

THIS ISSUE: We meet the Finance Police | **PLUS:** A Life In...our special supplement which gets behind the job title

CONNECT

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A portrait of David Cadin, a middle-aged man with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a green and white striped tie. He is sitting with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a solid green color.

David
Cadin

Bedell's boss on major change in the trust and legal sectors



UNPLUGGED

In each edition of Connect we enable someone in the news to speak directly to you, in their own words...

Unplugged. What you are about to read is a transcript – beyond minor changes to punctuation and syntax to aid clarity – these words come directly from the person who uttered them.



Trust in the future

James Filleul

Managing major change within any business is recognised as one of the hardest tasks for leaders – how do you keep your team all heading in the same direction, particularly if typically, they are used to working their own way?

So far this year, law firm Bedell Cristin have appointed a new Managing Partner, rebranded and separated from their trust company, Bedell Trust, announcing a management buyout, supported by private equity firm, Inflexion.

With the market shifting in the local trust and legal sectors, and a restructuring within the firm itself, 2016 has been a year when managing change is the norm at Bedells.

James Filleul asked the new Managing Partner, David Cadin, why the law firm had split from Bedell Trust:

David Cadin: There are a variety of different factors. One is size. Law firms

seem to grow small trust companies. Small trust companies grow into bigger trust companies, and eventually you end up with two similar-sized businesses; and the tensions between those two businesses in terms of strategies, demands on cash and resources, just become too much and there comes a point where actually it becomes sensible to separate.

I think we've also got a new dynamic in the market which is the entry of private equity. You can see it across the sector, that private equity has come in, they seem to be enthusiastic about this type of investment, so there is an opportunity that did not exist perhaps ten or fifteen years ago; and you couple that with being in the right place at the right time.

The benefit is focus. It gives us a 'monoline' business in terms of legal services, and you can see the tension that has existed historically between trust companies who were major clients





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of law firms saying, “well, actually you’re running a trust company.” We are now a stand-alone law firm. We are not competing in any sector against potential clients or clients.

There’s also another tension. There’s a tension, that’s been touched on elsewhere, which is the question as to what lawyers do? You know we’re all looking at professions. What’s the future of professions? Are we lawyers to serve the public or are we businesspeople, who carry out a bit of law? At its heart I think we’re lawyers.

James Filleul: How do you see the Trust market at the moment?

DC: I think the trust market has taken off. I think the entry of private equity into this space has just created huge opportunities, so I think the trust market is no longer ‘Channel Islands-centric.’ They are looking for global presences. That is the way it is going, there is a lot of money being invested. You have just seen Elian effectively being sold on again. There is movement and it is going to carry on, as long as the trust company sector remains an attractive proposition.

I’m very confident about the future of Jersey. I think we’re perfectly positioned from a regulatory and geographic standpoint to do what we need to do, and that’s particularly important in Brexit. You know, nobody knows what’s going to happen, but we think we’re in the right place.

No one knows what Brexit is going to hold, but actually the sun is still shining, the rain is still falling, you know nothing has changed and when you’ve got the UK government saying well, “...Brexit means leaving the EU,” but they can’t give you any further details, actually this is going to be a long-term process; and during that time people are still going to want to invest, there are still going to want structures, and they’re still going to want to be going through Jersey companies.

JF: Where does the legal sector go next?

DC: That’s an interesting one. The legal sector is very competitive. We have

got some great firms out there, and there’s a lot of competition. I think you can start to see that a lot of the law firms are spreading their wings. They’re looking to reduce jurisdictional risk, so Channel Island firms are getting into the Caribbean, into Asia and so on. Some of the Caribbean firms are coming back here. I think that’s going to carry on. It’s healthy having a vibrant and competitive market.

JF: It’s clearly a major change for your team, so from a leadership point of view, how have you tried to manage that?

DC: I thought it was a huge challenge, and I sat down and I thought about how I would feel if I was in their position, with limited information and limited visibility; and as a result of that, I came up with what I thought they needed.

I thought the staff needed to see a firm brand that they could rely on, and to see a leader.

So having done that, and identified those things, I’m trying to push forward with them.

JF: What actual measures have you been able to put in place to manage the change?

DC: If we start with the announcement. The announcement was that there has been an exchange, and in due course there is going to be a complete separation.

The follow-up announcement from that is telling employees of the law firm, “...this is where you are, this is who is leading you, this is the Managing Partner and this is what we’re going to do,” so giving people clear vision.

We were lucky because we also had a re-branding project going on, so that re-branding project gives everyone a cohesive sense of identity.

In terms of us putting the flag up and saying, “...this is your law firm, this is what it means to you to be in the law firm,” we were halfway there. So, I could get people aligned behind the flag as it were.



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That was the basics and then there were certain, I suppose, hard and soft things I put in place.

The soft things were being approachable, listening to people, empowering people. If they have got a view, there's no wrong views, let's listen to them, let's talk about them and see where it takes us.

Hard structural things, so governance; changing the governance of the law firm; making it visible to all: who is running the law firm? Is it just Managing Partner or is it a team of people? If it's a team, how do they work? How do they function?

And then there's a bit of ownership, and the ownership is 'just do it.' I had a lovely client once, I sent him some advice and he just sent me a text back saying, "...no excuses, just do it," and that is what I think you have got to do.

If you're leading, just get on and do it and make it happen, and when people see things happening, they feel more confident and more settled.

JF: What was the big concern for you?

DC: Everyone else's mortgage. I have a responsibility. My responsibility is to them, it's to the staff. That's what keeps me awake at night. It's making sure that my staff are where they need to be. That they have the resources they need. Looking after staff, that's what keeps me awake.

JF: What was the biggest challenge?

DC: The biggest challenge is energizing the law firm and making it move forward, following the separation. It could be very easy to sit back and say, "...well the trust company has gone, let's leave it, let's not worry about it, we'll carry on doing what we've done before," but I don't think that's right.

I think we've got a huge opportunity as a standalone business and we've got to make the most of it.

JF: A lot of what you've been talking about is about changing people's

mindsets...how do you do that?

DC: Total ownership. You keep on at people. You lead from the front and just keep the pressure on.

It's repetition and its excitement. Creating a noise, telling people this is what you expect and telling people it's okay to fail, it's okay to change, that we don't want to do the same thing we've always done. You can see that the market is changing, people are changing, you know you're not doing the same things you were doing ten years ago. Your processes have changed. People change and we've got to embrace that.

I think it took me six weeks to go from being appointed Managing Partner, to holding a full strategy day with all of the partners and all of the senior managers. In those six weeks, some people were cynical - "...what's going to change, it's business as usual, this is just a pain," - but once you go through the strategy day, and people really see that there is a difference, then people start to get engaged.

JF: Was there a moment in it when you thought, "...it's working, we're getting there!"

DC: It was the strategy day for me. Starting off with a strategy day, you don't know how it's going to go, and you don't know at the end if you're still going to be in position...then you've done the strategy day and you've come out, and actually the energy and the unified direction of travel is incredible.

JF: Would you agree managing change for large numbers of people is not a natural skill?

DC: Absolutely. I think these are skills that I've developed as a litigator. So, reading people, trying to work out what their reactions are going to be. Where do you pressure people? Where do you pull pressure off? Those things I think help me in terms of management. I also think you've got to share information,

and sharing information is what a litigator does in court. How many times do you go to an organization and people don't know who the Managing Partner is, or the Managing Partner has never spoken to them, or never spoken to the organization as a whole. It seems to me that has got to change, and if you're comfortable speaking to people, well, you're half way there.

JF: With such a big internal change, is there a danger that you lose focus on actual client work?

DC: Quite often people will say, "Bedell is a great place to work." Why does that matter to clients?

On one level, it doesn't; but on another level, if your lawyers and your staff are working together in a collegiate fashion effectively, that means we can do better things for clients, quicker, cheaper, more effectively.

There is a client service benefit, and it's taking that message from nice place to work, through to actually, "...we do things different, we can get results no one else can get," and that's because of our culture.

Our re-branding exercise involved talking to staff, clients, intermediaries just to find out what they thought of us. "Nice culture", "tangible culture," they were the things that came back.

Clients appreciate that. But it's turning that, and working out why that's important, and it is important. It's important because it's a differentiation. It's a real differentiation. People come to us because we give them something different.

I think culture plays a great part in that. If you've got this culture, this client service of being innovative in how you deliver your services, people buy into that. People get enthusiastic about it and they come together with a team approach.

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