



## A firm at the forefront of change

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When Katrina Edge began her career with Ogier in 2002, the legal profession was very different. Suits were a requirement, lawyers worked from their offices, and women were not a common sight at senior levels.

18 years later, working practices, workspaces, dress codes and attitudes within the profession are all more flexible.

Ogier had embraced flexible working practices long before the start of the current pandemic with employees and partners being encouraged to work remotely across Ogier's offices. "Ogier has been investing in technology for a long time, meaning that as a business we were able to move all of our staff to effective remote working very quickly when the pandemic hit", Katrina said. "I already worked from home at least one day a week so the 'new normal' was not too much of a shock to the system, although it was a relief when home-schooling finished."

Ogier also had long-embraced technology platforms to support their clients which proved invaluable in the early days of lockdown.

"At the start of lockdown, a number of clients didn't have the technology or systems to support electronic signing of documents. As a firm we had been using this technology for a while and were able to offer this service to clients to ensure that transactions could close smoothly, or as smoothly as possible in those early days. This was another great example of how our investment in technology enabled us to identify client need and maintain the same high standards of service during the pandemic."

As Head of Banking and Finance in Jersey and Europe, Katrina travels regularly to Ogier's offices in Asia and the Caribbean and to Europe and the United States to meet with clients.

"Before lockdown most of my meetings were held face-to-face, I certainly hadn't heard of Zoom or Teams – now we use them every day. Since restrictions were imposed, I have attended

virtual partners meetings, client training sessions, quizzes, wine tastings and team drinks. I'm amazed how well it has worked and how quickly everyone had adapted."

Of course, the flexible working culture was not developed with a pandemic in mind but as a means of allowing employees to strike a good work life balance and to place wellbeing at the heart of life at Ogier. During lockdown, staff were provided with free access to an app offering exercise and health tips and the company's confidential health care line continued to support employees 24/7.

Walks on Jersey's north coast and playing the piano are Katrina's preferred ways to relax but lockdown also provided the opportunity to try online yoga classes – bringing some calm and balance to the days spent juggling online meetings and home schooling.

"It was important for us to recognise that everyone was experiencing lockdown differently. Some of our employees may live alone and not have had access to outdoor space, others may be worried about family living in different jurisdictions or may have had to juggle work with childcare. Supporting team members during the pandemic has been particularly important and this is something which I am proud to say has been recognised across the firm at all levels."

Born in the Bahamas, Katrina grew up in the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas, where her father worked in banking, before moving to Jersey. She studied Ancient History at Bristol, instead of law, but always intended to become a lawyer.

"I think there is a misconception that you have to study law to become a lawyer," Katrina said. "If you are prepared to take an extra year for a law conversion, then there's no reason why you can't study another subject you enjoy too."

After completing her training and qualifying as an English solicitor with Farrer and Co, Katrina left London to join Ogier in 2002 in a Corporate and Finance role, qualifying as a Jersey Advocate in 2005.

"I decided to move back to the island to be closer to family. I had been working in a Corporate and Finance role in London and this fitted well with Ogier. It was a much smaller practice at the time, but the prospects for growth were already there."

Katrina was also admitted as a Cayman Attorney-at-Law in 2017.

Katrina has a wide ranging finance practice with a particular focus on fund finance and real estate finance transactions, helping conclude purchases of properties such as the £1.28 billion Walkie Talkie building in London, and Gaspé House, the highest value commercial real estate transaction in Jersey to date.

Working part-time when her children, now 11 and 14, were young, Katrina became a partner in 2013. When she joined Ogier, the legal profession was not known for its diversity and Ogier was

no different with only a few women in senior roles across the group. This is beginning to change and Ogier is taking a progressive approach to improving its diversity. Katrina with over 50 other people – half men, half women – are now involved with Ogier's Diversity and Inclusion Group, which regularly seeks the views of employees in all jurisdictions and at all levels of seniority as to how Ogier can improve diversity and inclusion within the organisation.

"When you look at the statistics you see how many more women than men enter law as a profession. However, when you get to partner level the number of women is much lower. Clients, employees, and society now expect to see a more diverse leadership team. The more diverse your leadership, the more voices are heard, and this helps everyone in the business.

"When I became a partner, there were very few senior female role models which is something that I am pleased to say is slowly beginning to change. I am keen to be involved in building on that progress and hopefully help to break down some of the challenges I encountered in my early career."

The world's businesses are adapting to new ways of working – some of which have been thrown into sharp relief by the pandemic and some of which have been coming for a very long time. In both instances, Ogier is in a strong position to take a lead.

"As a firm we know we have not reached where we want to be yet, but we have developed a strong identity as an innovative and progressive organisation. We have buy-in from partners and staff, understand what is important and we have come a long way."

## 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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