



'Futureproofing our workforce'

Opinion: Richard Fraser, CEO Frenkel Topping

No doubt, there's a stereotype of a financial services careerist - white, middle class, university-educated, male.

I'm very conscious we need to look beyond that "traditional" talent pool to future proof our workforce and open the industry up to those who may not have previously considered a job in financial advice or wealth management.

Our future success depends on having a diverse team that reflects the clients we work for. We operate in a particularly sensitive area of financial services and because of the specialist nature of our work, we need people with a special blend of skills - technical ability, interpersonal skills, and a high level of emotional intelligence. People who fit that bill can come from all walks of life. In fact, I'd go further to say they *need* to come from as wide a range of backgrounds and cultures as possible if we're going to remain relevant for our clients. They could be working in industries completely unrelated to finance.

It's in pursuit of making our business as genuinely accessible to all that we launched our training academy some years ago.

Our training academy and our graduate programme aims to attract younger people of all backgrounds and qualification levels to financial services. It's allowed us to take on employees, develop their skillsets and open their eyes to a career in the field. One of our youngest consultants is a perfect example of how this can work in practice. He joined Frenkel Topping as an administrative assistant with no prior office experience. Through our training academy, we've nurtured his talent and supported him in his development to become a fully-fledged adviser who manages his own clients and plays a key part in the delivery of our expert witness reports.

I'm incredibly proud to see all of our apprentices and graduates growing in experience and confidence and adding real value across the business every day.

Prioritising this accessibility is crucial for enticing younger generations into our industry. There has long been a perception – perhaps warranted – that the Financial Services Industry is "stuffy" and out of reach for anyone who isn't a Russell Group-educated student. We're determined to change that view, and to make young people understand that it's a vibrant, diverse and interesting sector.

Diversity in all its forms is an undeniably vital factor in encouraging millennials and Gen Z-ers into the industry. These are socially-conscious generations that actively search for companies which align with their values – and that includes employing a workforce which is diverse in ethnicities, genders, cultures, backgrounds, classes and more.