

What all HR and People Managers should know

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From interesting discussions with a range of employment lawyers on EU law and Brexit, to honing communication and presentation skills whilst chanting 'Mary had a little lamb' with the whole BDBF team, my week work-shadowing in London's leading employment law firm has certainly been a great and varied experience.

I previously worked as an Area Manager in a leading

supermarket chain which, unlike most big companies, did not have a designated HR department. Therefore, as Personnel Leader to over 120 people, I was responsible for hiring, firing and everything in between. During my 3 years there, I attended multiple employment law courses, which I found incredibly interesting. So when I resigned and had the opportunity to get some experience at BDBF to explore a future career in law, I jumped at it.

Top Tips

From my experience, once a case gets into an employment lawyer's hands, it usually means that there is a complexity which requires further guidance. I've realised my previous employment training was pretty good, and I managed to steer clear of having long conversations with great lawyers such as that at BDBF. So here are a few things I learnt along my management journey, which have been further realised by my work experience here:

- Ensure you maintain full concentration when processing every recruitment application – it can be tough when you have hundreds to view, however, as I have learnt this week, a case of discrimination for an application not getting shortlisted can escalate to an Employment Tribunal.
- To avoid employment issues escalating, deal with interpersonal concerns as soon as possible. Informal conversations and resolutions can go a long way to avoiding formal grievance or disciplinary proceedings.
- Even during informal conversations, make note and document everything said with the individuals in chronological order. This will help you explain your case clearly and objectively.
- The formal disciplinary and grievance procedures are in place for a reason. Once informal resolutions have been exhausted, these procedures should be carried out quickly and professionally. Don't let investigations go

on for weeks. Make it your priority, as the longer it takes, the more uneasy all parties feel.

- Disciplinary or grievance hearings can be daunting for both employees and employers. Role playing with colleagues or your lawyers is a great way to go through the formalities of the hearing as well as practising the handling of different situations before they arise.
- Get employment law advice. With a big focus on costs in businesses, lawyers are usually a last resort. However, having shadowed at BDBF, their fountain of knowledge can provide reassurance if there is anything you are unsure of with regards to employment law, and will give you sound advice as to how to proceed.

Phoebe Fisher

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