

**Nicola Kömpf**

Alerion, Paris

nkompfale@

alerionavocats.com



**A**s a partner of Alerion, head of German Desk and recently designated as board member in charge of communication and HR, I am currently contributing to support in our office young lawyers and parents (both women and men) to manage their work-life balance to achieve their personal goals and to reach a higher degree of diversity.

Alerion is a mid-sized French independent full-service law firm based in Paris, which focuses on international business law. Our multidisciplinary team includes over 70 lawyers who are constantly combining their talents to deliver high value added and practical solutions for our clients.

While the fight against discrimination was already enacted in the US by the 1964 Civil Rights Act, pro-diversity activities only appeared in France in the early '90s. Furthermore, people increasingly wish to consume more ethically and responsibly. The same applies to services. A welcoming, open-minded environment is, from my

point of view, also a key issue in recruiting future talent.

Diversity emerges as an important management tool in law firms and we have attempted to harness this evolution. Over the last decade we have implemented different measures built around five basic pillars:

- recruitment of lawyers with different backgrounds, with typical and atypical CVs, focusing on various experiences and strong language skills;
- creating of an environment conducive to wellbeing and allowing personal expression;
- career guidance;
- collective action to strengthen the spirit of belonging to an attractive law firm;
- favouring cross-disciplinary teamwork.

These efforts have been well awarded, as we have reached a good gender balance of 47:53 female/male lawyers. Women account for 27 per cent of our partners, a high score compared to equivalent international law firms in France. And a decent percentage have become partners through internal promotion, ie, seven of the 18 partners are former associates who climbed the corporate ladder including two women lawyers.

Three lawyers have also been admitted to a foreign bar and a great number have foreign diplomas or additional education in addition to their Paris Bar admission. I am myself, a member of both the Paris and Berlin Bar, the mother of three children (18, 16 and 11 years old), and a partner since 2000, a good example of what is possible.

Courage and determination are essential as well, in part, chance meeting the right people at the right time to support the project. Consequently, we have the benefit to develop resourceful solutions adapted to our clients' needs with our flexible, highly qualified, open-minded and diversified team.