



Annual Report 2008

Introduction

The InterLaw Diversity Forum for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (“LGBT”) Networks (the “InterLaw Diversity Forum”) was founded in March 2008 by Daniel Winterfeldt, Simmons & Simmons corporate partner, working with other top London law firms including Allen & Overy, Baker & MacKenzie, Clifford Chance, Eversheds, Herbert Smith and Lovells. The InterLaw Diversity Forum is an inter-organisational forum for the LGBT networks in law firms and all personnel (lawyers and non-lawyers) in the legal sector, including in-house counsel (the “LGBT Legal Community”). The overall objective of the InterLaw Diversity Forum is to encourage LGBT diversity and inclusion in the legal sector. The InterLaw Diversity Forum at year end had over 400 members from more than 60 law firms and 35 corporates and financial institutions.

The InterLaw Diversity Forum was created in response to a need for an organisation to address LGBT issues in the London legal sector. Until 2008 no London law firm had entered the Stonewall Work Equality Index’s (“WEI”) top 100 employers for LGB employees, placing the legal sector far behind its City peers. The WEI is the definitive national benchmarking exercise showcasing Britain’s top employers for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. In addition, top clients of City law firms had asked the London legal community to address LGBT issues and to create an environment where employees can reach their fullest potential without regard to sexual orientation. In addition, the creation of the InterLaw Diversity Forum was influenced by the recommendations in a 2006 study published by The Law Society: [Career experiences of gay and lesbian solicitors](#).

In its brief tenure, the InterLaw Diversity Forum has already been recognized as a driving force for the LGBT Legal Community. The InterLaw Diversity Forum is honoured to have been recognized in 2008 by being ranked first for Diversity by the [FT Innovative Lawyers Report](#), as well as “Highly Commended” at the Law Society’s Excellence Awards in November 2008.

Mission statement

The InterLaw Diversity Forum finalized its Mission Statement at its second monthly meeting held at Lovells on 16 April 2008, and it states:

The InterLaw Diversity Forum is an inter-organisational forum created in 2008 for the LGBT Legal Community.

The InterLaw Diversity Forum has regular meetings in addition to organising a range of events, including panel discussions, seminars and networking opportunities. Involvement in the InterLaw Diversity Forum is not restricted on the basis of sexual orientation; it is open to anyone who is interested in improving the working environment for the LGBT Legal Community by encouraging a climate of understanding, respect and inclusion. The focus of the InterLaw Diversity Forum is currently the London legal sector.

The overall objective of the InterLaw Diversity Forum is to encourage LGBT diversity and inclusion in the legal sector by:

- providing guidance and support to the LGBT Legal Community;
- encouraging the co-operation and sharing of experiences and best practice by LGBT networks;
- providing guidance and support to employers in the development and implementation of their diversity and inclusion strategies and policies; and
- working with other organisations, networks and committees in the LGBT community and the legal sector on events and projects consistent with this Mission Statement.

A full copy of our Mission Statement can be found **here**.

Monthly meetings

The InterLaw Diversity Forum holds monthly meetings followed by networking drinks. The first meeting was held on 18 March 2008 with presentations from Ben Summerskill, Chief Executive of Stonewall, Tim Hailes, Managing Director of JP Morgan, and Daniel Winterfeldt, corporate partner of Simmons & Simmons, along with panellists from Clifford Chance (Francis Idehen), Herbert Smith (Carolyn Lee), Lovells (Alun Davies) and Simmons & Simmons (Jeremy Cruse). The meeting was a resounding success with more than 80 attendees from 24 City law firms and members of some of the world's top corporates and investment banks.

The InterLaw Diversity Forum would like to extend a special thanks to all of the monthly meeting hosts in 2008, including Lovells (April), Allen & Overy (May), Herbert Smith (June), Clifford Chance (July), Ashursts (August), Freshfields (September), Baker & MacKenzie (October) and BLP (November).

A copy of the Monthly Meeting Rota for 2009 can be found [here](#) and an archive of the minutes from our past meetings can be found [here](#).

Launch event at National Gallery

On 17 April 2008 a launch event for the InterLaw Diversity Forum at the National Gallery was held which was oversubscribed and attended by over 300 people from 47 law firms and 39 corporates and financial institutions. Champagne flowed and canapés were dispensed as the InterLaw Diversity Forum took over the Barry Rooms at the National Gallery.

The event was hosted by Simmons & Simmons, with a welcome address from Managing Partner Mark Dawkins, and a presentation from corporate partner Daniel Winterfeldt. Ben Summerskill, Chief Executive of Stonewall, also spoke in support of the InterLaw Diversity Forum. Ben Summerskill said: "The launch of the InterLaw Diversity Forum is a hugely positive development for the legal industry. In a highly competitive labour market, talented lesbian and gay graduate recruits are presenting increasingly to businesses that will not only treat them fairly at point of recruitment but also transparently offer the chance to rise to the top of their chosen career." As part of the event, £1,500 was raised for Stonewall's Education for All campaign, which combats homophobic bullying in schools and colleges across the United Kingdom.

Women's Initiative

On 24 September 2008 the InterLaw Diversity Forum launched its Women's Initiative. The brainchild of Petra Braybrook of Simmons & Simmons' corporate department, the Women's Initiative was created after months of meetings and research on how to engage the lesbian and bisexual women in the LGBT Legal Community. The Women's Initiative maintains its own mailing list and holds quarterly women-only meetings, in addition to other events aimed at addressing and promoting women's issues in the legal sector. The InterLaw Diversity Forum would like to thank the InterBank Forum for LGBT Networks, Credit Suisse (Jemima Jefferson); Gay Women's Network (Sophie Merrick and Carolyn Lee), and Stonewall (Michelle Fullerton and David Shields) for their contributions to this project. The Women's Initiative has already had an effect, with a noted increase in female attendance at monthly meetings and events.

Guide to Stonewall's WEI for the legal sector

In response to the scarcity of legal sector representatives in Stonewall's WEI top 100 employers, the InterLaw Diversity Forum set out to develop guidance for the WEI for the legal sector. This guide was produced following the meeting of the InterLaw Diversity Forum in July 2008 hosted by Clifford Chance which focused on the WEI and its application to the legal sector. Michelle Fullerton from Stonewall attended the meeting and took part in a question and answer session on the WEI with representatives from a wide range of law firms and legal employers. The InterLaw Diversity Forum is delighted that four law firms have entered the top 100 employers for the WEI for 2009, including: Simmons & Simmons, Pinsent Masons, Herbert Smith and Eversheds, a great improvement on 2008's sole entry of Pinsent Masons. A summary of the key points is set out in the Stonewall WEI: Legal Sector Guidance document, which can be found [here](#).

International Diversity event

On 3 November 2008 the InterLaw Diversity Forum and the Law Society co-hosted an event on international diversity issues, generously sponsored by Allen & Overy, Baker & McKenzie, Eversheds, Herbert Smith, the Law Society and Simmons & Simmons. The purpose of the International Diversity Event was to both raise awareness of international diversity issues and to present innovations from other sectors which may be applicable to the legal sector. International diversity issues include

legal, geographic, cultural and historical challenges, as well as some additional challenges specific to the legal sector.

The InterLaw Diversity Forum was very privileged to have a distinguished panel of innovators in this arena from other sectors who brought their knowledge and insight, as well as inspired the legal sector on how to innovate on these issues. We were given a very warm welcome from Stephen Ward, Director of Communications and Diversity Champion of the Law Society.

The panel was moderated by Daniel Winterfeldt and the panellists included:

- Liz Grant, Channel Sales Leader, IBM
- Ian Howells, Senior Commercial Lawyer, BT Global Services
- Lieutenant Commander Mandy McBain, Logistics Officer, Royal Navy
- Derek Munn, Director of Public Affairs, Stonewall

The International Diversity Event started with short presentations from Liz Grant from IBM and Ian Howells from BT, then moved on to a panel discussion followed by a question and answer session. We then continued the discussion over everyone's favourite part – drinks and canapés.

Northern event

On 11 December 2008 the InterLaw Diversity Forum held its first event in the North which was generously hosted by Eversheds at their beautiful offices in Leeds. The event was a great success with over 45 attendees from 25 law firms, corporates and financial institutions. Speakers included Ben Summerskill, Chief Executive of Stonewall, Keith Froud, Senior Office Partner of Eversheds' Leeds, Caroline Wilson, Director of Diversity at Eversheds, office and Daniel Winterfeldt of Simmons & Simmons. In addition to presentations from the speakers, the evening included networking drinks and canapés, including an InterLaw Diversity Forum cake. Given the high turnout and enthusiasm for the event, the InterLaw Diversity Forum will be having additional events in the North, and possibly in the Midlands and South, in 2009.

Holiday art tour

The InterLaw Diversity Forum ended the year with a holiday party and art tour hosted by Simmons & Simmons. The event was held as a thank you to everyone for the spectacular beginning of the InterLaw Diversity Forum. December's event included a tour of Simmons & Simmons' renowned contemporary art collection by its curator and corporate partner, Stuart Evans. The collection includes works by artists such as Tracey Emin, Damien Hirst and Wolfgang Tillmans. The tour was accompanied by a champagne reception and canapés.

Contact Information

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