



It's about people. COLLEAGUES ARE FAMILY.
CLIENTS ARE PARTNERS.
AND CONSULTANTS ARE HUMAN TOO.

Responsible Business Report 2018

Obelisk Legal Support Solutions Ltd.



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Introduction.



Message from Our Founder, Dana Denis-Smith

"I started Obelisk in 2010 with £500 and we have experienced over 1,000% growth since inception. With this level of growth, you'd think it was easy, but there is a real difference between supporting women in business and taking positive action to back them. Most of my meetings involved pitching to prospective clients with another lawyer, who sometimes was pregnant. I remember one particular meeting with a bank where of the ten people in the room, only my colleague and I were female. They listened, but at the end of the pitch asked how they could trust a 'school-gate mum.'"



Eight years on, **Obelisk Legal Support Solutions Ltd.** is a fast-growing **legal service provider** of over 1,300 lawyers based in the UK and internationally, named one of the **Fastest Growing Companies in Europe by the Financial Times**. The company was founded by Dana Denis-Smith on the idea of **flexible work in law**; we use a flexible 'outsourcing' working model where our consultants work **remotely for the client, either on stand-by or as supporting legal advisors**. Our consultants are former City solicitors, many of whom are parents who seek a more flexible working schedule to help them maintain a healthy **work-life balance**.

This **responsible business report** outlines how Obelisk Support's business operates, our accomplishments since inception and what the future holds for us.



OBELISK

“At Obelisk, we pride ourselves on our Human values when dealing with clients, consultants and each other.”



Being Human.

Our Culture
Our Story
Our Values

Our People.



OUR STORY

The first idea for Obelisk Support was born in India, March 2010. Our CEO Dana Denis-Smith travelled there to explore her next entrepreneurial idea. At that time, many business were opting for the cheaper delivery model of outsourcing centres. But between cramped working conditions and the cost and effect of constantly flying managers out to oversee the quality of work, she began to question the validity of this working model. Why send work abroad when you can source it locally? What effect does this model have on people's lives? What about all the talent and experience sat dormant in UK homes? Such was the genesis of a simple idea. The simple idea to work differently.

OUR CULTURE

We believe nobody should have to choose between family and work. That the future needs committed parents just as much as it needs committed professionals. That the best things in life aren't 9 to 5. And no consultant should be 'on demand'. So we're here to change the way the world works, one lawyer at a time. Because only with good people, can you have good business. We connect our clients with the UK's largest pool of talent. Because whether you're a client or a consultant or something in between, work should work for you.

OUR VALUES

It's easy to say we're 'people people'. It's easy to say we care about and respect the Human element. It's easy to say our consultants are on demand to help our clients. But the differentiating fact is that our entire business model has strong philosophical roots. We wouldn't be here if we didn't believe workers have a specific need. A need that is fundamentally Human - letting them work without compromising on their life goals. We proudly centre ourselves on being Human First. One of the most Human things is the ongoing quest to improve, to progress, to create meaning, and ultimately change the world. To look back and feel proud of life's work.





“We believe that diversity encourages us to think independently collectively.”



Being Diverse.

Gender Diversity
Returners
Ethnic Diversity
Age

Diversity & Inclusion.



GENDER DIVERSITY

Our company revolves around a business model that ensures equal opportunity for everyone and promotes gender diversity within the legal sector. We are committed to advancing women in law, and are proud to employ excellent consultants, over half of whom are female.

RETURNERS

Our business model champions the return of returners to the workforce. 20% of our consultants are returners, while the industry average of 1.5%, and 80% of these returners are women¹. Returners face discrimination due to the career gap in their CV and 3 out of 5 returning women end up in a lower skilled job. At Obelisk Support, we welcome returners and pay the same rate regardless of career gap, age or gender.

ETHNIC DIVERSITY

We at Obelisk Support promote workplace diversity, because diversity brings together different ideas and new ways of thinking. Over 20% of the Obelisk Support team and 100% of our interns are from BAME backgrounds, compared to the national average of BAME workers in the UK workforce, 13%.

AGE

Ageism is a rising problem in the UK; over 50% of professionals over 50 have faced discrimination on the ground of age at the workplace, and age discrimination lawsuits have increased by a staggering 164% between 2009 and 2010². We at Obelisk Support value experience, whether that's life experience or post-qualification experience, therefore we are proud that over 20% of our consultants are aged 50 or over.



¹ The Bar Council "FW: Statistics on Returners within Legal Sector." E-mail message to author. August 16, 2018.

² Rayner, Jonathan. "Is Age Discrimination Rife in the Legal Profession?" Law Society Gazette. April 28, 2011. Accessed September 04, 2018. <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/analysis/is-age-discrimination-rife-in-the-legal-profession/60269.article>.



“We continue to drive change with forward thinking.”



Being Focused.

Women in Law
Our Business Model
A Bespoke Model
Matching Technology

Our Strategy.



WOMEN IN LAW: THE GAP IN THE MARKET

At entry level, around 70% of lawyers are women, however at partner level that figure is just 12%.³ Our CEO Dana looked into the reason behind this dramatic drop, and found that many female lawyers who had taken time out of their careers to care for their families were finding it difficult to re-enter the legal sector. These women felt “forgotten” and as though “their skills don’t matter anymore”.⁴ The Obelisk business model centres on an untapped reserve of talent, and reconnects lawyers with the legal sector.

OUR BUSINESS MODEL

At Obelisk we have created a unique business model that provides consultants with flexible working opportunities. This could be in the form of on-site, full-time and part-time secondments, remote and flexible support, adaptive and on-call support, and multilingual support. We believe that work should work for you; 98% of our consultants work flexibly, and 1 in 4 work remotely full-time.

A BESPOKE MODEL

We pride ourselves in the bespoke nature of our business model. We are an innovative, flexible and empathetic legal services provider who will not only offer the resources wanted by our clients, but the legal solution needed. Our matching team maintains strong working relationships with our consultants and clients to ensure we find the best match possible, because quality isn’t just about skills and experience, it’s about the right fit.

MATCHING TECHNOLOGY

We are a progressive and forward-thinking business; we use technology to enhance our Human First approach. Our advanced technology platform, powered by artificial intelligence, cross references the needs of consultants and clients, and generates a list of potential matches. Our matching team then handpicks the most well-suited consultants and puts them forward to the client.

³ "Entry Trends." Largest Ever Survey on Gender Equality in Legal Profession - The Law Society. Accessed September 05, 2018.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/law-careers/becoming-a-solicitor/entry-trends/>.

⁴ Davies, Catriona. "Your Top-flight Lawyer? She's a Stay-at-home Mom." CNN. November 27, 2012. Accessed September 05, 2018.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/27/business/lawyer-moms/index.html>.



“Our work happens rapidly with an agile, responsive and energetic attitude.”



Brexit
Development Goals

Being Pragmatic.

Next Steps.



BREXIT

Brexit has provoked a period of great uncertainty in many sectors, and the legal sector is one of them. With potential new immigration controls, many legal practitioners are uncertain about the future of their rights to work in Europe and the UK. There is a growing 'talent' concern, in that the pool of legal talent is likely to reduce in the face of tighter immigration controls.

PREPARING FOR BREXIT

DEVELOPMENT GOALS



“Our presence is global, and our talent pool extends across all the world.”



Being Global.

Global Presence
Foreign Jurisdiction
Language Skills

International Reach.



GLOBAL PRESENCE

At Obelisk Support, we pride ourselves in our international approach. We have an international pool of talent, with **consultants located in every single continent** except for Antarctica. We have recently on-boarded consultants in the USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Jordan, Germany, and Bulgaria. **Over 20% of our consultants are internationally based and 50% have multi-jurisdictional experience.**

FOREIGN JURISDICTION

Beyond experience and location, many of our consultants have experience of working abroad, and many are qualified in multiple foreign countries. All of our consultants are qualified in England and Wales, and **one in four consultants has at least one or more foreign jurisdictions.**

LANGUAGE SKILLS

We value language skills as we believe that languages bring together different ideas and ways of thinking. Our talent pool includes legal professionals who can work across our stand-in, stand-by or stand-out service lines in **27 languages**, and provide **legal translation services**. **40% of the Obelisk team are multilingual**, and can speak French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Tamil, Bengali, Hindi, Thai, and Japanese.





"We believe that everyone can give
a little for a greater cause."



Being Charitable.

Community Outreach
First 100 Years & Spark 21

Volunteering & Corporate Responsibility.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

At Obelisk Support, we promote a culture of selflessness. On average, each member of the Obelisk team has contributed at least 4 hours of their time to volunteering every week. In the last year our team have donated 20 times to various charities—such as the ASOS Foundation, totalling over £18,000.



FIRST 100 YEARS & SPARK 21

The **First 100 Years** is a ground-breaking history project created by Dana Denis-Smith, CEO of Obelisk Support, supported by the Law Society and the Bar Council. The project charts the journey of women in law since 1919. The project is powered by **Spark21**, a charity founded to celebrate, inform and inspire the future generation of women in the profession. In 2019 the project will mark the centenary of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 which paved the way for women to become lawyers for the first time.

“People don’t know their history — who the first woman solicitor was, for instance. There is no archive like **the First 100 Years** to help us place ourselves in history.” – Dana



SPARK21



“Our planet is a shared living space,
therefore we believe we should all
do our bit to look after it.”



Being

Eco-friendly.

Carbon Footprint
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
Transport

Environment.



OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

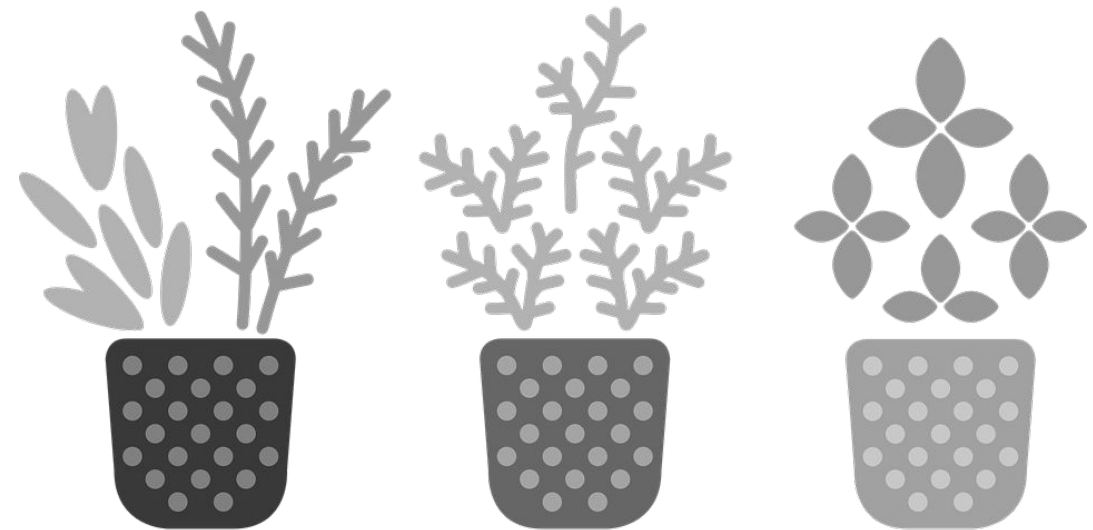
At Obelisk, we believe we have a duty to protect and respect our planet. We work hard to keep our carbon footprint as low as possible. Whether it's switching the lights off at the end of the working day or using **eco-friendly products** in the office such as non-antibacterial hand wash, we believe that every little helps. Last year, our average carbon footprint (electricity) per person in the office was **0.28 tonnes per year, compared to the UK average of 1.6 tonnes per year.**⁵

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

At Obelisk we believe we should all do our bit to protect our planet. That's why we make an active effort to be as eco-friendly as we can at the office. We use **reusable and recyclable products** such as recyclable paper and reusable bags. We recycle our used coffee pods, batteries and printer cartridges, and always make sure to **separate our recyclable waste** to reduce office waste.

TRANSPORT

We are consciously aware of the benefits of taking public transport powered by electricity. **The entire Obelisk team takes public transport**, and the majority take the train and tube. Additionally, **63% of our staff work remotely at least one day a week**, which further reduces our carbon footprint.



⁵ Warwick University. "Carbon Calculator - National Averages." Carbon Calculator - Effects of CO2. Accessed September 04, 2018. <https://www.carboncalculator.co.uk/averages.php>.



“We’re here to change the way the world works one lawyer at a time.”



Being Successful.

Reputation
Awards

Our Success.



REPUTATION

At Obelisk Support we seek to build on our success. In 2016 we were invited to join Mayor Khan on his visit to North American and European capitals to showcase his **International Business Programme**, and in 2017, we were the only legal services business to be selected to join the mayor on his **trade mission trip to France**. Our founder Dana has spoken a number of times; most recently she spoke on the **100 year of women's suffrage at Hay Festival**, and delivered a **TEDx talk on How to be remembered at Royal Tunbridge Wells**. She also played an important role in erecting the first statue of a woman, Millicent Fawcett, on Parliament Square.



AWARDS

- **LexisNexis Legal Personality of the Year 2018** awarded to Dana Denis-Smith
- Obelisk Support was named one of **Europe's fastest growing companies** by the Financial Times
- Obelisk Support listed in Inc.com's Inc. 5000 List of **Fastest-Growing European Private Companies 2018**
- **WEConnect International Best Mentor and Role Model Award 2017** awarded to Dana Denis-Smith
- **Legal Week's Innovation Awards Marketing Innovation** awarded to The Attic, Obelisk Support's Thinking Space
- Obelisk Support listed in **The Times' Top 50 Employers for Women List 2015**. LegalWeek's **Outstanding Legal Innovator Award 2015** awarded to Dana Denis-Smith
- **Best Strategic Leadership Award 2014** awarded to Obelisk Support at the MPF Awards. Finalist for second year for **Best Emerging Firm**
- Obelisk Support named Runner Up for **'Most Agile Organisation' Award** at Opportunity Now Awards 2014
- Obelisk Support rated **stand out in the Legal Pioneers** category at Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards 2013

Our Consultants' Stories.



Gareth trained at a Silver Circle law firm and specialised in finance. He worked at Barclays for 9 years in London and Hong Kong before returning to the UK to work for his family furniture business, however he missed being a lawyer. In 2017 he got in touch with us and was on-boarded as an Obelisk consultant. Soon after, Barclays contacted us looking for a banking and finance lawyer. We selected Gareth and he started his first job the very next month. He made a successful comeback on the legal scene and went on to win an Obelisk award in 2017.



Linklaters

This UK-qualified lawyer trained at a Silver Circle law firm and worked at two investment banks. She took a three year career break to care for her family. She then joined Obelisk Support and was matched to a position at Linklaters. Given her seniority and depth of expertise, feedback from partners at the law firm was very positive. They found her to be thorough, careful, very good at taking points away and working through them, and good at finding appropriate knowhow in the group.

Our Consultants' Stories.



This banking lawyer started at CMS. She was then recruited by ING as an in-house lawyer. After six years, she decided to take a career break. Four-year later, she read an article in The Wall Street Journal about Obelisk Support and got in touch with us. Through Obelisk, she returned to ING as a remote legal consultant. ING was so pleased with her work that in 2017 they asked her to contribute to another corporate finance project. Obelisk also recognised her as one of its star consultants at our annual awards in 2016.



This lawyer trained at a City law firm and worked in their corporate department for two years. She then went on to work as assistant editor for a magazine for a year before taking a career break to raise her four children. Twelve years later, she joined Obelisk as a consultant and was selected out of four consultants to join White & Case's private equity team. We believe that her story is inspiring for anyone who thinks they have been out of the legal world for too long.



Legal work that works for you.

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Obelisk Legal Support Solutions Ltd. is a limited company registered in England & Wales.

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