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# Find out more from Anastasia Klein and what she thinks about women in the Real Estate industry

## What attracted you to the Real Estate industry?

Contrary to my mantra that you must be strategic about your career, I never set out to become part of the real estate industry.

My first job after completing my law degree was as a Management Trainee at a Housing Association, which operated a large portfolio and was very active in acquiring and developing sites. This sparked my interest in occupational issues and bricks and mortar.

Eventually, I returned to the law, and I worked as a property litigation paralegal at an international law firm. Whilst I was there I heard about Maples Teesdale, and was interested in the fact that it was a specialist real estate law firm. I got in touch with them to see if they were looking for a trainee solicitor; luckily for me they were and I am still here over 16 years later!

## If you had one key piece of career advice for women, what would it be?

Be strategic about your career, and vocal about your ambitions from as early as possible. Of course, this advice does not just apply to women!

## How can businesses level the playing field to create an environment in which everybody thrives?

There has to be equality of opportunity to progress, with clear pathways that are not based upon criteria that is more favourable to, or more easily achievable by, one group above others.

We aim to ensure that those who work flexibly are not disadvantaged within our workplace, by ensuring that the right technology is in place and that in practice, not just in theory, we actively support flexible working practices. I work both part time and flexibly and am transparent about my working practices, as I hope to serve as a positive example for our team.

At my firm, we also ensure that training, marketing



**Anastasia Klein**

Maples Teesdale, Real Estate Partner

events and internal social events are held at different times on different days, to ensure that those who struggle to attend early morning or evening events, or who do not work on specific days are not side-lined.

## How can our male colleagues be allies for equality?

I genuinely believe that male colleagues are essential allies for equality. Conversations around equality that don't involve everyone will not, in my view, help achieve equality.

In terms of specific things Maples Teesdale is doing to achieve this, last year we organised an event for our clients and contacts discussing female experiences of career progression and transition into management roles. A number of our male colleagues attended; their feedback was unanimously positive and they are keen to be involved in future events.

Also, whilst some organisations see flexible or part-time working as a "women's issue", numerous male (as well as female) members of our team work flexibly. This

creates equality and moves away from the stereotypical view of flexible working practices being solely for women.

I personally mentor a mix of both men and women, and my own mentors (the current and previous managing partners at my firm) are both male. I have found that the mentor / mentee relationship can create links, relationships and open conversations about issues such as equality.

In addition, groups such as Real Estate Balance, of which Maples Teesdale is a member, are working to achieve a gender balance in the real estate industry. Working with these groups can be very inspiring. It was a very proud day for our firm, when our managing partner signed up to their CEO Commitments for Diversity.

Overall, the assumption that men might not want to be part of the conversation does not mirror my experience and it is imperative that we ask their opinions and listen to their ideas about equality. Just as we need everyone to be part of the solution, we also need everyone to be part of the discussion.

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### **What do we need to do to see meaningful change being made in the corporate and property world?**

We need policies about equality to be lived (not just on paper) and conversations about equality to involve everyone.

Also, in my view it is imperative that more women in the industry make themselves visible by, for example, speaking on or moderating industry panel discussions. These more visible roles should encourage other women to step up, and also normalise the presence of women in these traditionally "male" roles. I am a registered speaker for Women Talk Real Estate which is a fantastic organisation that aims to do just this, by both training women for panels and offering female speakers for events.

Personally, I found it difficult to find any female role models who were similar to me; not a "superwoman", but a professional with a young family who wanted to progress to a management role, whilst still being fully involved in her children's lives. I hope that by being transparent about my own experiences, I can offer another model for partnership, or management roles that people can relate to.

Finally, for change to be meaningful, I believe that we need to make sure that our business allows all of the members of our team to be authentic and to feel comfortable bringing their whole self to the office.

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### **What insights can you share regarding meaningful diversity at senior levels, which overcomes the "tick box" approach and ensures senior hires are still based on true merit?**

I think that this is a real challenge, with no simple answer. There are numerous ideas around this topic, but for me the key is establishing and maintaining a strong, diverse pipeline and a clear, and equally achievable pathway to senior roles.

The pipeline for the issue is twofold; relating to both retention and recruitment.

In terms of retaining the diversity of your existing team, I think that all organisations have a responsibility to ensure that the pipeline of talent within their business is diverse and that it remains so all the way to management level. If you find that at entry level there is a good mix, but by the time you approach mid or senior level roles, that the pool has become generic, you have to ask when and why this happened and do something about it.

In terms of recruitment, it's not true that candidates from diverse backgrounds aren't available.

- Choose to work with recruiters who are positive about the need to present you with candidates of diverse backgrounds.
  - Make sure that the wording of your job adverts is
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neutral, so as not to subconsciously put certain groups of people off applying.

- Consider using technology to enable you to review applications on an impartial basis. For example at Maples Teesdale to process the trainee solicitor applications (of which we receive in excess of 150 applicants each year), we use software to ensure that the demographics of our applicants (gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background, sexuality) are consistent at each level of selection. We also remove all identifying information from the applications when they are considered to avoid any bias (unconscious or otherwise) affecting our decisions.

In my view, if you can recruit a diverse team, offer them clear and equally achievable pathways to senior levels, and retain them, then the "tick box approach" should be avoidable all together.

## About Crestbridge

Crestbridge provides global administration, trustee, accounting, management and governance solutions that are shaped to our clients' needs wherever they do business.

We recognise that our success and that of our clients is down to the quality of the people who work here at Crestbridge. So our focus is squarely on attracting and retaining individuals who have outstanding experience in their field and share our values as an independent, forward-thinking business.



## Anastasia Klein

### Maples Teesdale, Real Estate Partner

Anastasia Klein is a real estate partner at Maples Teesdale, a City-based law firm that specialises in commercial property.

As co-Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Maples Teesdale, Anastasia is passionate about the need for diversity within the real estate industry and the legal profession.

Anastasia is also a keen advocate for women raising their visibility in both the legal profession and the real estate industry. Anastasia has moderated panel discussions, and is also a founding member of the Allbright women's networking club, an active member of Real Estate Balance and is registered as a speaker with Women Talk Real Estate.

## Stephanie Workman

### Crestbridge, Manager

Stephanie has over 12 years of real estate and fund administration experience. She is responsible for a large portfolio of UK and European real estate holding structures for a number of prestigious corporate clients, predominantly based in North America and the UK.

Stephanie is an active committee member of Lean In Jersey, one of the fastest growing networks in the world, currently with 369 members. The network is a platform which provides support, training, mentoring and development, with the primary aim of helping women to achieve their ambitions.

