

## UK breakthrough for law firm's new partners

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**Pictons Solicitors LLP**, a regional law firm operating in the Northern Home Counties, has achieved what is believed to be a UK first, by appointing two new partners who are not solicitors.

Anil Virji, the Head of the firm's Cost Department, is a Fellow of the Association of Law Costs Draftsmen and a Costs Lawyer. He has been with the firm for almost 7 years.

Yvonne Hardiman has been the firm's head of human resources for nearly four years. She is a chartered member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

It is believed that they are each among the first in their respective professional bodies to achieve partner status in a solicitors practice. The significance of the appointments lies in recent government changes to the way the legal profession operates. Previously partners of law firms have always had to be qualified solicitors. But now, in an attempt to make the profession less exclusive of outside influences, ownership and therefore partnership has been opened to lawyers who are not solicitors and to non-lawyers.

The move has been criticised by some in the profession as opening the doors to 'Tesco law', the idea that the public can obtain legal advice from supermarkets. But has more far-reaching implications, as **Roger Talbot, Pictons' Chairman**, explains.

'We are very conscious of the issues and challenges, and the opportunities, which these fundamental changes to the legal structure in this country introduce', he says

'Its crucial for the legal profession that we seize these changes and make the most of them. Anil and Yvonne are highly valued colleagues here at Pictons. Both offer opportunities for Pictons to expand operations in their respective specialist areas. In offering them partnerships we feel we are promoting the interests both of the firm and of our clients'.

'Pictons continues to be an innovative and forward-thinking law firm, recognizing and embracing the changes taking place in the legal profession and how it operates'.

Pictons has offices in Luton, Milton Keynes and Hemel Hempstead. They now have **14** partners and around **100** staff.

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