



Training and innovation at the heart of a revolution

THE BIG INTERVIEW

ROBERT LLEWELLYN JONES

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The award recognises those directors able to demonstrate that, through their direct actions and leadership, their business has made a positive impact on the local community, wider society and the environment.

Ten years after establishing Newport-based Convey Law Mr Davies was adding another honour to the growing list of the firm's achievements, which include the best conveyancing company in England and Wales at the 2014 Times and Sunday Times Estate Agency awards, best large conveyancing provider, the best overall UK conveyancing provider and best direct conveyancer 2014 at the LSF Conveyancing Awards.

What, then, sets Convey Law apart from other law firms? The answer, Mr Davies asserts, lies in the way the firm works with its clients.

There is the belief, he says, that in the 21st century clients no longer want a traditional law firm where a solicitor "is always engaged in

considering how best to guide his fellow man through a labyrinthine world", preferring instead one that embraces "forward-thinking approaches to service, billing, commercial know-how, innovation, people management and community engagement".

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Explaining the term he said: "We undertake volume conveyancing work and are in the top 50 conveyancers in the country in terms of the number of transactions we process. What we always try to do is provide a first-class client service which lies at the heart of our operation."

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A PASSION FOR RUGBY AND FUNDRAISING

A product of Llandovery College and its rugby tradition, Lloyd Davies, 45, read history at Swansea University before taking a conversion course at the University of the West of England, Bristol, and the legal professional course at the University of Glamorgan, now the University of South Wales. On qualifying as a solicitor he

became a partner at Loosemore Solicitors, Newport, and specialised in residential conveyancing. In 2004 he set up Convey Law to benefit from Council for Licensed Conveyancers regulation in order to allow the firm to work on both sides of a conveyancing transaction. Of the firm's extramural activities he

said: "Over the course of the last five years we have implemented a charity fundraising culture. We have raised in excess of £250,000 for charity with our favourite charity being Ty Hafan Children's Hospice." As the son of a former WRU medical officer he is passionate about rugby and is chairman of Monmouth RFC.



the heart of a revolution

people by email or telephone. But there is only so much this technology can do.

"We have the online case-tracking systems in place but people really need to be spoken to and have that personal touch.

"At Convey Law we have the very latest IT systems which we have invested in for several years through our online management monitoring and case-tracking systems. This means clients can access all the information relevant to their cases online, 24/7.

"Despite this they still want to phone and I believe that's the right way to



conduct the transaction, by having someone at the end of the line."

This is the revolutionary dimension the firm has won awards for.

He said: "Most conveyancers don't have the background teams supporting the conveyancers, with much of the administrative work being done behind the scenes in a quiet environment where people can function effectively without phones ringing.

"Conveyancers can then put their time into helping clients move house quickly, with the minimum amount of stress."

This is, Mr Davies points out, a process that works in two ways.

"The way we look after our people has been important to us," he said.

"It's easy to provide staff with too much work, so we measure how much they have so they can perform effectively. To do this we give them the best possible training, which involves employing a trainer to make sure we are deploying training effectively throughout the business.

"Earlier this year we qualified 20 paralegals from our bespoke paralegal course, run in conjunction with the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, and we have qualified eight licensed conveyancers over the last five years."

And here he breaks off to pay tribute to the Welsh Government for funding that underpinned the paralegal courses.

He added: "But that has recently been withdrawn, which is a shame because I'm sure other businesses would benefit from increased training.

"There is a shortage of qualified conveyancers

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and paralegals and, as we come out of recession, training is critical."

To emphasise the point he added: "We have been commissioned by the Conveyancing Association to pull together a paralegal training course, an online function that can be deployed within different legal practices to measure the effectiveness of their staff.

"This means they read the material, look at the course structure and then answer test questions online."

The word revolutionary occurs again, when he adds: "It is in fact quite revolutionary - something that's been lacking in the industry. So proper and effective training will play a big part in our world over the coming years and into the future."

Of this brave new world of legal conveyancing, he said: "We have some catching up to do, especially in the training sector.

"This is why we are developing this paralegal course, which has to do with client service and interaction with legal procedures."

Of the human factor this involves, he said: "Many of our staff have been here a long time.

"Of our 80-plus employees many have been here for more than five years and are ingrained in the way we operate and enjoyed our inhouse training.

"We find that those who come here need an induction process which can take three to six months, during which time they can understand how our systems and procedures work.

"We hold their hands throughout the process which ensures they are happy, the clients are happy and when their course is finished they are ready to operate effectively."

Law, like life, is a constantly changing process and currently that process involves developing a new case management system which brings together the firm's best practice procedure. This, Mr Davies believes, will make the practice more efficient, more effective and help others in the conveyancing business.

All of which raises the question, in which direction Convey Law is moving as it looks to the future? The answer Mr Davies gives is succinct and to the point.

"I think for now it's more of the same," he said.

"We need to keep investing in our people and training them. We have six new recruits and every year we will recruit new people to come in and train as licensed conveyancers.

"Currently we have six paralegals who have completed the paralegal course and will go on and train to become licensed conveyancers.

"It's about achieving our maximum potential in relation to the facilities we have here, but we have scalability.

"This may mean we look at moving to different locations and taking our offering to different cities. We don't need to be in a particular location to function effectively since we act for clients from around the UK.

"The only reason we would locate to Cardiff or Bristol or any other city would be to tap into that workforce.

"We are always on the lookout for good new recruits who fit in with our ethos.

"Our training format is taking off and becoming an industry standard as well as the IT systems we employ."

Such systems are, he admits, subject to the general economic climate which following the recent general election is "very good".

Every year, he explains, is different with major sporting events, royal weddings and general elections all having an impact on the housing market throughout the year.

Of 2015 he said: "This year it was slow leading up to the election but now it seems to have taken off and we could have a busy summer.

"Looking to the future the Conservatives have done a reasonable job with the initiatives they have brought in such as Help To Buy and stamp duty changes. These have had an impact on the housing industry and it's looking good for the future.

"We have been through difficult times but now the Government has realised it doesn't need to raise interest rates to control the housing market.

"That's not the way and only makes the banks more wealthy.

"What they need to do is control lending, which they have done, making it difficult to get a mortgage which means house purchasers have to jump through several hoops."