

JILL TRELOGGEN INTERIORS

Nicola Stapleton of Beechwood Solicitors interviews Jill Trelloggen to find out more about her successful interiors business.



BEECHWOOD SOLICITORS

Jill Trelloggen interviews Nicola Stapleton of Beechwood Solicitors about their whole new approach to commercial law.



What lead you to set up your own interior design business?

"I've always had a passion for interior design, but when I was at school the careers advice was not to pursue it. So I studied business studies, and worked for a time at Marks & Spencer, in buying, and as a business development director for a marketing company. However, Interior design was still a keen interest for me, so I undertook a distance learning course in my spare time. The turning point for me came about six years ago when I had the opportunity to take voluntary redundancy. It felt like fate was handing me an opportunity, so I left my job and set up the business in January 2003, and haven't looked back! In the early days I did everything myself – paint the walls, hang the curtains, you name it. Today the business has expanded to a team of eight!"

What kind of work do you specialise in?

"Over the years the company has expanded into many areas of the property market including show homes, the high end rental market, and interior design for private clients. We work with a large portfolio of clients and have established ourselves as one of Oxfordshire's leading providers of interior design services. We work on projects of all sizes, from helping people choose a new pair of curtains for their living room, to furnishing a block of six apartments in the city centre. We have also recently launched a shopping 'by appointment' service at our studios in Witney – the idea is to take the strain out of shopping for your home. We have all the sample books and product catalogues available, along

with some expert advice and a good cup of coffee!"

What would you say is your USP?

"I think most people associate interior design with flamboyant individuals creating impractical and expensive ideas. We pride ourselves on our practical approach to projects, and create schemes that will be both easy to live with and come in at the right budget – our motto is 'on time, on brief, on budget', and we aim to deliver on all of these.

"I think our other USP is that we are a small local team, who work tirelessly until a project is finished to our client's satisfaction. Using large companies can often be a frustration, as you are treated as an order number and always get served by someone new. At our company, each client is assigned a project co-ordinator who will hold their hand throughout the entire project."

What kind of clients do you work for?

"We have a very diverse portfolio of clients. We work alongside many of Oxfordshire's estate and lettings agents, and help them work with their clients to prepare homes for sale or rent. We also work with a number of property developers and provide a range of services, such as working on the original drawings to help in the design of lighting and electrics, providing show homes to market developments and also after sales packages for the buyers ie: carpets and curtains. We also work for private clients in their own homes. These clients are typically people with busy lives, who

want their home to look good but don't have the time to spend every weekend doing DIY! We work at all budget levels, so during our initial conversation we talk about what the client is looking for, but also how much they would typically spend on items or the kind of shops they buy from – this gives us a great starting point, to make sure we deliver a scheme they will like, at a budget they will love!"

What do your clients say about you?

"We have had some great feedback from our clients over the years, and that is in no small way down to the excellent team that we have in place to deliver each project. a recent client testimonial we received was from Lucy Properties "Jill and her team have translated all of our briefs perfectly and always deliver on time. They are a pleasure to work with and we are delighted with the completed schemes."

What is your most rewarding project?

"It sounds a bit corny, but they all are! It gives you such a sense of satisfaction to put together a design board, and then see the scheme literally come to life. At the end of all the hard work it is always fantastic to leave a property just as you imagined it would look, and with a delighted client!"

Beechwood Solicitors carries the practice of commercial law boldly into the 21st century. The approach is fresh, accessible and down-to-earth, whilst being deeply rooted in a close understanding of the law and of cutting-edge legal developments.

What lead you to set up your own practice?

I qualified in London as a Barrister and fellow of Lincolns Inn Field. I worked in Knightsbridge for a couple of years and loved the fast pace of life, the high calibre clients, the location and the social life. Training as a Barrister taught me the basics of being self employed and in particular the art of networking.

I qualified as a solicitor to enable me to become a partner in a traditional Oxford firm but the reality of partnership was quite different to what I expected. I practised as a partner for over 3 years but the turning point came when I had my son. He focused my mind and I struggled to see the direction I was heading in; and the business side of me wanted more control. Locally, there is a shortage of commercial firms and although I chatted with several firms, my clients asked why can't you just go on your own. So I did.

What kind of work do you specialise in?

All commercial, property and company matters. We have a portfolio of clients both individuals and companies where we deal with all commercial aspects from terms and conditions of trading, shareholders agreements to business sales and purchases. Where I

do not have the resources or expertise in house, I use consultants from a network of specialist practices. This keeps the overheads low whilst facilitates a responsive and all round legal service without needing to be passed from department to department.

What would you say is your USP?

Me and the way that I work. Perhaps it is the Barrister in me but I think those that know me would agree I am not like most solicitors. People usually associate their experience with solicitors as expensive and laborious sometimes painful. I pride myself on building relationships and providing practical, commercial understandable advice, having a personal awareness of individual needs. Basic common courtesies like calling people back, answering emails and correspondence promptly and generally providing good service is a core foundation of the practice. That coupled with fixed prices has been the basis of very successful ever growing practice.

What kind of clients do you work for?

A variety to be honest. The majority of our work is from a portfolio of companies, whereby we act as their personal legal department dealing with all their commercial needs. I also act for individuals, and more recently for those who don't like being passed from pillar to post and want to revert to the traditional 'family' solicitor approach to their commercial affairs.

What do you clients say about you?

I have a very loyal client base. Indeed 90 of my work

is repeat and word of mouth recommendations which is extremely rewarding. I do also take the trouble to ask clients what they would like, what could be changed, what would better suit their needs and this also works very well to ensure we provide the level of service expected. Some examples of this are:-

"After using a large firm of corporate solicitors for several years it has been a breath of fresh air working with Nicola Stapleton at Beechwood Solicitors. I have received a friendly, prompt and totally customer-focused service whenever I have needed help of any kind. It is so refreshing to find a company who can see the benefits of building a strong relationship with clients, rather than employing the rather old-fashioned 'bill for every minute' approach."

What has been most rewarding?

Every thank you card, grateful telephone call and general thank you for me is worth everything. I have gone back to basics by setting up on my own but which regularly reminds me of why I become a lawyer. For me, running my own business has to be the most rewarding thing I have ever done.

I have also just celebrated my first year of trading, employed my first team member and celebrated in winning the award for Best Start Up 2008. It couldn't get much more rewarding than that!