



## Revolutionising the business of law

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*In a recent interview with Connect magazine, Ogier partner Christopher Jones speaks about the many ways in which Ogier has transformed the way it does business.*

Change is now a constant march and working with new tools and technology to enhance businesses and our everyday lives is a vital part of our success in embracing it.

This has certainly been the experience of international law firm, Ogier, and, over a delightful meal at the Slaughterhouse, Ogier's Guernsey Banking and Finance Partner, Christopher Jones, explained how the firm has put itself at the forefront of offshore law by putting change at the heart of the business over the last decade.

“Going back five or six years we sold our administration business and that allowed us to concentrate on the law firm,” he began. “That has led to a transformational shift in the firm. We’re a much younger firm now; the partnership is younger and so is the executive board that provides our leadership and strategy.

“We’ve completely revolutionised the way we look at business and how we do it. The change could not have been bigger.”

Chris has lived and worked in the island for the past decade, having started his career with major firms in London and New York.

During his time with Ogier he has noticed many evolutionary changes, including those in the relationship between the leadership team and its employees. One of the examples of this is the Employee Value Proposition.

“The idea is that it isn’t just about coming into work and getting paid. It’s about all the other things people now want from their career. There’s a whole host of things that employees value, like a strong successful brand, being able to dress down and working in a way that suits them. Walking around my team now, there are people using standing desks, if that suits them, or wearing jeans if that is appropriate for their day. Those things don't matter.

“Corporate social responsibility is also really important for folk these days. We support charities financially but in addition to holidays, every year everyone gets two days off to volunteer. One of those days is linked to the firm’s CSR theme for that year - perhaps helping with school refurbishment with work colleagues. The other day can be for whatever charitable theme you are passionate about. We say, go and have a day on us and do it.

“Recognition and reward have revolutionised. We now have a transparent way of rewarding people and giving recognition. We used to do formal twice-yearly reviews which have now been replaced with regular and more frequent chats. Doing it this way means that objectives can regularly be discussed; there are no surprises and no formal interview.”

Another area becoming increasingly important to employees, as well as to clients, is the firm’s approach on diversity.

Ogier has chosen to offer a programme of training talks on ‘unconscious bias’. So far, the entire global partnership has taken part in the workshop-style sessions, which are now being rolled throughout the organisation.

“The training is really interesting because it tries to unpick your automatic preconceptions. It’s not about being consciously biased. It is about awareness and making sure that everyone is comfortable in the work environment.”

As technology continues to develop, businesses are able to support changes in how employees carry out their roles and from where they are able to work. Ogier has invested heavily in both new equipment and training to maintain a fresh approach to technology and innovation.

“We’ve made it possible for people to work as flexibly as possible using good and secure technology,” Chris explained. “Someone might need to leave the office because they need to pick up their kids or, frankly, because they want dinner with their partner. Having the right tools means that they can do that and then, if they need to, they can log back in and work from home.

“In our team we have one associate who, for personal reasons, works from Brighton. It took a little bit of getting used to, but now we don’t even think about him being out of the office. We can use platforms which allow us to work collaboratively without necessarily being in the same room. It’s easier now to work with people in this way.”

Chris has always leaned toward the finance side of law and, since moving to Ogier, has specialised in banking and finance. He covers a broad range of the sector including real estate financing, fund financing, derivatives, asset financing and restructuring.

“At most of the firms in the island, the norm is for general practitioners who do a range of work. Ogier has honed a number of different service lines which works well and mirrors what is happening in the big firms in places like London. Advice is much more technical these days and is

so much more specialist that we have to have real strength and depth in our knowledge. Being service-line led allows us to build that deep understanding.”

Chris' focus is, increasingly, on fund financing, which has been growing rapidly over the last few years. The island itself has a large fund market and Chris believes there is “massive potential” for more locally based funds to get involved.

“Some time ago there was a realisation that raising capital from investors, which is then used to make investments, was really only one aspect of the fund world. What people realised is that there is a huge asset there - the ability to call on that capital is actually an asset the fund can use to borrow against.

“The fund can use this borrowing to increase its investment potential, or it might want to have it for cash flow reasons; it smooths out those bumps in the road and means the fund can be a bit more flexible.

“We are a dedicated banking and finance team, so we really understand the market. Our global network of offices, including the Channel Islands, Cayman, BVI, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Shanghai and Tokyo, means that we are truly cross-jurisdictional. We can bring our expertise on the laws in each jurisdiction together with the different styles and approaches which apply in each place. We can all learn from each other and be a market leader in providing the right service.”

It comes as no surprise that working as a lawyer can be difficult and stressful at times and so 'down time' and the chance to relax is hugely important. For Chris, this means getting on the tennis court, listening to classical music and, as often as possible, getting out on the water in his boat.

“It's important that we help people to keep a balance in their lives between work and home. This can be hard and stressful work and we need to recognise that in a meaningful way. 20 years ago you would have been left alone to just crack on with it. There is a recognition now that this doesn't work for our teams or for the firm.

“You can't expect people to work hard and work long hours without understanding that that has to be compatible with the rest of their daily lives.”

## 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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