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Size no bar to innovation reveals Top Legal Employers research

- ∞ Three-partner firm makes the Top 10 in Sweet & Maxwell/ CRF research
- ∞ Berwin Leighton Paisner takes top spot for the second year running

The size of a law firm does not have to affect its ability to be innovative, or to offer competitive pay and benefits to its employees reveals Top Legal Employers research from CRF and Sweet & Maxwell, the legal information provider. (**Table of results below**)

Three-partner firm Goldsmith Williams, based in Liverpool and employing 240 members of staff, was ranked highest for both Innovation, with a score of 96.47% and Corporate Social Responsibility, with a score of 87.5%. (**More details on Goldsmith Williams below**)

Each of the firms who participated in the rigorous, independent study¹ were awarded a percentage score in seven categories. The criteria were Pay & Benefits, Promotion & Development, Training, People; Culture and Style, Innovation, Diversity and Corporate Social Responsibility.

The Top 10 Legal Employers

Law firm	Overall ranking
1. Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP	84.18%
2. Pinsent Masons LLP	80.09%
3. Allen & Overy LLP	79.70%
4. Shoosmiths	78.03%
5. Denton Wilde Sapte LLP	77.04%
6. DLA Piper	75.90%
7. Goldsmith Williams	75.54%
8. SJ Berwin LLP	74.76%
9. Travers Smith LLP	74.63%
10. Harvey Ingram LLP	72.97%

Berwin Leighton Paisner – Top Legal Employer for the second year running

¹ The research process included desk research, analysis and one-to-one interviews with senior management and partners. The firms featured have contributed to the cost of researching and producing the Top Legal Employers guide. This in no way prejudices the profiles or the scores allocated to these companies. Claire Smith, a regular contributor to The Financial Times and The Times is Editor of Top Legal Employers 2009.

Berwin Leighton Paisner, which falls outside of the Magic Circle, was ranked highest for Pay and Benefits with 85.91%, and took first place overall for the second year running.

Staff at Berwin Leighton Paisner are offered a broad range of benefits as well as competitive salaries. A newly introduced firm-funded private medical insurance programme offers employees points for adopting a healthier lifestyle which can then be exchanged for a year-end cash bonus. Staff can also take advantage of free health screens, an in-house nurse and an in-house concierge.

Anne Kemsley of Sweet & Maxwell comments: “Whilst the highest billing global law firms are often thought to offer the best salaries the research has proved that firms outside of the Magic Circle can also offer attractive pay and benefits packages.”

Each firm was judged by a panel of leading experts. The panel consisted of Carl Lygo, Barrister and Principle of BPP Law School, Julia Chain of H4 Partners which provides management advice to law firms and the legal departments of major public companies, Noel Cooper, Director of Compensation & Benefits for Thomson Reuters Legal and Regulatory group and Yvonne Smyth, Managing Director of Hays Legal, the UK and Europe’s leading legal recruitment business.

DLA Piper, Shoosmiths and Pinsent Masons score highly for their working culture

International law firm Pinsent Masons was ranked in second place for the second year running, followed by Magic Circle firm Allen & Overy in third place.

Pinsent Mason scored particularly highly (99.25%) for People: Culture and Style. The firm is run on the basis its values: ambition and excellence; respect and co-operation; and open and approachable. Open-plan office space has now been introduced across the bulk of its UK operations to promote teamwork and a new secondment system has been developed to encourage collaboration across the firm’s worldwide network of offices.

A score of 100% was awarded to both Shoosmiths and DLA Piper for People: Culture and Style. DLA Piper was noted for its commitment to fostering a local culture in each of its international offices. Shoosmiths was recognised by the panel for its commitment to putting its employees first. Both firms were applauded for implementing benefits package designed to encourage staff to strike a work-life balance.

Shoosmiths, which does not have an office in London, came top for Diversity with a score of 78.79%. A sixth of staff are from ethnic minorities and 72% are female.

Goldsmith Williams tops the table for Innovation and Corporate Social Responsibility

Goldsmith Williams was noted for the development of its unique GWLive software, designed to revolutionise the way solicitors and mortgage brokers work together to make e-conveyancing a reality. GWLive gives mortgage brokers 24-hour access to information held by solicitors, enabling them to respond to queries instantly and to move the case forward quickly and easily.

Anne Kemsley comments: “There is a growing recognition amongst modern law firms that innovation now plays a major role in ensuring they remain competitive. Goldsmith Williams has raised the bar for larger law firms by putting innovative ideas into practice that provide clients with a unique and impressive level of service.”

John Jones, Director of Learning and Development at Goldsmith Williams comments: “The idea for GWLive originated in-house and was developed entirely by our own employees. We are immensely proud of GWLive and that our policy of encouraging staff to put forward their ideas has resulted in a software programme that now underpins the procedures of the whole firm”

Goldsmith Williams also took the highest score in the Corporate Social Responsibility category. The firm’s partners are trustees of a number of local charities and the firm works closely with Age Concern to provide free advice clinics on lifetime mortgages. The firm has a policy to support staff in their fundraising efforts and staff are given time off to pursue charity or community work.

The Top Legal Employers guide has been published by Sweet & Maxwell on its Legal Hub website (www.legalhub.co.uk) and is also available in print from Sweet and Maxwell (www.sweetandmaxwell.co.uk).

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Notes to Editors:

CRF have produced over 40 research reports, including Britain’s Top Employers, Corporate Strategies of the Top UK Companies of the Future, Top UK Companies of the Future, Top IT Companies in the UK, and Top Marketing and Media Companies in the UK.

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