



Ogier's focus on innovation, collaboration and flexibility is a key differentiator

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The head of the Banking and Finance team in Jersey and Europe, partner Katrina Edge, was interviewed for the Legal 500 Offshore Special Edition which was published in November 2019 about the need for offshore firms to take a global approach.

What's the main change you've made in the firm that will benefit clients?

Our focus is on delivering market-leading client service by being the most advanced offshore firm in digital service delivery and innovation. We have rolled out an award-winning, cross-jurisdictional initiative to streamline our transaction processes, promote a culture of continuous improvement and ultimately deliver a better client experience.

As part of this firm-wide infrastructure investment and development programme, we train all employees in process-mapping skills. This involves our legal teams working alongside our dedicated service innovation team to streamline and refine the way that client work is undertaken, to deliver a more efficient, consistent and transparent service for clients. This means clients know exactly what to expect from us and when.

What does innovation mean to you and how can firms be better at it?

I think it's all about approach. The delivery of legal services has changed, with clients wanting concise commercial advice. In essence, "is this an issue or not?".

Our strategy of "getting to the point" has embraced that - as the work gets more complex, it becomes even more important to give straight, commercial advice that cuts through the complexity and legal jargon. We have invested heavily in training our teams to support this ethos to ensure a consistent approach at all levels.

What are the biggest challenges facing firms in the offshore world?

The market is only going to get more competitive, meaning experience and a commercial

approach is going to become even more important (particularly as regulatory pressures and deal complexity increases). At the moment there are in the region of 50 offshore law firms, but I anticipate that as the deals become more complicated and increasingly cross-border, we will see increased consolidation in our markets.

Offshore firms need to have a global approach to their businesses. Our focus has for a long time been an "international" one - for example we were the first "offshore" firm to open an office in Luxembourg, and we also have teams in Hong Kong, London, Shanghai and Tokyo. I expect this to be a continued area of focus as client bases become increasingly global.

What do you do differently from other offshore firms?

In addition to our focus on delivering commercially focused advice to clients in a transparent and efficient way, our culture of innovation, collaboration and flexibility is a key differentiator.

We have invested heavily in employee engagement and well-being projects. For our teams, we place great emphasis on supporting people to be the best version of themselves at work.

We have opened a conversation around what it means for our people, and how we can support them to be extraordinary.

What have you found is the best way to recruit and retain talent?

In terms of attracting talent, it's all about being open and specific about what we offer. Our employer brand focuses on tangible things - we support flexible working and provide the technology to enable that, we also talk about how we're technology focused and we practice an "open from day one" approach - you don't need to wait until you're at a senior level to feed your ideas up. It's ultimately about respecting and supporting the individual, and treating people like grown-ups - feedback from new recruits shows that it really resonates. And then to retain talent it's all about ensuring that you deliver on those promises - proactively supporting people and their work/life balance, genuinely supporting and enabling agile working and flexibility, and making sure everyone has a voice.

What should young lawyers know about working offshore, compared to onshore?

There was a perception when I moved offshore from the City that offshore work was repetitive and narrow in focus. This is certainly not the case, in my experience offshore lawyers have exposure to a wide variety of high value and high profile transactions, my practice for example requires me to advise on local and global financing transactions (involving multiple asset classes), corporate transactions and restructuring and insolvency deals. Structures are becoming more complex, as is the advice we are required to give. To me, working offshore provides an opportunity for a more rounded and varied career than may be on offer in some parts of the onshore market.

What advice would you give to the next generation of partners ready to rise the ranks?

It goes back to this question of approach - it's not just about being technically excellent (that's expected). Lawyers looking to rise through the ranks also have to be leaders, they have to be communicators, they have to be project managers, they have to have relationship skills, and to be able to see the bigger picture. And commerciality is key.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you? And, is it more difficult offshore?

It's important that diversity and inclusion translates into action - concrete policies that are well thought through. For example, as a firm we've fully embraced agile working, which is a great thing.

Ogier has a genuinely collaborative ethos. There's a real recognition here that all our employees have views and ideas about how to do things. It's important that we all remember that our own perspective is not the only one. From their first day in the office, no matter what their role or team, we genuinely want to hear different voices - they shape how we do things.

About Ogier

Ogier is a professional services firm with the knowledge and expertise to handle the most demanding and complex transactions and provide expert, efficient and cost-effective services to all our clients. We regularly win awards for the quality of our client service, our work and our people.

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