



DLA Piper New Zealand

EMPOWERMENT FINALIST



THE STORY

Women make up 61 per cent of lawyers working in law firms, yet just 31 per cent of the partners in those firms are female. When DLA Piper reviewed its diversity policies, it realised it wasn't doing enough to correct the imbalance.

DLA Piper is a global firm with lawyers in more than 40 countries, and 130 staff in New Zealand. Internationally, the firm established an initiative called Leadership Alliance for Women (LAW) to address gender-balance issues. Since launching this initiative in New Zealand in 2013, the firm has seen a significant increase in the number of women in senior roles.

DLA Piper Partner and Chair of LAW NZ Tracey Cross says, "Having been lucky enough to have represented New Zealand in several global LAW conferences, I have experienced the power of global collaboration and a focused LAW strategy. In leveraging such thought leadership and shared experiences, we have been able to create our own initiative in New Zealand, focused on supporting, empowering and challenging our women to be confident, skilled, effectively networked and to strive for leadership positions. While we remain on a journey, I am proud to recognise the higher numbers of women that we now have across our leadership positions, the high engagement of our people in LAW and our aspiring younger generation that can see and be supported by the progress that has been made."

LAW has three clear areas of focus. The first is Client Connectivity, showcasing women in the in-house legal client community, connecting with women leaders in business and supporting and partnering with clients on gender-based activity.

The second focus is Creating Clarity for Empowerment, which involves empowering women within DLA Piper to achieve their potential by focusing on gender balance in new hires and

internal appointments, and providing a clear pathway for women to move into and succeed in senior positions.

The third is Changing Perceptions, with the aim of challenging bias and stereotypes and encouraging inclusive behaviour and language.

Since launching in New Zealand, LAW has hosted and sponsored events throughout the country giving women the opportunity to network and learn from each other and leaders in the legal and business industries.

In 2018 DLA Piper adopted the Gender Equality Charter, outlining the firm's commitment to countering systemic disadvantages faced by females in the workplace. Actions have included implementing unconscious bias training, annual gender pay gap audits, supporting flexible working, reviewing areas of practice with a gender equality lens, adopting equitable instruction practices, back to work mentoring following maternity leave and actively working to increase gender equality.

Support for LAW from the firm's leadership is reflected in the time and financial support they provide for the network. Support is also tied into partners' performance reviews. LAW events are also fully-supported by staff across the firm.

People Projects Consultant Rachel Bermudez says, "The great attendance, positive feedback and post-event comments proves that our workforce live and breathe a culture where empowering women is a priority."

Since the launch of LAW, female representation has progressed significantly and the firm has achieved gender pay equity. The commitment to gender balance and diversity and inclusion as a whole was a major drawcard in attracting graduates to DLA Piper.

Solicitor Alex Moore says, "As a young female looking to enter the legal industry in late 2018, I was wary of taking a role with a law firm that did not reflect my values, especially in relation to gender issues. DLA Piper's diversity and inclusion programmes and their global reach were a significant drawcard for me. Since joining DLA Piper as a Law Clerk, I have had the opportunity to help lead the refresh of our internal LAW programme. The support and encouragement I have received in running these sessions has made me feel like a valued member of the firm."

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THE CHALLENGE

DLA Piper New Zealand recognised that while since the 1990s more women than men have graduated in law, the profession has been slow to accommodate women in senior roles.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Leadership Alliance for Women (LAW) established to generate awareness and inform action with the goal of becoming a more gender-balanced workplace
- The network focussed on supporting, empowering and challenging women in the firm to be confident, skilled, mentored and to strive for leadership positions
- Gender-balance considered in external hires and internal appointments

- Gender pay equity actively monitored with monthly reports to the board
- Support for LAW tied into partners' performance reviews
- Gender Equality Charter adopted, outlining the firm's commitment to countering systemic disadvantages faced by women in the workplace

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- DLA Piper is one of the most gender-balanced law firms in New Zealand – 56 per cent of lawyers and 43 per cent of partners are female.
- Firm recognised by legal publication LawFuel as the most female-friendly law firm in New Zealand for equity partners.
- When LAW was launched, 22 per cent of partners were female. Now 43 per cent are female
- A 2018 firm-wide engagement survey showed 73 per cent of female employees said they enjoyed working for DLA Piper. In 2019 this increased to 80 per cent

KEY LEARNING

By empowering female talent, creating greater connectivity, being held to account and acting as change makers, gender-balance can be achieved.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

Visit diversityworks.nz or call 0800 DIVERSITY (0800 348 377)