: Let people reach out beyond their standard skill set to explore their abilities in new challenges and tasks.
 - Mentor and coaching programs: This may include finding mentors within your existing team or supporting people in finding external sources of support.
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- Supporting lateral moves: Give people a chance to shadow other employees in lateral roles throughout the company. This may guide individuals towards skills they didn't know they had.
- Educational sabbaticals: If your teams need to learn complex new skills, give them time out of the office to do so. Just make sure there's someone available to pick up the slack while they're away.

Focusing on education for your business delivers more than just higher retention rates. The more you invest in employee development, the more your business grows. It means you get access to additional skills and knowledge in a time when there's heavy competition for both. You may even find your next senior executive or leader hidden within your existing team.

Demonstrate Company Values and Ethics

Today's most desirable employees want a lot more than just an excellent salary from employers. People are increasingly conscious of making sure that they're working for a company they can believe in. Your top talent wants to know that they're making a difference in the legal sector. This is particularly true among younger generations like millennials.

In recent years, we've seen a significant shift in the workforce. Employers are embracing more open-plan offices to improve collaboration. Teams are working in remote environments to access greater work/life balance. Underlying these changes is the demand for employers that care about the values and opinions of their workforce.

Employees are now more empowered than ever, and they're not willing to settle for employment in a company that doesn't share their expectations around ethics and values.

Google is an excellent example of a business that adapted to meet the ethical needs of its employees. When the company bought DeepMind Technologies for \$650 million, they had big plans for the AI startup. However, to keep their 50 AI engineers and scientists in place, Google had to promise that DeepMind tech would never be used for intelligence or military purposes.

Today's most attractive employers know that they need to listen to the opinions and ideas of their employees. If you show your team members that you respect their values, then they'll feel safer remaining a part of your team.

Although this sometimes means making changes to your development roadmap, it pays off in the long run. Both talent and customers are attracted to ethical companies today.

Give Your People A Purpose

Finding meaning in work isn't just about choosing an employer that shares similar ethics. Your employees also want to know that they're contributing to something bigger than themselves. If your legal firm can give employees meaningful work, the result will be better engagement.

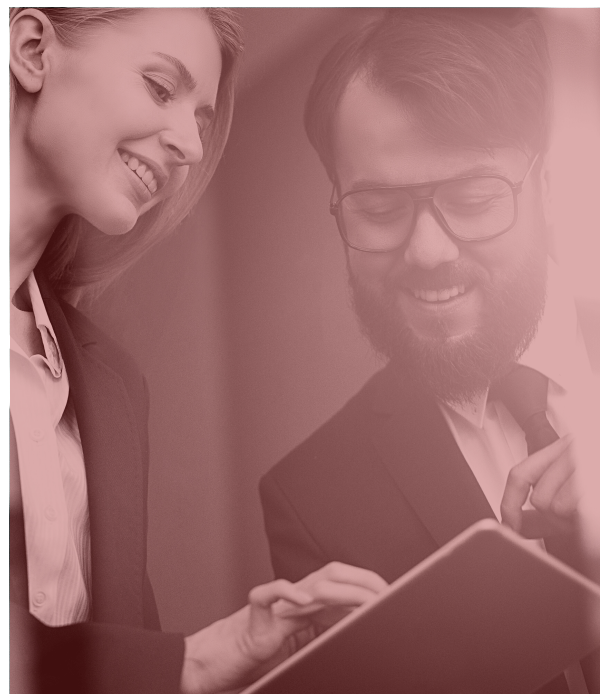
When employees are engaged, they feel invested in your business, and they're more likely to work harder towards their goals. On the other hand, neglecting employee satisfaction can be dangerous for your team. A study conducted in 2017 found that disengaged employees have a \$550 billion impact on the economy.

The easiest way to make sure that your teams feel that they're doing meaningful work is to listen to them. Find out what matters to your employees, and what kind of work they value the most. If possible, make sure that you let them know what kind of impact their work is having on your business too. For instance, your customer relationship manager keeps clients happy, which helps your company to grow and attract new clients.

Additionally, when it comes to developing your underlying purpose as a brand, make sure that you have a mission your teams can get behind. Ask your talent to give their input on the kind of work you need to be doing, and you can rest assured that they'll feel more committed to your goals.

For instance, 3,000 Google employees signed a petition when the company started working on AI technology that might have resulted in military assassinations. Google held a town hall session to listen to the concerns of employees and drafted an ethical principle guide to help them handle military work.

Eventually, Google decided to remove itself from the controversial contract altogether.



Promote Your Employer Brand/ Reputation

The more you listen to your staff's demand for meaning and ethics, the better your retention strategies will be. What's more, you'll also find that your reputation begins to improve as well, particularly if you share information about your initiatives online. Remember that 9 out of 10 candidates today say that they would be willing to apply for a role with a company that has an active employer brand.

In a world run by social media and personal branding, individuals are growing more selective of the businesses they choose to align themselves with. They know that their employment choices can have an impact on their opportunities in the future. This means that they're only willing to invest in businesses with the best reputation.

Examine the competitors in the legal industry and assess how your reputation aligns with theirs. How much work have you done to make your company stand out? Do the opinions that people share about your organisation match the way that you would describe your brand?

All companies, large and small are beginning to see the need for a strong digital footprint. Some of the ways that you can build out your employer brand include:

- Working with a legal recruitment specialist: These expert teams can help to get the word out about your business. They can also give you guidance on which details you need to include in your job descriptions.
- Developing a social media presence: 57% of job seekers now use social media as part of the job search. Make sure that you're regularly sharing stories about your organisation and your employees on your social channels. Invite your employees to share in your social activities with their own posts, by setting up an employee advocacy program too.
- Becoming a thought leader: Share information about your industry that makes you stand out. Blog posts and other content are excellent for capturing the attention of candidates and showing how knowledgeable you are. You can even share videos and podcasts too.

Remember, if you notice any negative reviews or testimonials that may harm your employer brand, don't just ignore them or try to sweep them under the rug. Respond ethically to each complaint and treat the issue as a chance to learn and build on your reputation. For instance, if someone complains that your recruitment process is too long, apologise. Let them know you'll be working to speed up the experience in the future, and keep candidates informed while they wait.

Provide the Right Benefits

Companies often think most about remuneration and benefits when they're attracting talent. However, keeping up to date with the latest legal guidelines is also an excellent way to keep team members happy. If your talent finds out that they can get a better income elsewhere, they may be more likely to jump into a new job.

Aside from basic remuneration packages, make sure that you're giving employees the benefits that they want too. Remember, these benefits can go beyond things like paid sick leave. You can also deliver paid educational breaks or provide certain staff members with the option to work outside of the office on specific days.

The Hanrahan company for social change implemented an eighteen-week paid parental leave strategy for their employees. The business also launched a Change.org petition to encourage other companies to make the same move.

During onboarding interviews with your new employees, consider asking them what kind of benefits they would appreciate most.

For instance, you might use onboarding strategies to help your team members get the most out of the first 30, 60 or 90 days they spend with your team. Alternatively, you can offer regular one-on-one interviews with team members where you can discuss personal development plans and new opportunities.

Make Team Members Feel Valued

Benefits and compensation are crucial, but it's also essential to make your teams feel valued in other ways too. Make sure that you don't just let your people know how much you appreciate them when you're offering them a raise or promotion.

All employees thrive off recognition and encouragement. When your team members do something that's valuable for your business, let them know how happy you are about it. A pat on the back or congratulations is often enough to make your team members feel incredible.

It's not necessary to shower your employees with praise for every little thing they do but make sure you're not overlooking the big accomplishments. The aim is to create a positive and encouraging work environment where your people know that their hard work will be recognised.

Some of the ways you can recognise your team without a pay boost include:

- Paid lunches with team members where they have a chance to network and bond.
- Development and learning opportunities that benefit both your employee and your bottom line.
- Tickets to industry events where your staff member can expand their knowledge.
- Company-wide shout-outs sent over social media or a corporate intranet.
- Access to remote working days if it's possible for your employee to finish their tasks at home.
- Opportunities to pick the next project or task they'd like to work on.

Foster Transparent and Open Communication

One of the easiest ways to boost retention in your organisation is to find out what's causing people to leave in the first place. The only way to do that is to create a culture of transparency and communication, where your people feel comfortable talking to you about your concerns.

Regular meetings in which team members can offer ideas for improvement and ask questions are valuable here. It's also a good idea to have open-door policies in place where people can come and speak frankly with their managers if they have an issue.

Businesses are constantly changing, and the needs of your employees change with them. Opening the door for consistent and open communication ensures that you're listening and responding to the expectations of your employees.

The more feedback you gather, the easier it will be to make meaningful changes to your company operations and retention strategies. Some of the best places to gather input include:

- Stay interviews: Speak to the people who decided to leave your team and ask them what sent them to another company. This is a great way to learn what you need to change to keep your remaining staff.
 - Stay interviews: Conduct regular interviews with your team members to find out why they continue to stay with your business, and what might cause them to leave. This data will help you to create a culture that's more appealing to your existing employees.
 - Candidate interviews: If someone says no to your employment offer, arrange a time to talk to them. Find out what caused them to take a different route. Was something wrong with your [sector] reputation, or was the culture a bad fit?
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Remember that it's not enough to simply listen to your people; you also need to show them that you're taking their words to heart. Once you've received plenty of feedback, turn it into actionable insights that you can use to transform your company. For instance, if you find out that your people don't feel as though they get enough support from managers, implement a new management training course to address the issue.

Be Prepared for Turnover

Ideally, the strategies above will help you to avoid as much turnover as possible in your organisation. However, it's important to remember that in any business, employees may leave. Your talent might find a better opportunity elsewhere, or they may leave your workplace for personal reasons.

It's difficult to lose a star from your team, but you can prepare. With help from a specialist legal recruitment agency, you can ensure that you have a talent pipeline in place to fill the gaps in your business.



CLAYTON LEGAL

We understand that while talent is your greatest asset - it can also be your scarcest resource - which is why you need a recruitment partner with the market expertise, insight and network to deliver the right people at the right time.

Clayton Legal has been partnering with law firms across the country since 1999 and during that time has built up an enviable reputation for trust and reliability. We provide an experienced and credible voice in the market by being able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the legal sector's talent agenda. Talent is all about people and just like you, our consultants are true experts in their field with a real drive for excellence which informs everything they do.

From Partners and Associates through to Solicitors, junior fee earning positions and support staff, Clayton Legal is the only name you'll ever need - and what's more - we are nice people to do business with!

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