

IBERIAN LAWYER

January/February 2016

Big Four lawyers
Quantity and quality?

On the rise
Portuguese real estate boom

Hot and cold
Mexico leading Latin American M&A



Bringing talent back

Junior lawyers in demand again

Firms broaden training amid concern graduates are ill-prepared

Law firm training programmes now include more instruction in non-legal skills due to worries that law courses are “woefully inadequate” preparation for a career in a modern law firm

Law firms are placing a greater emphasis on developing training programmes that enhance young lawyers’ non-legal skills – such as “client care”, negotiation, pricing and management – amid widespread concern that law graduates are leaving university

insufficiently prepared for a career in a law firm.

Next month, leading Spanish firm Uria Menéndez will officially launch a training course – in conjunction with IE business school – that will include improving lawyers business-related skills among its key objectives. The “IE-UM Professional Development Programme for Lawyers” is three years in duration and comprises a total of 140 teaching hours – in addition to legal subjects, the firm says the course will include

“business and economic subjects and skills”.

Explaining the need for such training, Uria Menéndez partner José Massaguer says young lawyers often lack vital attributes necessary for a career in a law firm including “client care” skills, and, in the case of more experienced lawyers, leadership and management skills. He adds: “The education in law school is not focussed on legal practice – young lawyers usually have knowledge of the law but are not yet equipped to practice law.”

Pérez-Llorca’s training priorities include ensuring its lawyers are fully up-to-date with the latest developments in areas in “finance, the stock market and energy”. Partner and corporate director Constanza Vergara Jaakkola adds: “We have made sure that our lawyers are fully trained in these fields – once the technical side of the programme has been covered, training lawyers in commercial skills and guiding them through how to attract new clients are also important objectives.”

She continues: “Young lawyers start with an excellent technical background, however they must learn to frame and adapt this legal knowledge to the client’s needs.”

Some firms have instituted their own learning academies. Margarida Couto, partner at Vieira de Almeida in Portugal and president of the VdAcademia board, says the skills law students learn at university are “woefully inadequate” preparation for a career in a law firm. “Although we have seen minor changes in

What new types of training do law firms have to provide?

“We invest in training in order to strengthen the soft skills of our lawyers, mainly tools that generate income (commercial abilities) and team management.” **Juan M. Chicote, human resources director, Gómez-Acebo & Pombo**

“Training must offer associates the tools for them to be up to date and able to offer clients innovative solutions. This implies a firm commitment to knowledge management, promoting the use of technologies through e-learning and streaming platforms, and fostering experiential training.” **Nuria Martin, human resources deputy director, Cuatrecasas, Gonçalves Pereira, Portugal**

“Increasing specialisation requires a double-track programme in which lawyers are trained in the latest and most complex developments in their area, while being also kept up-to-date with basic legal changes in fields outside their area of specialisation.” **Beatriz Satrustegui, head of expertise (Madrid), Ashurst**

“Clients insist their lawyers have a more commercial approach, so law firms have had to reinvent their training programmes and give more importance to behavioural skills, management skills and leadership skills. It is also now common to see topics such as pricing and profitability, legal project management, design thinking and client management at the forefront of the minds of law firm academies.” **PLMJ Excelletia Training Centre spokesperson**

“Hands-on involvement of the partners”

Chambers Europe 2015

“Response times are excellent and clients’ needs are understood, great value for money”

The Legal 500 EMEA 2015

Paseo de la Castellana, 164 · 28046 Madrid (Spain) · T: (+34) 91 319 02 33
info@araozyrueda.com · www.araozyrueda.com

ABOGADOS

ARAOZ & RUEDA

the curricula of universities, these are outdated," she adds. "The approach to law is a twentieth-century approach and doesn't consider the new millennium challenges for advocacy."

According to Couto, among the challenges law firms face when providing new types of training for lawyers is developing skills that are "non-existent" in the typical law graduate – these include management and business development. Couto describes the typical lawyer as an "analytical introvert who likes office work, reading researching and writing". She adds: "This is a profile that feels more attracted to law school, where these skills are overrated."

However, others in the legal sector argue that law schools are becoming more innovative in the way in which they prepare students for life in a law firm.

José Luis Moreira da Silva, human resources director at Lisbon-based SRS Advogados says: "In Portugal, the top law schools are increasingly focused on training law graduates in cross-functional skills and to think more outside the box." That said, Moreira da Silva adds that SRS Advogados is investing in "soft skills training" for its lawyers – this training includes client generation, stress management, and leadership.

Evaluating the success of programmes is important, according to Vergara Jaakola who says that Pérez-Llorca's training programmes are developed by the human resources team in partnership with an academic committee that includes partners and the knowledge management manager. She adds: "HR analyses feedback given by the attendees at each session and subsequently sends a report to both the lecturers and members of the academic committee."

Abreu Advogados managing partner Duarte Athayde argues that above all the quality of training offered by a law firm can impact on its ability to attract potential recruits. "Training can be a deciding factor when accepting or refusing a new or potential job offer," he adds. **IL**



VIEIRA DE ALMEIDA & Associados Sociedade de Advogados, RL

LEGAL TIME ON TIME

PORTUGAL	ANGOLA	MOZAMBIQUE	TIMOR-LESTE	GUINEA-BISSAU
09:23	09:23	09:23	09:23	09:23
CAPE VERDE	SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE	RD CONGO	GABON	CONGO

An integrated approach to legal solutions.










www.vda.pt



International
Legal Advice