



Law Careers.Net

www.LawCareers.Net

2012 Best in Law

Making good candidates excellent

Including:

Observing excellence

Award-winning firms reviewed

Excellent information

Knowledge you must possess

Technical excellence

*The skills and behaviours
required for success*

VEALE WASBROUGH VIZARDS

LC.N AWARD WINNER 2012 BEST TRAINING PRINCIPAL (SMALL INTAKE) – TABITHA CAVE



Firm partner Tabitha Cave is in the privileged position of being one of just two recipients of the LC.N Training & Recruitment Award for Best Training Principal (2012 being its inaugural year). She was described by the firm's trainees and newly qualifieds as, variously, "an exceptional lawyer", "approachable and friendly" and "the best lawyer that I have had the opportunity to work with". Glowing recommendations all, and clear evidence that she is a deserving recipient of this prestigious award. But as she says, her personal success is representative of something bigger – recognition that this is a firm that knows what it's good at and wants to instil that in its trainees.

Veale Wasbrough Vizards (VWV) has around 300 employees and 46 partners in its Bristol and London offices. It's not just Tabitha who has been attracting honourable mention and impressive accolades – VWV won 2011 Regional Law Firm of the Year at the Bristol Law Society awards. The firm has an impressive client list, acting nationally for clients in education and charities, healthcare, private wealth, family-owned business and public sectors. The firm also offers a dedicated service to individuals.

James Blackwell, a law with French graduate from the University of Sheffield, explains what attracted him to the firm: "I was fairly certain that I wanted to be in Bristol, as I grew up near here, so I focused my search on the region's main players. I was interested in VWV's education and charities specialism, which I thought separated it from other firms in Bristol."

This sector specialism drives cross-team working and generates work across the board, including in commercial litigation, the team which Tabitha heads. She joined the firm in 1998, as a year-and-a-half qualified solicitor, and started to get involved with graduate recruitment in 2004. She has been training principal for the last six years. "I head the





“ ”

Tabitha is a very approachable person, who is interested in helping trainees get the most out of their training contracts

trainee recruitment committee,” she explains, “as well as taking on the additional responsibilities assigned by the Solicitors Regulation Authority in terms of the firm’s training obligations.” Ellen Turner, HR adviser at VWV, says of Tabitha: “She is a very approachable person, who is interested in helping trainees get the most out of their training contracts.”

Right in the thick of the trainee recruitment process when we spoke to her, Tabitha is a hands-on member of the team. “I get very involved with both training and recruitment. Led and organised by Ellen, our team gets together to go through all the applications and decide who to interview and, ultimately, who to offer a training contract.” She is also part of the welcoming committee for new starters each August, as well as having a trainee under her direct supervision.

It is the more informal, day-to-day guidance that Tabitha provides which makes the training principal role so satisfying. “There is a lot of *ad hoc* engagement,” she explains, “such as when someone comes to ask which seats they should be doing or what jobs there might be at the end of their training contract, or even which other

firms they should consider if they’re not kept on. That sort of mentoring is more unpredictable and varies from trainee to trainee, but it’s the part that I really love. And, I imagine, it’s what led to my nomination for this award, which I am very touched and honoured to have received.”

Now a second-seat trainee in the employment department, “continuing to learn new things every day”, James was lucky enough to have Tabitha as a mentor when she supervised him in his first seat in commercial litigation. He recalls those first six months at the firm: “I worked predominantly in school fee recovery, which essentially meant that I worked on claims against parents who hadn’t paid their school fees. I was given my own case load, managing those cases right through the litigation process. It’s very exciting having an opportunity to work directly with senior personnel in schools, and the work throws up some challenges and the opportunity to consider wider issues. It was a great first seat: really busy, with excellent experience of the litigation process from beginning to end. I even got to go to court a few times on my own and do some advocacy. I wasn’t expecting that so early on.”



Trainees do six-month seats in contentious and non-contentious areas, as required, and have the opportunity to do seats in both offices and across sectors and departments. Describing his experiences as a trainee as “fantastic, far exceeding my expectations”, James believes that Tabitha’s guidance at an early stage helped set him on the right path: “Tabitha was absolutely brilliant as my supervisor. I hadn’t expected to have so much day-to-day contact with someone so senior in the firm. I sat right next to her; she was always on hand to help, never too busy and always very accommodating with her time. She never made me feel that my questions were stupid! I felt very comfortable with how easily approachable she was, as were other members of the team. It was great to receive guidance from someone who I consider to be a great lawyer – I learnt so much from her.”

Certainly, heightened responsibility and exposure to interesting work are just two of the many advantages of training at a top 100 firm. Ellen says: “A small intake – just eight a year – is something that really appeals to many candidates, as it allows us to invest a lot of time in each trainee. The fact that we’re accredited as an Investor In People is also a plus. From the minute trainees walk through the door, they receive exceptional one-to-one training.”

The firm’s core values of promoting teamwork and collaboration, putting the client at the centre of the firm and taking a commercial approach pervade every facet of the firm’s operations, including

“ ”
*Tabitha goes
 out of her way
 to help trainees
 irrespective
 of her own
 significant
 workload*

the way in which it trains. “Particularly in relation to teamwork, we have a reputation as a firm for embodying those ideals,” explains Tabitha. “What that means for trainees is that they are involved in case work from the very beginning and have responsibilities that match their skills, as well as good supervision and opportunities to work with people at all levels of the firm. The size of the firm and its culture mean that we can take a very individual approach to people’s training.”

Furthermore, the core values inform the way trainees are selected, as Ellen explains: “All these elements are tested at interview. We want well-rounded, enthusiastic applicants, who have a passion to work here and who can get behind those concepts.” Absolutely, agrees Tabitha: “We’re looking for people with academic proficiency, of course, but who will also fit in with the firm’s culture.”

Clearly, James was someone who could demonstrate that he was a good match for the firm at interview: “I submitted a written application and then had an interview morning which consisted of a presentation, two written exercises and an interview with a member of HR and a partner. I was instantly very impressed by the firm. I was made to feel comfortable and as if they were on my side. They didn’t ask me anything designed specifically to trip me up! Compared to some other interview experiences I’d had, which were quite intimidating, I felt very much at ease here.”

Ellen describes precisely how the interview process is run: “We accept applications for our work experience

Veale Wasbrough Vizards

Orchard Court

Orchard Lane

Bristol

BS1 5WS

T 0117 925 2020

E jobs@vwv.co.ukW www.vwv.co.uk**Twitter**

@vwvlawfirm

Method of application

Online application form

Application deadline

Apply by 30 June 2013 for training contracts commencing in September 2015

Method of selection

Interview

Work areas

- Banking and finance
- Commercial
- Construction and engineering
- Corporate
- Cross-border
- Debt recovery
- Dispute resolution
- Education & charities
- Employment
- Environment & regulatory
- Family business
- Information technology
- Intellectual property
- Licensing
- Local government
- Parliamentary agents
- Personal injury
- PFI & projects
- Real estate
- Residential conveyancing
- Restructuring and recovery
- Services for individuals
- Succession planning
- Tax for business

Offices

Bristol and London

What trainees said

“Our TP is an exceptional lawyer who displays talents across numerous sectors. She is approachable, friendly and takes an active interest in all trainees. She balances all of this with an extremely demanding and time consuming role – no easy task!”

“Tabitha Cave is the best lawyer that I have had the opportunity to work with, and is keen to follow up with you on your seat reviews and preferences



for qualification.”

“Tabitha goes out of her way to help trainees irrespective of her own significant workload.”

scheme at the end of March, and those who are chosen come in for a week in the summer, where they're mentored by one of the trainees and spend time in different departments. At the end, we make a decision whether to interview them for a training contract. The interview is made up of three parts – as James has explained – and we have a lot of involvement from senior associates and partners; they're always happy to help as they know that finding the right trainees is part of ensuring the future of the firm. Two of the partners on the panel trained here, so they have first-hand knowledge!” Ellen explains that while the firm reviews the recruitment process each year as a matter of course, it also uses feedback gleaned from regular trainee knowledge-sharing meetings to influence its decisions.

Humble in her success, Tabitha concludes by giving credit to the ethos of the firm. “My success is partly a benefit of working here,” she says, “where we prioritise investment in individuals. I try to help people achieve their career objectives and hope that they will mirror those of the firm.”

By Isla Grant

