

## Firms promoting “mediocre men”, Law Society president says

News | 11 January 2013



### Scott-Moncrieff attacks those who pay lip service to benefits of flexible working

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, president of the Law Society, has attacked some law firms for “promoting mediocre men” at the launch of a report calling on practices to adopt targets to increase the number of women in senior roles.

Moncrieff said there remained an “uncomfortable truth” about firms where men dominate the boardrooms and the opportunities for flexible working were scarce.

“Unwittingly, these firms may be losing talented women and promoting mediocre men,” she said. “It is not enough to merely pay lip service to the benefits of flexible working. It is not acceptable to consider women who take advantage of flexible working practices as somehow lacking commitment.

“The risk is that boardrooms will be full of men only some of whose talent warrants their senior positions.

“If career progression was based on pure merit, some male business leaders and law firm senior partners would never even have seen the paintings on the boardroom wall.”

Scott-Moncrieff added that an increasing number of firms had “genuinely embraced and adopted modern flexible working practices” and were attracting more talented women and men with boardroom potential as a result.

**However, Ronnie Fox, principal of City employment firm Fox, said it was “nonsense” to say that during a recession firms would appoint people as partners or directors who lacked ability.**

**“It is ironic that the fourth female president of the Law Society in ten years is using her position to attack members of her own profession on sex discrimination,” he said.**

**“When times are tough, law firms, like all other businesses, make huge efforts to retain and promote talented people, regardless of gender. No business can afford to make somebody a partner or a director who lacks ability. It is nonsense to say otherwise.”**

The report, launched last night and commissioned after last year’s International Women in Law Summit at Chancery Lane, recommended that law firms adopt targets to increase the number of women in senior roles and measure and report the take-up of flexible working.

Other recommendations were introducing a mentoring or sponsorship programme and improving partners' management training.

Firms such as Hogan Lovells, Ashurst and Eversheds have already introduced targets for the number of women in high-level positions, while others, such as Linklaters, have signed up to the government's Think, Act, Report equal opportunities initiative.