

Time out with Banking and Finance Partner Paul Chanter

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Following on from lockdown, businesses across the island are looking at implementing more flexible working practices for their employees – whether that be more opportunities to work from home, adaptable working hours, or more casual clothing days.

But for Ogier, that's been 'business as usual' for some time now. The firm's full package of reward, recognition and culture aims to bring out the best in all of the law firm's employees, as Partner of the Banking and Finance team, Paul Chanter, explained to CONNECT...

"The thing that has been abundantly apparent to me in my near seven years with Ogier is the focus on employees," he said. "Putting employees first is absolutely critical in inspiring people."

"We are open from day one, so as soon as someone joins us, they have an equal voice and an equal place at the table. Their opinion is as important to us as anyone else's."

"Then there are other key strands like flexibility. Yes, clients' demands are absolutely fundamental but the way we service that is down to individual circumstances, and we try and be as flexible as we can in that."

"Technology is fundamental in allowing for that, so the investment we've gone through in infrastructure has really paid dividends, and obviously during covid that's been crucial. Our IT platforms are brilliant and all of the access we have to electronic databases etc. works incredibly well."

"Boot the Suit' is another one of our principles. There used to be a real stuffiness in law firms; you had to be dressed in a suit irrespective of your role or the kind of day you had ahead. For us, what matters is that you come to work and do the best you can possibly do for a client. We give you the platform to be your best self, and wearing a suit doesn't necessarily mean that someone's going to be their best self and give their best advice."

Paul moved to Guernsey nearly seven years ago to join Ogier. He began his career in the UK and spent some time in France, before taking the lifestyle choice to relocate to the Channel Islands.

"I took the decision to move over to Guernsey to escape the ferocious hours," he explained. "I'd done all of the big city stuff and life there was incredibly stressful. I was a finance lawyer in the UK working long hours. I had young kids at the time and I wasn't seeing them much."

"So, the move was about work-life balance but also quality of work. The quality of work in the UK was exceptional, but Guernsey's got a fantastic reputation in the area I work in. Also, the French aspect appealed because I was in France for a long time. Guernsey has much more of a leaning towards France than Jersey does. It was a combination of factors – all of which proved to be true."

"There's no such thing as fake smiles in Ogier. You are valued as a person and for what you

can bring to the table, which is refreshing coming from large international law firms where that's not necessarily the case. Certainly, ten years ago when I was back in the UK, I really did feel that I was a number in a vast machine. Your view wasn't as important, but here it genuinely is."

Paul believes his personal journey through the ranks at Ogier is testament to the firm's focus on its employees and their career paths.

"I moved to Ogier as an Associate in the finance team," he said. "Then I was promoted to Senior Associate in 2015 and did the Guernsey Bar exams. I was, on the one hand, privileged to be exempt from the French aspect because I hold a French law degree, but, on the other, gutted to have foregone the opportunity to spend three months, as was, in Caen!

"I passed the exams and became a Guernsey Advocate in 2016, was made Managing Associate in 2017 and then I made Partner in July this year.

"In those nearly seven years, I've grown and gone through all of the rungs, and have been allowed to do the Guernsey Bar even though traditionally in my area being Guernsey qualified was reserved for more senior fee earners. It does give you extra gravitas but it's clearly much more important if you're going to court everyday as a court-based lawyer, so being allowed to do that is a sign of Ogier's investment in me."

"My journey is case in point. It really exemplifies how this isn't just lip service that Ogier are paying, it is applied. And happy people make happy clients."

Paul now enjoys covering a wide spectrum of work in his day-to-day job – something he wasn't able to do when he was working in the UK.

"In the UK, I was a leveraged finance banking lawyer, so when you come here you naturally end up having a much wider practice area. The joy here is you're not pigeon-holed automatically and because you have much more of an overview in different areas, it helps you in advising clients to the best of your ability."

Ogier has recently drawn on the expertise of employees working in numerous areas to quickly adapt to market needs.

"The speed and agility with which the Restructuring and Corporate Recovery Group and the Private Equity Group have responded to a changed business environment is really testament to how we operate as a firm," explained Paul.

"We sensed a need for this expertise, drawing upon different strands of our business across the globe and across service lines, to help businesses through this challenging period, and we are now seeing increased workflows in those areas."

Paul believes the Bailiwick is in a "positive place" at the moment and is looking forward to seeing how that progresses in the future.

"As a firm, we're very busy," he said. "For instance, our property team has acted on some of the biggest property deals locally recently, which is a great sign of confidence in Guernsey, whether that's local market or open-market."

"We Are Guernsey has reported that investment flows between Guernsey and the United States are growing, primarily due to the sensible proportionate regulation here in Guernsey. And we think Guernsey is the ideal gateway to the UK and the European Union for US managers. So, I think we'll continue to see – certainly in the private equity sphere – a good pipeline of work. And our corporate and finance teams are equally busy."

“Things are promising for Guernsey.”

About Ogier

Ogier provides practical advice on BVI, Cayman Islands, Guernsey, Jersey and Luxembourg law through its global network of offices. Ours is the only firm to advise on these five laws. We regularly win awards for the quality of our client service, our work and our people.

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