

Diversity task force update

April 2015

The task force & its four working groups

The January 2015 round-table meeting on diversity led to the creation of a pan-professional task force. With over 30 members from organisations such as CIPA, ITMA, the IP Federation, FICPI-UK and the IPO, as well as from *Managing IP* magazine, the task force is charged with implementing the diversity-improving initiatives agreed during the round-table discussions.

It has been divided into four working groups, each tackling a specific area:

- A. Awareness-raising upstream of the IP professions
- B. Best practice charters & accreditation schemes within the professions
- C. Diversity & inclusion training within the professions
- D. Support within the professions

Each group is working separately on its projects, led by a group co-ordinator. The four co-ordinators will meet regularly to review progress and ensure that efforts are appropriately aligned.

“Project Video”

One of the first projects to get off the ground will be Group A’s creation of resources for raising awareness of the IP professions and developing a wider pool of potential recruits. These resources will be targeted primarily at school and university students and their teachers and careers advisers. The group is collating a database of networks, organisations and individual contacts through whom the resources can be distributed.

Work is about to start on a collection of short video interviews with people in the IP professions, from a range of backgrounds. The style and content of these videos will be designed with a younger and more diverse audience in mind, and will stress the breadth and inclusivity of the various IP professions.

If you have an interesting story to tell about your work in the IP professions, or how you came to be here, and would be willing to record a short video for our collection, please contact the group co-ordinator Parminder Lally (plally@marks-clerk.com).

Best practice charter

Group B’s aim is to establish some kind of voluntary code of practice on diversity and inclusion, and to encourage its adoption across the IP professions. This might take the form of a charter which IP professionals can sign up to, or even, ultimately, an accreditation scheme. The group recognises that whatever the format, the scheme needs to suit a range of different working environments, including both small and large private practice firms and industrial IP departments. A tiered scheme

might be used, with an entry level placed to facilitate early uptake of the most fundamental best practices.

Group B has begun gathering information on existing such schemes in other professions, to help tailor an approach that works for the IP field.

Training

There are plenty of training resources already available on diversity and inclusion; Group C's challenge is to identify those that are appropriate for the IP professions, accessible and cost-effective. It has made contact with several training providers to discuss suitable training and awareness-raising resources – likely to be a combination of seminars, webinars, online training and guidance, workshops and coaching. The ubiquity and the dangers of unconscious bias are likely to feature highly in such training.

Clearly there will be overlap between Group C's work on training and Group B's on best practices, and the two will co-ordinate their efforts in this area.

Support initiatives

Group D has begun to scope out what various support groups might look like within the IP professions, for example for women, the LGBT sector, those with disabilities, black and ethnic minority groups and carers. It then plans a survey to gauge the likely levels of uptake and to seek further input on the type of support that people need.

The two groups likely to be established within the next few months are for women in IP (with help from *Managing IP's* existing network) and LGBT. There are plans for social, networking and awareness-raising events, discussion forums, mentoring schemes and potential lobbying on issues that affect the working environment for minority groups.

If you have suggestions to add, or are interested in becoming involved in a support group, please contact the group co-ordinator Lee Davies (lee@cipa.org.uk).

So...

There is much going on, and much still to do. But it's fantastic to see how this initiative has brought together enthusiastic and committed volunteers from across the IP professions, and every reason to believe that we will be able to make a difference over the next 12 months. There is clearly an appetite to make the IP professions more diverse, more inclusive and more welcoming – and a recognition that everyone will benefit from that. My thanks to all the task force members, and in particular the group co-ordinators, for their hard work so far.

Andrea Brewster
Task force leader