

I'm In! *This is my story*



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I had a three and a half year career break after my children were born. It changed the lens through which I see things and helped me bring a different skill set to my role.

Catherine Taylor
Partner

Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself.

A: Although I love the law I have made a couple of bids for freedom. Before turning to law, I studied Fashion and Fabrics as I wanted to be a Fashion Designer. After ten years as a partner, I took a three-and-a-half year career break when I had my twins Charlotte and Georgie and when they were nine weeks old we went to live on a tiny Greek island!

Q: What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

A: It is an interesting question. If you had asked me ten years ago I would have said that it was something nice to have and is something that we should do but, as I have become more senior and given my own personal experiences, I have seen that it is actually key to our business. The reason is that unless we have the optimum diverse range of people in our business, we are not going to provide the best service, or be the best business we can. We have to work hard all the time to try to be as inclusive as possible, to ensure that as much as possible, we are as diverse as the clients and other business people we work with.

Q: Do you feel valued and appreciated at CMS?

A: At Olswang, I was the only woman on the Board. At CMS this is no longer the case and Penelope Warne has been really good at making me feel welcomed and valued. I jointly manage LAIE with Jonathan Warne, who has become a great friend and we truly work as a team.

Q: What is your experience of being a role model?

A: I am very conscious of trying to be a role model, and I think that one of the advantages I have is that my career structure has not been very typical. When I had my children, I decided to take a three-and-a-half year career break and return to work, which (thankfully) has gone well for me. I also live away from London and try to work one day a week from home. It is great that I can be a 'success story' even if the way I have done it is not the typical 9 to 7, 5 day a week route, because it means that as a role model, I am not saying you have to do it like this, but there are other ways in which you can achieve success. Equally, however, I have also experienced first-hand the challenges that come along with taking a three-and-a-half year break and juggling work/life balance. I think that it has definitely given me the experience that enables me to assist others who have equally diverse career paths.

Q: Do you think CMS is a diverse and inclusive firm, and what can it do to improve?

A: I think that CMS is a diverse and inclusive organisation, and that there are many good things that we are doing here, however I do not think that we are doing enough to publicise the opportunities that are available. These include flexible working, career breaks, maternity/paternity policies and benefits packages, which should be communicated in a clearer way.

I also think that we need to be more agile in the working patterns we sponsor. This is why we introduced 'Time Out' which is a one month, no need to justify, period of unpaid leave for all staff. However there is still a lot of work to do on work flexibility. I also think that this agility extends to Partners not least as they set tone for the rest of the organisation.

Furthermore, I think we could do more to integrate returners back into the business and help to build their confidence. As I have had a three-year plus maternity- break myself, I can truly empathise with employees who have returned back to work after a career break, which may place them in a challenging position.

