



Nicholas Butcher, managing partner at Maples and Calder Picture: Fergal Phillips

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Nicholas Butcher is managing partner at legal firm Maples and Calder. Maples and Calder is part of the Maples Group. Established in the Cayman Islands in the 1960s, the Maples Group also owns funds and fiduciary business MaplesFS. The company established a Dublin office in 2006 and employs just over 400 people in Ireland in legal, funds and fiduciary roles.

Tell us about your career to date.

I graduated from the London School of Economics in 1992, training as an associate solicitor with Speechly Bircham, now Charles Russell Speechlys, in London.

I qualified into the corporate group in 1995 and then moved to Hammonds, now Squire Patton Boggs, where I built on my M&A experience, focusing on corporate finance advisory work, before becoming a partner at the firm.

I was admitted as an attorney-at-law in the Cayman Islands in 2004 and joined the Maples and Calder Investment Funds team, specialising in formation and transactional advice to investment funds. I was admitted as a solicitor in Ireland in 2015 and took up my current role last December.

Are you where you expected to be in your career?

Having originally qualified in London, if someone had told me then that I would eventually head up an Irish law firm as part of a global financial services group via a long stint in the Cayman Islands, I would have suggested (after having looked the Cayman Islands up in an atlas) that they might be a little wide of the mark. Yet, here I am. And that's really the point.

Law has provided me with wonderful opportunities and opportunities are always worth exploring, even if they involve some risk. A willingness to be flexible and to take a chance or two has been beneficial to me.

What was the best career advice you got along the way?

I think the best advice I ever received was about the importance of recognising achievements, whether it is by teams or individuals.

This approach ensures that people feel they are accomplishing our goals, both as a collective and as a valued individual.

Based on your own experience, what are your top career tips?

I would say that relationships are absolutely key. Build bridges and strong relationships at every stage of your career, because these relationships are the foundation that will sustain you throughout.

Give 100 per cent to everything you do.

Ensure you give everything to every bit of work you do, whether it's for a client, your manager or your teammate. It won't go unnoticed and you will learn and expand your skillset throughout.

How would you define your work style, and how has this evolved over the years?

I see myself as a leader and I always try to encourage and challenge my team to achieve their potential.

I have a very strong belief in the power and value of positive reinforcement and goal-oriented mentoring for team members.

This approach helps to overcoming challenges and achieve results by getting the best out of the team.

Treating people with the respect they deserve is critical to the success of a leader. As a general rule, you will not go wrong if you treat people the way you would expect to be treated yourself.

In terms of managing teams and individuals, what are your insights?

It is important to accept that management is inherently complex and challenging. You must be capable of coping under pressure. If you accept this, and you are agile and responsive in pressured situations, you will make better decisions and achieve better outcomes.

Don't avoid conflict, but deal with it even-handedly. Talk to the relevant person and address the issue head-on. Dealing with conflict is a part of management and a good manager can turn a conflict into a learning experience.

It is important in these situations to be approachable, open-minded, and to come up with tangible plans to resolve the issues at hand.

It is vital to be - and to be seen to be - fair-minded, reasonable and empathetic.

In a large organisation like ours, it is important to try to see things through the eyes of others and to ensure that you are always listening.

Everyone will, from time to time, get this wrong. You have to be ready to admit your mistakes and change direction when the need arises. The ability to successfully pivot is a sign of strength and confidence, not weakness.

What about communication and negotiating the typical ups and downs of working life?

Effective communication is an essential part of management, but it's equally important at all stages of your career. I would always advise anyone not to be afraid to speak up, or to take calculated risks, within reason.

Has networking played an important part in your career?

The legal sector is relatively small in Ireland and people tend to know one another quite well. Networking is critical, not just for business development, but for learning and for recruitment.

Before a networking event, carry out some research on the potential attendees.

Also, every single day presents a networking opportunity. You don't need to wait for a networking event.

Talk to people around you, whether it's at the coffee station or at after-work events. Push yourself out of your comfort zone.

Seek to take a genuine interest in the things people share about themselves and make a point to follow up when you meet them next time.

If you had to choose another career tomorrow, what would it be and why?

Astronaut, elite athlete or prime minister would suit me just fine, please. Except that they wouldn't, because I don't have anything like the skillset necessary for any of those.

Law has allowed me to play to my strengths and enjoy a varied career in multiple jurisdictions. So, truth is, if I was doing it all over again, I would do it all over again.