



Governance and Compliance Profiles Christopher Hitchins, Discussing Employment Law and Diversity

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London managing partner Christopher Hitchins was featured by *Governance and Compliance* magazine, where he spoke about his career in employment law, diversity and environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. Christopher noted that a key component to tearing down societal barriers in law firms is in creating "the psychological safety in the firm for all individuals to feel confident that not only do they have a voice, but that voice will enable them to make meaningful contributions." He added, "When everyone feels they belong at a firm, retention and recruitment of diverse individuals is easier."

Regarding ESG, Christopher noted that diversity within an organization is critical to reaching those goals. "If organizations, led by senior management and boards, are expected to confirm that ESG risks are appropriately overseen and mitigated, lack of diversity in the board directly goes against the considerations that form the 'social' part of ESG. We need to bear in mind that as trusted legal advisers, if we are to assist clients in addressing increasingly critical environmental, social and governance challenges, we need a diverse leadership team ourselves to steer clients in the right direction when it comes to identifying and addressing any ESG-related gaps; we need different voices, perspectives and knowledge because, put simply, great minds do not think alike."

Christopher offered sound suggestions for those interested in a governance career. "First, learn the rules, and go back to the original laws, or regulations, or guidance, and do not rely on a shorthand or summary view of these. Understand your regulator, and how it applies those rules. Ultimately, you will need to know your subject and regulatory environment inside out — black letter learning, allied with experience. Secondly, once you know the rules, read around the subject, and spot trends, potential developments, find out what others think and how they interpret them. Thirdly, you will make mistakes, but do not take a flier and make decisions that you are not authorized for. Respect the chain of command, and quickly train your antennae to recognize a potential problem, flag it to someone more senior and ask for their opinion. Finally, do not become a 'yes' or 'no' person; organizations need solutions, so learn your office's culture, tolerance for risk and the regulatory

environment in which it operates, and the sanctions for non-compliance, and apply your knowledge of the relevant compliance regulations in that context." ("[Ultimately, you will need to know your subject and regulatory environment inside out](#)," September 2021)

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