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Developing Bermudian talent

Jonathan Betts focuses on teaching legal skills in theory and practice.

Cox Hallett Wilkinson (CHW) has become recognised, both locally and internationally, as one of the leading law firms on the Island for some time now. The firm's goal is to provide the highest-quality legal advice to both Bermuda-based and international clients in a responsive and cost-efficient manner, so as to enable them to meet their commercial needs. In order to achieve this, it is essential that the firm recruits, trains and retains attorneys who are very bright, but also commercially minded and hard-working.

CHW has committed itself to the recruitment, training and professional development of law students by implementing two principal programmes that support the training and development of Bermuda's aspiring legal minds: an annual scholarship awards scheme and a pupillage programme.

CHW provides scholarships to Bermudian students enrolled in a law degree or other higher education course that will lead to legal qualification and subsequent admission to the Bermuda Bar. Financial



support, currently up to \$25,000, is offered to a student who displays exceptional academic ability and a keen interest in legal practice. CHW's Scholarship Committee also makes smaller scholarship awards to Bermudian students in order to assist them with the costs of their studies. In summer 2009, the firm gave awards to four students for the 2009/10 academic year.

As well as receiving funding for their studies abroad, our students have the opportunity to work at the firm during breaks from their legal studies so that they are able to see what a career in the law involves and how a firm operates, as well as gaining an invaluable understanding of what it really means to practise law in Bermuda.

We very much hope that the most promising of our scholarship winners will, as a result of having first-hand experience of the firm and its attorneys, want to join CHW's pupillage programme, so that they may qualify as an attorney and be admitted to the Bermuda Bar.

The programme lasts for one year and during this time our pupils work in each of the key practice areas of the firm - the Corporate & Commercial, Litigation and Private Client & Real Estate departments. In each department, the pupil will share an office with a "Pupil Master", a senior attorney with extensive practice experience, who will be responsible for ensuring that each pupil receives an opportunity to develop his or her academic understanding of law and sees how this is applied to working as an attorney in a commercial environment.

In terms of specific experience, pupils in the Corporate & Commercial department will be exposed to a wide range of matters, including the formation of companies, partnerships and joint ventures, advising investment funds and insurance and reinsurance companies, mergers and acquisitions of businesses established in Bermuda and debt finance transactions. The firm's client base is extremely varied and includes both local businesses and large international companies located across the globe, meaning that the nature of the work that the pupil experiences is constantly changing.

CHW's Litigation department offers its pupils the opportunity to advise clients in relation to a wide range of disputes including corporate and commercial, property, employment and matrimonial matters, and insolvent and solvent restructurings of companies. In the Private Client & Real Estate department, pupils are given an insight into the skills required to advise on wills and probate, trusts and estate planning and conveyancing of both residential and commercial property on the Island.

During the pupillage, pupils develop legal skills such as drafting, research and advocacy, as well as key personal skills - for example, written and oral communication, negotiation and transaction management skills - that are essentially the tools and experience required to enable an attorney to interact with and advise clients on a daily basis. Our aim is to provide a stimulating and



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supportive environment for pupils with all departments operating an 'open door' policy that encourages dialogue between all those working within the firm; questions are encouraged and welcomed, so that our pupils are given the best opportunity to learn.

Once our pupils are called to the Bermuda Bar and invited to become Associates of the firm, they will have a further year of supervised practice in two departments, selected following discussions between them and the firm. This enables the attorneys to further develop their legal practice skills as well as their understanding and confidence.

CHW has a proven track record of enabling Bermudian law students to fulfil their ambitions of becoming attorneys in Bermuda. In recent years, six CHW pupils have completed their pupillage and been admitted to the Bermuda Bar and we currently have a further two pupils at the firm.

We believe that the firm's scholarship programme is an ideal way for the firm to develop strong connections with aspiring students and, thereafter, the pupillage programme enables us to build on those relationships and develop attorneys who understand the firm and, more importantly, what is required of an attorney who wishes to practice commercial law in Bermuda. We continue to explore new methods of developing prospects for recruitment, as well as qualified young attorneys.

The development of Bermudian talent is key to the ongoing growth and success of the firm. CHW is very proud of its achievements to date in the recruitment, training and support of Bermudian law students and we aim to continue our approach in order to achieve the business goals of the firm.



Jonathan Betts is a Senior Associate Attorney at Cox Hallett Wilkinson. He has been the Pupil Master for CHW's Corporate Department for over four years.