

DELTAS: building a WIN-WIN initiative



Since its launch approximately 18 months ago DELTAS has been extremely active during 2019 / 2020. True, activity does not itself translate into results...

Let's stand back to assess what has been achieved so far, bearing in mind that the DELTAS initiative represents a long-term investment by the legal services sector and legaltech industry. It will take a number of years before we will be in a position to assess the full impact of DELTAS initiatives, both on the talent pipeline in our sector, and whether we are making a positive impact on the career and life choices of underrepresented groups of pupils and students.

Law Firms and Corporate Sponsors: impact on morale and motivation

The effect of participating in DELTAS initiatives is proving electrifying, at all levels. Feedback received from one of our Panel Members, David Fazakerley, CIO of MW Solicitors after a Champion Talk session together with Karen Jacks, IT Director of Bird & Bird: *"On a personal note, I really enjoyed the afternoon and felt it was one of the most worthwhile things I've done in quite some time!"*.

Interestingly, the positive effect not only impacts those who participate, but apparently throughout the whole organisation. Two representatives BigHand, together with Christel Aguila, Head of IT of Winckworth Sherwood and one of her service desk analysts recently participated in a DELTAS Champion Talk at one of our 14 schools. Apart from the fact that all the participants were enthused by (and enthusiastically blogged) about the event, they reported that this initiative has generated considerable interest and enthusiasm throughout their respective organisations, with several of their colleagues volunteering to become involved. And this is despite the fact that both organisations are already actively involved in other CSR activities.



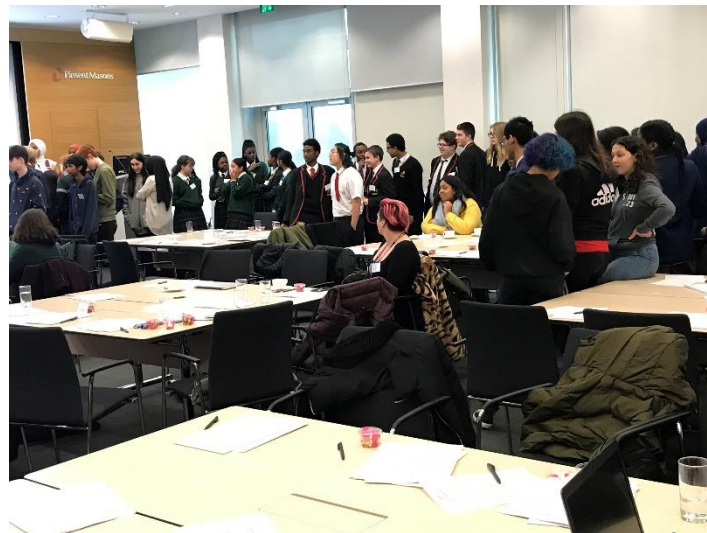
Year 7 Pupils at Notre Dame RC school with Lucinda from BigHand, and Christel and Cam

We can speculate about the reasons for the interest and enthusiasm - what differentiates DELTAS initiatives from the many CSR and charitable activities that most firms undertake? One reason that comes to mind is that if the participant is already passionate about his or her career interests, and is committed to the firm or organisation, communicating that passion and inspiring young people in a

professional context is even more satisfying than engaging in general charitable activities. Whatever the reason, the outcome is positive – for the organisation and certainly for the schools benefiting from the enthusiasm of the participants.

The DELTAS programme is predicated on a long-term involvement with schools by our members. Since the pupils and the schools are so varied, and their reactions often so unexpected, it is likely that participating in each DELTAS initiative will result in a fresh surge of enthusiasm, thereby sustaining (or even increasing) the positive impact on morale and motivation. This can only be tracked over time, and in any event, it may be difficult to disentangle the effect of DELTAS participation on other motivating factors. Nevertheless, intuitively and from feedback and observation, the “DELTA effect” is very positive.

Reinforcing these conclusions, all the law firms who have so far hosted large scale DELTAS events for schools have indicated that they would like to repeat the process and extend their engagement with the pupils, and those representatives of both corporate sponsors and law firms who have participated in Champion Talks are most definitely up for more.



Pinsent Masons Information Security Day 3rd February 2020

Law firms:

As concerns increase about the future LegalTech and Security talent pipeline and the difficulties of recruiting diverse teams, any initiative which is likely to address these challenges must be viewed in a positive light by any progressive law firm. After all, the legal services sector is increasingly reliant on the use of technology and innovation, which is now a core business function.

It is far too early for hard evidence – DELTAS may only see definitive results emerging in 3 to 5 years' time. However, even from small sample sizes, there are definite positive indicators. For example, in a feedback survey after a careers' day hosted by Linklaters for A level students, 13 out of 18 responded (positively or very positively) that they would like to work in a law firm. Since, out of the sample, only 5 were initially interested in a legal career, we take that as a positive. At another event hosted by Pinsent Masons, this time for 50 GCSE students with mixed or undecided career aspirations, 25 responded that they would like to know more about careers in LegalTech, Law or Security. At the Champion Talk referred to above, delivered by David Fazakerley and Karen Jacks for A level Maths students, not only was the response very positive, but several of the students made further enquiries about work placements, apprenticeships or other career related questions.

These are very early indicators, and we do not want to overstate their importance. Yet, at the very least, we are opening the window and minds of a number of young people onto careers that they were not previously aware of. Whether this will eventually translate into actually embarking on such careers – and for how many pupils and students - can only be assessed in the future.

A further intangible benefit is the fact that DELTAS initiatives serve to strengthen the relationship between law firm and Vendor. Yes, it is a commercial relationship, but we all know that ultimately, the level of service – going the extra mile, over and beyond contractual obligations – depends on an amicable and collaborative relationship between law firm and Vendor. We have already seen signs of closer “bonding” between firms and their Vendors when engaged in joint DELTAS initiatives. We may be buying technology, but it is still a people business and CSR initiatives are vital within this.

The Schools and their careers advisers

Now having dealt with a growing number of schools, DELTAS is becoming increasingly sympathetic to the challenges faced by them, particularly in the socially and economically disadvantaged catchment areas which DELTAS targets. Not only has there been significant funding cuts in recent years – often resulting in only one part-time careers’ adviser for a school of 800 to 1000 pupils (or a careers adviser also having teaching obligations), but as from 2020, schools will also be assessed by OFSTED on their compliance with the GATSBY careers’ guidance benchmarks. The proverbial rock and a hard place.

Once we are able to establish personal contact with a careers’ adviser (which is a serious initial challenge, since they are generally so stretched), the DELTAS programme has been universally welcomed, in most instances with a great deal of enthusiasm.

As for the pupils – their reactions range from literally jumping up and down (at the younger age groups) and declaring that they want to be Data Analysts, or that they want to work for Bighand – to serious enquiries about routes into legal, legaltech or security careers amongst older cohorts.

The DELTAS programme is still at an early stage. We are constantly adapting, finetuning and improving. Despite the fact that we are only 18 months into the programme, we are increasingly confident that as a unique, legal services sector initiative, we are creating win-win outcomes for our sector, for an increasingly large number of pupils and students, and for society at large.