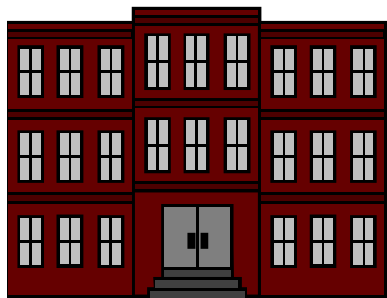


## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT / CONTINUING EDUCATION

(June 04)



A rather dull press release concerning professional development or continuing education appeared this month. It is interesting to note just how far some of the world's leading firms have gone in the interests of delivering improved services to clients. The contrast between post qualification learning regimes is stark. In NZ the profession's Trade Association would appear to be happy with the concept that professional development should be 'voluntary'.

The press release from Messrs. Herbert Smith, a London based 'magic circle' practice set out changes to their learning and development programme, which runs alongside the mandatory one requiring audited returns to the Law Society.



The additional service, which complements the in-house and 3 University Business School programmes, is designed to enhance 'personal development planning' for staff and partners. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a personalised process to develop core skills across the organisation. The process works seamlessly between internal and external providers and is moderated. The essential elements include an induction programme for new entrants to the profession and prospective partners, attendance at development centres during key career stages, core skills learning (business development, client relationship management and practice management, personal development planning (tailored to the individual) a 360° appraisal involving contributions from support staff, and executive coaching. Each component can take up to two days. Training is taken seriously and considered more than just another compliance function. The annual cost is not disclosed but must run to \$millions.

Whilst the Herbert Smith system may seem 'over-the-top' it may be better than a system where any professional development is voluntary. Most clients are unable to determine the skill quotient of their lawyer which negates the 'let the market decide' argument bruited about by some.

Professional development can cut costs as there is a link between PI claims rates and completion of professional development training. Food for thought? LegalBestPractice has developed a range of workshops and seminar formats aimed at improving legal services delivery and hence profitability. Call us for an obligation free assessment of your requirements. (+64 9 520 5360)