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Women in Leadership Conversations

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Equality & Diversity Committee Series

In recognition of recognition of Women's History Month, the Equality & Diversity Committee continue with their 'Women In Leadership Conversations'. This month, we interview the Society's newly appointed Private Client Committee Chair, Bindiya Patel from Acton's Solicitors.

❖ Can you tell us about your role at Actons Solicitors? What does a typical day look like for you?

I am a Director and Solicitor, and the current Head of Private Client at Actons.

My days in the office are spent meeting with clients, catching up with my team, supervising junior members of the team including our NQ and Trainee Solicitor, and often includes some element of Practice Management and Marketing and Business development too.

We have a Hybrid Working Policy in place post-pandemic, so I am able to work from home two-three days a week, which enables me to get my head down with any drafting or complex matters that we are instructed on.

❖ What do you find most interesting about your role within the firm?

Private Client as a practice area is very varied, so I am fortunate enough to have clients from all walks of life with whom I can build long-standing relationships, and the practice area is one which means that we work closely with a number of teams across the firm also.

I have always wanted to be part of a firm, which recognises you as an individual and not a number, and that is definitely the case at Actons.

❖ What does being a woman in law mean to you?

Being a young and successful woman in law (and one of an ethnic minority) is really important as it shows those entering the profession and/or early in their careers that it is possible to achieve your goals and be given the recognition and respect to hold a position of seniority, irrespective of gender or race.



- ❖ As a successful woman in the legal profession, have you experienced any significant barriers in your career so far, and if so, how have you dealt with this?

I qualified at 24, so age previously came into question where progression was concerned. Despite this, I continued to work hard and prove myself and my capabilities, and progressed through my career in the timely manner that I had always wanted to.

I wasn't shy in making it known to senior colleagues that I wanted to progress to Director when I joined Actons at 2.5 years PQE, and I took every opportunity that I could to progress and develop in line with the firm's ethos. I was promoted to Associate in 2018 and to Director in 2021.



- ❖ What challenges, if any, do you think you face in expediting your role, specifically as a female Director?

I don't think the challenges are specific to females only, as the workplace has changed significantly during and post-pandemic. Giving colleagues the opportunity to be heard, and listening to the challenges that are faced across the firm and the industry is really important, whilst striving to find and retain talented individuals.

- ❖ Have you experienced or sensed resistance when taking the lead in male dominated workplaces/situations and how have you handled this, if so?

No doubt this has happened from time-to-time, but I'd like to think that I have always been confident enough to make my views known, and I have not been afraid to take the lead where necessary.

❖ Which woman has influenced you the most in life? Why?

Somewhat cliché, but undoubtedly my mum – she has always pushed to ensure that we had the opportunities that she didn't have when growing up, which included being educated and entering the workplace.

She is not only an incredible mother, but a confidant and a friend – all of which have contributed to and enabled me to have been successful in my career.

❖ What advice would you give to other women entering the legal profession and those looking to progress in their legal careers?

Be brave and believe in yourself. You are just as worthy of a senior position as your male counterparts, and you can achieve anything if you put your mind to it.

❖ Are there any positive changes you have seen that have actively helped you and/or other women be successful within the profession?

Private Client is a largely female-led practice area, and so I have spent the majority if not all of my career having been directly led by strong female characters that held a position of seniority at the firms that I have worked at.

Particularly as a young solicitor, this made me even more determined to be successful in the profession as I knew it was possible from the outset.



❖ How important do you feel family friendly working practices are both to you and your firm, and what measures have you adopted to ensure inclusivity for women and other parents/carers at Actons Solicitors?

I think it is hugely important to have a family friendly working practice and the introduction of Flexible Working and Hybrid Working Policies no doubt lends itself to this. I am not yet a parent myself, but there are a number of parents across the firm, all of whom have the opportunity to take advantage of the Flexible Working and Hybrid Working Policies to achieve a good work-life balance.

I have spoken to a number of colleagues who are grateful for the additional time that they get to spend with their children and loved ones given that they don't have to commute to the office every day. Working from home does not change the quality of service that we deliver to our clients, but more so that we deliver it in a slightly different way.

❖ What do you think the legal profession can do to further widen diversity at senior levels?

Prove that it is possible, encourage junior members to make their career goals known at all opportunities, and work with them to achieve these goals.

It will be equally as important to retain the individuals that progress into senior positions so that they can be future leaders, and to equip them with the skills and knowledge that they need to do this in an ever-changing world.

Finding an alternative routes for progression is important and Actons are proud to have promoted colleagues into positions of seniority, as non-legal Directors. Recognising the skills and contribution that all team members can make is paramount to the progression of a forward-thinking firm.



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