

LAW STUDENTS GET DOWN TO BUSINESS

Elgood Effective Learning delivers practical commercial training to students at the Birmingham College of Law



In an increasingly competitive marketplace, smart employers aim to recruit individuals with a broad range of experience in addition to their core skills and qualifications. This is particularly true in the legal field, where law firms will take trainees' legal knowledge and intelligence for granted, but are also looking for well-rounded, engaging individuals who have other qualities to offer. Mindful of this, The College of Law,

Birmingham have implemented Growbal, a business simulation game from Elgood Effective Learning, to help address concerns that solicitors are not sufficiently commercially aware as they enter the professional arena.

The College offers Growbal to all its aspiring solicitor and barrister students. Senior Lecturer Paul McConnell elaborates: 'Nowadays employers look beyond the qualification and attach value to commercial awareness, which is not generally something the students gain at university, and cannot easily be demonstrated at interview. We've been running an annual business competition with Elgood Effective Learning for 7 years now, and find that it not only gives our students a better understanding of the commercial world, but also gives potential employers a firm context within which they can discuss a students' business credentials. It has the added advantage of enabling us to build links with the professional community through our use of external mentors and judges as the game progresses.'

Christine Elgood, who developed Growbal, confirms: 'Fundamentally, every law firm is a business, and every business needs competent personnel who are capable of winning and retaining clients. In a competitive marketplace,



those lawyers who dispense their legal advice within a commercial context will be those who retain customers, and ultimately win more business. Growbal encourages participants to work co-operatively and creatively to find solutions to business problems which they may not otherwise encounter during the course of their studies.'

Students participate as teams of 6 or 7 in leagues of 6 teams, and the College enjoyed unprecedented demand last year, with over 30 teams taking part. Teams are in control of a fictitious wholesale office furniture business which operates internationally. They play for 3 'half years' or sessions, encountering different challenges and business situations as the game develops. Each team is mentored by external volunteers from the business and education community, and after 3 'half years' have elapsed, the winner of each league will be the team with the highest share price. For the final, the top teams have to prepare and present a board report to a diverse and exacting team of judges who then pronounce the most impressive and competent team to be the winner.



Paul McConnell again: ' Growbal generates a high level of excitement and competitiveness within the student body, who really appreciate the energy and fun Christine Elgood brings to the exercise. In addition to developing the complex business simulation, Christine leads all the sessions and advises students on their priorities at each stage of the game. The students clearly like her dynamic style, and her motivational skills definitely generate results. We now include details of the game in our marketing materials to prospective students and employers, and we're convinced it adds value to our course offering.'

Christine Elgood summarises: 'When it comes to seeking employment, the students' core competence remains their professional skill - in this case their legal qualification - but they have to be able to communicate in a way that clients will understand. They need to have empathy. Growbal helps participants to be more rounded, skilled individuals by exposing them to key business issues.'

If you feel your teams need to sharpen their wits, talk to us about Growbal.

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improved performance*

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