



Time out with partner Simon Schilder

Insights - 21/06/2021

This interview first appeared in the June 2021 edition of CONNECT.

Working from home has been good for Simon Schilder, who heads Ogier's BVI law in Europe team from its office in Jersey. He's keen on sport and when he wasn't working in the office in St Helier, his proximity to La Moye Golf Club has, on occasion, allowed him time to get nine holes in before breakfast and the start of the working day. If it's not golf, then it could be indoor rowing for the early riser who also has to balance his working life across several time-zones.

And those days can be long as he can expect a call from clients in the Caribbean or North and South America late into the evening.

"I have always had a mixed Europe and US based practice, so it was a busy day when I was working in BVI but when it was close of business in America, you had this period of quiet and calm. Having moved here, I'm in the same time-zone as half my practice but it means the Americans are all still busy at work while I'm trying to finish work, so I just have to be flexible."

An economics and politics graduate from Southampton University, his interest in working in the financial sector was sparked by the collapse of Barings Bank in the mid 1990s.

"I followed it in the papers and read all the books and funnily enough, in my first week as a trainee solicitor in London I was in a meeting with the former deputy chairman of Barings talking about why a bonus for one of those involved shouldn't be paid. It was fascinating and I've enjoyed law ever since."

Having worked in London, in 2004 newly-weds Simon and his wife Clare-Louise were looking for an adventure and that was working for Ogier in BVI. The plan had been to stay for a couple of years but a lifestyle that effectively enabled them to live a Caribbean holiday every weekend - which included Simon using his divemaster qualification to help out at a local diving centre - meant those two years stretched to eleven. Both their boys were born in the Caribbean, but it was time to move closer to home.

Simon had become a partner at Ogier in 2007 and an opportunity came up in Jersey, so in 2015 the family crossed the Atlantic to settle in St Peter. Simon was due to start practising Jersey law, but as Simon's clients from BVI followed him, the firm decided to set up a BVI team in the Channel Islands.

“There are currently eight of us in Jersey doing full-time BVI work, and we have people in Guernsey. Large amounts of BVI work come out of London and Switzerland, and there is also work here in the Channel Islands because businesses here will have BVI work as well as their Jersey and Guernsey business. So being here has opened a number of doors. A lot of the international businesses who are headquartered in Jersey might have a BVI offering but the decision makers for those businesses sit in Jersey. If they have a BVI issue they need to get some advice on, post-Covid, I can go to their office to have a meeting which they find is very convenient.”

It's all signs of how the offshore model has been changing over the last few years. Jersey has rapidly evolved into a financial services hub, drawing in different businesses and new skills.

“There are more things going on here in Jersey than the old, traditional offshore business model. International finance is attracted to Jersey because there is a varied skillset and infrastructure here. It encourages growth in the bigger picture for the finance industry.”

Having the BVI team in Jersey has its advantages for Ogier too. It means talented people remain with the business. People will often spend part of their career in the Caribbean, but for many people, it is not intended to be a permanent move..

“Lawyers who have been in our BVI office and want to come home or live nearer home, frequently end up coming to the Channel Islands and this enables us to retain that talent in the business. Some of the lawyers who work for me in Jersey, used to work for me in BVI. It's a bit like getting the band back together! For those people who are not from Jersey but are from the UK, being here enables them to be closer to family, while maintaining many of the work/life benefits of not working in London.”

Sport plays a significant part in Simon's life and in addition to golf, he has competed in the British Indoor Rowing Championships. The benchmark for indoor rowing is 2000m and a couple of times a month, Simon tests himself over that distance on his rowing machine.

“On those days when you go out and you know it's going to hurt, for me that's at about 1700m, that's when I'm in the pain cave and that last 300 are going to be horrible. It's when I can't feel my arms anymore.”

But for those less strenuous days, there's cricket. Simon plays for Aztec St John which last year won the Jersey Evening League.

“I've been playing cricket since I was eight years old, and last year was the first time I'd ever

played in a team that had won a league. Last year's cricket season was interesting because of Covid we didn't start for so long. But then when we started it was brilliant fun because life was beginning to return to normal, but no one was travelling anywhere and that meant everyone was in Jersey. In our team, most of us work in finance and normally we are travelling back and forth to London for business, so it has previously been challenging for us to get a full strength side out. Last year, we were all here so, there was a lot of competition for places. We weren't the best team in the league, but we were a good team and some of the matches that could've gone either way went in our favour. It was tremendous."

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