

## CASE STUDY: Linklaters



# LINKLATERS

## THE PROCESS

# LLP



Linklaters is a global corporate law firm headquartered in London. A member of the “Magic Circle” of leading UK firms, Linklaters operates from 29 offices in 20 countries across the world, employing 5,200 people globally. In the UK, the firm has 2,500 direct employees, split evenly between partners and business support staff, the majority in London with a smaller office in Colchester. The UK business is also supported by around 350 supplier staff.

Linklaters was an early adopter of the Living Wage in the legal industry, and one of the first corporate adopters, paying the rate as of 2010. The firm then became officially accredited as a Living Wage Employer in 2012, and soon after became a Principal Partner of the Living Wage Foundation. Linklaters felt that business success should be shared fairly across all roles, including those at the lower end of the pay scale. The firm believed that all staff, regardless of their role, should earn a decent wage that was enough to live on, and saw few business reasons for not implementing such a wage.

The accreditation journey for Linklaters was initiated by the firm’s Corporate Responsibility and Operations teams, both of whom saw it as the right thing to do. A fully costed proposal was then submitted to the firm’s London Committee, constituting both lawyers and senior management, who agreed to the idea.

While Living Wage Employer accreditation requires organisations to have a plan in place to uplift all contracted staff to the rate within two years, as best practice, Linklaters wished to effect the change as swiftly as possible. They paid a lump sum to their supplier to cover the costs of immediate implementation. As the Living Wage was a relatively new initiative at the time, the suppliers did face some initial logistical challenges to manage the increase in wages. However, they were willing and able to overcome these challenges to maintain their relationship with Linklaters as a client.

Linklaters chose to champion its commitment to the Living Wage in a business-to-business context by becoming a Principal Partner, and therefore an Advisory Council member, of the Living Wage Foundation. The firm emphasises its Living Wage accreditation both when pitching for work, and when hosting events around responsible business. Internally, Linklaters announced its accreditation through firm-wide communications, and proudly displays its Living Wage Employer plaque by the restaurant of its London office. It also communicates its status during the induction process for all new staff.

## THE BENEFITS

- Staff paid the Living Wage stay at the firm longer, and are more experienced, flexible and accommodating within their roles
- Client-facing support staff are happy and satisfied by receiving a fair wage, and have fewer financial worries. Linklaters believes this is reflected in their quality of work.
- The firm's reputation as a responsible employer has increased by championing the Living Wage and being actively involved with the work of the Living Wage Foundation
- Involvement in the Living Wage Foundation network has allowed Linklaters to form enlightening and beneficial relationships with other, both client and non-client, Living Wage organisations
- Living Wage accreditation gives the firm's own staff the confidence that it is implementing the rate correctly, and is fully committed to doing so in the future

*“On the Operations side, the quality of service and the reduction of cost in terms of staff turnover, means that [being a Living Wage Employer] pays for itself. From a broader HR perspective, the benefit to the whole workforce is key, in terms of confidence in the firm's employment practices.”*

**BOB JONES, HEAD OF OPERATIONS AT LINKLATERS LONDON OFFICE**

*“I'm really happy to work at Linklaters. I have worked here for 12 years since I came to London. I do hear from friends that they do not earn the same elsewhere. Earning the London Living Wage is important because it helps support my family living in London. Linklaters is a good company as they look after their employees and they also treat their suppliers as part of the firm too.”*

**FRANKLIM FERNADES, ISS FACILITY SERVICES STAFF MEMBER AT LINKLATERS**

## LESSONS LEARNED AND ADVICE FOR OTHER EMPLOYERS

Linklaters believes that successful, professional firms with relatively few in lower paid roles have a responsibility to ensure all staff are receiving a fair wage. It also recognises the importance of organisations becoming accredited Living Wage Employers, to maximise the long-term benefit to all parties and the wider movement.

A commitment to paying the Living Wage has been just one example of efforts made by the firm to ensure all staff, whether directly employed or contracted, feel part of a unified, caring team. For example, third-party staff also have access to the office gym and subsidised restaurant, as well as credit union facilities.

In terms of pursuing accreditation as a successful law firm, Linklaters found no significant arguments or obstacles. It believes there are many convincing reasons that can be used when communicating the idea to different departments within a well-performing firm, with accreditation adding value to the business in excess of the cost of implementation.

*“By being an accredited Living Wage Employer, it says much more about you than simply that you pay a Living Wage. It says you're willing to stand up and be part of something, and it also suggests that you're ethical across the board.”*

*“And as a successful corporate law firm, how can we possibly argue against all in our building receiving at least a Living Wage.”*

**MATT SPARKES, HEAD OF CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AT LINKLATERS**