



LEGALINK
INTERNATIONAL BUT PERSONAL

THE INTERVIEWS
SERIES

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Laurence Keenan

Laurence Keenan Advocates & Solicitors



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— LAURENCE KEENAN
ADVOCATES
& SOLICITORS

“In closing gradual expansion usually provides for solid foundations which you can build upon with confidence.”

What is new with your firm?

The Isle of Man is a relatively small legal jurisdiction, which has a diverse economy and is not solely dependent upon being an international financial centre.

The challenge that we and other professional firms faced in recent years has been to encourage a sufficient number of young graduates (those born on the Island and others born elsewhere) to pursue a rewarding career on the Island. One of the benefits being that there is no requirement here for a two hour daily commute to and from the office in order to secure work that major city firms take for granted.

The lack of good quality graduates is a relatively new experience for this firm and creates challenges for this firm and other professional firms on the Island.

In order to deal with such shortage we have had to be more creative in our approach to work by engaging third party

investigators and professionals in other disciplines and jurisdictions (principally England and Wales) to be able to create multi-discipline teams to meet the demands of our clients, (private individual, domestic and international corporations to public sector agencies).

The “good” news on the horizon (which I doubt is Brexit driven) being that the demand for graduates in certain sectors of the UK economy is slowing as their current capacity has been met. If this is the case the supply tap in the Island will flow more smoothly once again this coming year, and hopefully beyond.

Such difficulties have required us to review the work and services we want to provide and determine how we can do so effectively and cost efficiently for clients and of course our business. This has been a positive step for us from which we have introduced several beneficial changes.

A fairly recent change has been receiving instructions from the public sector to provide legal advice and assistance. This supports but is independent of the Attorney’s Chambers.

There is definitely a change of direction by the Public Sector and a welcome one.

We are currently heavily involved in advising the Police in a multi-jurisdiction and multi- agency, proceeds of crime/money laundering investigation. This is similar to and complimentary to the work we have been most involved with over the past near thirty years of pursuing individuals and assets in different jurisdictions but through civil law processes; i.e. freezing orders, search and seizure provisions.

Otherwise we continue as we always have done to provide a variety of services to domestic and international clients.

Which practice areas are the most in demand in your firm?

On the international front we are very actively involved with regulatory issues, (financial and criminal), advising clients in various jurisdictions on a wide range of legal work. Although M&A work here is not in any way near the scale of the major cities it is still part of our bread and butter work. 2019 was a busy year for us in this area and looks to continue in 2020.

As a small but general service firm we provide a wide range of advice and assistance to clients, many of whom have been with us for years and return as and when the need arises. The Island still enjoys a steady flow of work from over the globe, reflecting the well regarded and appropriately regulated jurisdiction in which to create and develop businesses. So like, most legal practices 2020, we look forward to the new and without doubt varied challenges ahead of us. We are positive about the future notwithstanding the difficult negotiations following Brexit.

Can you share an example of cross - border work with another Legalink firm?

Over the past twenty seven years of being a member, we have had numerous examples of cross-border (jurisdictions) cooperation and assistance from various member firms.

The work has ranged from tracing assets and the consequential multi-jurisdictional aspects to litigation tracing a missing Will of a former Isle of Man resident who had moved to Australia, resettled and then passed away. The lawyer died and his files had to be traced.

The size of these referrals have varied greatly from collapsed mutual funds to the recovery of money misappropriated

by a “trust fund pensioner” who found a wealthy spinster (with more money than he had access to). She passed away but not before he had taken control of her assets for his own use. He eventually decided to tell her family she had died and had been buried.

Thanks to our colleagues in Portugal we achieved a happy ending for the family of the spinster. As for the “trust fund pensioner” who knows he may still be chasing spinsters!

Our membership of Legalink has been instrumental in achieving fast and cost effective services to clients, whose “problem” has arisen in another jurisdiction, where legal advice or assistance is required.

In one particular case some years ago two Legalink member firms in Pittsburgh, USA Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney and Duane Morris were engaged by us but unusually on opposite sides.

We had obtained the appointment of a Receiver Manager over a small group of Companies (Buchanan Ingersoll supplied the Attorney, jointly with an Isle of Man Attorney). We then had to issue proceedings against those companies and Duane Morris advised us.

It all ended in a satisfactory way and we and our colleagues remained on good terms. The work was interesting and challenging for all sides.

What are your views on Legalink expansion?

Since the creation of the network as “a European Network of Lawyers” some thirty years ago- it is clear from the number of jurisdictions involved that we have expanded.

We are no longer “Europe centric”.

As regards to Legalink, are you happy about your firm's membership? What can we do better?

We have been a member firm in excess of twenty-seven years and remain content to remain.

From my perspective the committee and administration complete the tasks they are expected to do, but at the end of the day member firms will get out of their membership what they as the attendee(s) and their firms put in.

Keeping in touch with members directly by telephone, email or letter, builds and refreshes relationships already started, which leads more often than not to a greater understanding of what membership brings to the member firm and what is available to clients.

What is your favourite thing to do in your spare time?

Enjoying quality time with my wife, Anne, family and grandchildren. Travelling and in particular revisiting countries and cities I have worked in previously and appreciating what I missed having spent days between hotel rooms and offices during prior visits.

Live concerts where my favourite singers and bands whose music I have enjoyed over several decades prove they can still entertain - even though they have aged gracefully through time, they are not ready to give up. It is Leo Sayer in March, whom Anne and I are looking forward to seeing again.

Finally heading to our "bolt hole" in Mallorca, where the sun always shines, the Island is engaging and you can chose from leisure pursuits to high culture. A truly wonderful place to chill.

Thank you very much!
Laurence Keenan