

JONATHAN LEA NETWORK

– FORGING AHEAD



The growth of this enterprising and successful law firm is a testament to the company's vision and expertise, as Peter d'Aguilar discovered, when he spoke to Jonathan Lea

Ten years ago, after working for a couple of large law firms in the City of London and a smaller regional practice in Cornwall, Jonathan Lea opted to start working for himself as a consultant solicitor before eventually moving to Haywards Heath and in 2019 registering his company with the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). Today, the Jonathan Lea Network is a successful, well-established SRA regulated law firm with a growing close-knit team of employees working mostly from the large open plan office in Haywards Heath, two other offices in Worthing and Birmingham and also a network of self-employed consultant solicitors based remotely throughout the UK and overseas.

From the outset, Jonathan's vision was to offer clients a superior service by combining the benefits of a well-managed central employed team with the skills and expertise of trusted freelance specialists who can be brought in for certain matters where they can add significant value, but without the firm being burdened by the high salary costs of otherwise employing such experienced specialists. "We now have twenty full-time staff in Haywards Heath – a mixture of senior and junior solicitors, trainee

solicitors, paralegals and administrative assistants," Jonathan explained. "This number has grown from four in 2019. We also now have around 15 consultant solicitors regularly working with us remotely."

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This hybrid model is increasingly attractive to solicitors who would like to enjoy the freedom and independence of self-employment, but with the added security of working under the umbrella of an SRA-regulated firm. It also allows these solicitors to better concentrate on legal work for clients, while JLN's retained team deal with most of the administration involved in successfully managing cases.

Although its private client work is increasing, JLN's particular specialism



continues to be in assisting commercial clients, mostly startups and SMEs, while its two main practice areas are corporate and dispute resolution. The firm is equally adept in advising on non-contentious transactional work as it is in successfully managing fractious litigation matters.

2023 has already seen several new additions to the JLN team. Experienced corporate solicitor Liam Mulvee and intellectual property solicitor Lisa Patten have both started working in Haywards Heath. In addition, a new consultant commercial property solicitor based in Newcastle has also joined. Her first matter brought to the firm is to advise clients on the sale of an industrial site in Staffordshire for £6m.

At the end of 2022, JLN also merged with a small 20-year-old law firm in Birmingham that specialises in representing Chinese UK nationals, as well as those based in China who have UK interests. The firm



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already has a reputation for advising many international clients and it is hoped that this new Birmingham office will further improve JLN's ability to provide UK legal services to those based overseas.

"I'm pleased to say that our revenue has grown steadily each year and most of our growth is organic," Jonathan continued, "the majority of our new work these days comes from word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat instructions from existing clients, while we almost doubled our turnover during the course of 2022,

and look set to also do the same in 2023."

A recent driver of this growth is JLN's new dispute resolution team, which started in the summer of 2021. With two senior litigation solicitors managing a growing team, the volume of work is increasing month on month. As well as several large property development clients, the team is now advising on a wide variety of civil and commercial disputes, including contentious probate, intellectual property

for commercial clients where there is not such a need to regularly meet in person," said Jonathan. "It will help promote the JLN brand by acting as a shop window for our private client services and also encourage interested passers-by to pop in to introduce themselves and enquire about working with us."

Recruitment of new staff also continues to be a priority. JLN is always on the lookout for fresh talent, both young graduates starting out on a career in



law, as well as experienced solicitors.

"We take particular pleasure in recruiting and developing a number of juniors each year, most of them from the local Sussex community," Jonathan explained. "Our trainee solicitors are usually picked from previously having done a two-week vacation placement with us. We also now offer grants to cover tuition fees, together with a full-time paralegal job with us while law students finish the end of their academic studies."

JLN offers a free, no obligation twenty-minute preliminary consultation with one of its specialists to anyone interested in instructing the firm on any legal matter. ●

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