

Dechert LLP

Innovation Title: Dechert and Aspiring Solicitors – Improving access to the law

Company Website: www.dechert.com

Year Introduced: 2017

Executive Summary

Over the past five years, Dechert's partnership with Aspiring Solicitors (AS) has led to huge strides in the firm's efforts to recruit diverse talent. The collaboration with AS, a non-profit organization aiming to improve access to the UK legal profession, has resulted in underrepresented groups making up over half of Dechert's trainee intake since 2017. "Our partnership has been very successful because everyone at the firm is so invested," said Katrina Phull, Dechert's Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager. "Candidates really care about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and they are seeing firsthand that Dechert values this at all levels, and that we are attracting and retaining outstanding diverse talent."

Founded by former Dechert trainee Chris White, AS works alongside law firms and legal teams to provide opportunities for aspiring solicitors from diverse backgrounds. At the heart of the firm's collaboration with AS is the Commercial Awareness Competition (CAC) and the Dechert-sponsored

AS Culture event. Held annually, these events give professionals from underrepresented groups access to the legal profession. In turn, this allows Dechert to identify talent from backgrounds that would otherwise be more difficult to reach. The partnership has provided Dechert with access to broad demographics, resulting in the more nuanced areas of DEI being reflected in the firm's hiring, such as mature students, career changers and parents, as well as those from low-income backgrounds, ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community. "It doesn't matter what people look like or where they come from," said Gus Black, co-chair of Dechert's global financial services group and a member of the Policy Committee. "Our objective is excellence in client service. Hiring diverse talent means we can bring a broad range of experiences and skillsets to bear on our clients' problems. The clients get a better team and our lawyers become better lawyers."

Dechert is now the first AS partner firm to achieve a newly qualified solicitor intake in 2022 with 50% originating from the program, which

earned the firm its fourth award from AS since 2017. AS founder and CEO Chris White commented: "Dechert is a leading partner firm of AS. As such, it is fitting that they received the inaugural "Best Retention of Diverse Talent" Award for a record-setting level of representation of AS members in its newly qualified ranks. We greatly appreciate that the firm continues to invest funding, support and senior professionals' time in a catalogue of talent development initiatives and campaigns."

The success of the partnership with AS has transformed Dechert's talent in London. With 50% of the firm's 2022 newly qualified lawyers, as well as 50% of the future 2023 trainee intake coming from AS, the firm is attracting and keeping these diverse professionals. "This partnership enables us to create meaningful relationships with high-potential candidates that has led us to create an increasingly inclusive environment at the firm" says Ms. Phull, "Dechert wants to retain these attorneys because they are exceptional lawyers; they stay because they recognize the firm has a true commitment and investment in DEI."