

The Business Case for Pro Bono

As part of Pro Bono Week 2018, The Jeanie Project attended an event hosted by A4ID and LawWorks on The Business Case for Pro Bono. Panellists included: Amy Grunske, Head of International Pro Bono and Community Responsibility, Orrick; Rob Powell, Head of Pro Bono and CSR, London, Weil, Gotshal and Manges LLP; James Sandbach, Director of Policy and External Affairs, LawWorks; and Toby Collis, Learning and Development Manager, A4ID (moderating).

Pushback against pro bono in law firms or other organisations is often typified by comments and attitudes such as *'A law firm is a business, not a charity – we are here to make money'* and *'Clients don't care about us doing pro bono, we won't get anything out of it'*. Pro bono can therefore find itself on the periphery of a law firm's (and lawyer's) agenda when, in actual fact, there is a strong business case for integrating it into the day-to-day of life at a firm.

Pro bono is a win-win for solicitors, barristers, law firms, chambers and clients themselves. Firstly, it creates goodwill within the communities that a firm operates, this in itself is good marketing and can generate future clients. Secondly, many lawyers, particularly those in the younger age bracket, are attracted to firms that have pro bono programmes in place. It not only gives them a chance to develop key skills but also to experience other areas of law and the opportunity to deal with clients they may not normally have to within their job. Thirdly, pro bono clients clearly benefit from having access to justice which they otherwise could not afford.

Tackling pushback to pro bono within a firm or organisation can be challenging but collaborating with teams such as HR, or Graduate Recruitment and Accounts, can give you access to data on demand including future trainees for pro bono opportunities, employee satisfaction scores and evidence that doing pro bono does not impact upon lawyers' billable hours. Tapping into the various reasons people want to do pro bono is also useful. For some, they may be driven by a moral imperative, whilst others may be driven by the opportunity to enhance their skills and further their career. Does the motive matter? So long as people are engaged and the work is of high quality, then no.

Quantifying the benefits of pro bono to a law firm (small or large) can also be tricky. Looking at it on a 'pound for pound' value matrix is too simplistic; return on investment can take many forms and may not be immediate. The marketing and reputational benefits of pro bono outweigh the costs of the lawyers' time by far. It provides credible publicity and, depending on the case, visibility as well as giving back to the pro bono lawyer. As with challenging sceptics, work with the Marketing team to reap these benefits and gather data. Data is the best ammunition against disbelievers.

Interested in doing pro bono work? Why not check out how The Jeanie Project can help you at www.thejeanieproject.org.uk/probono.