

CAREER PROFILE

James Wilson was the Global Senior Partner of International Law firm, Ince & Co LLP, from March 2008 until December 2014, combining the functions often divided between 'Senior Partner' and 'Managing Partner' in other firms.

With 90 partners and a total complement of over 600, Ince & Co had a sector-led strategy focused on Shipping, Energy & Offshore, International Trade and Insurance. The firm comprised 11 offices across Europe, the Middle East, South East Asia and China

James led the firm through the uncertainties of the 2008 economic crisis and into the post-crisis era in which the nature of client relationships changed and the pace of innovation accelerated. Partly in response to those changes in market conditions, James oversaw a major project to secure consensus across the partnership for an entirely new management, remuneration and governance structure.

Those changes were implemented alongside a complete revision of the firm's risk structure through the adoption of an international network of Limited Liability Partnerships. The longevity of the downturn in the clients' market in the firm's primary sector, Shipping, started to feed through into a downturn in the demand for legal services in 2013. That resulted in the need for James to lead a management initiative to restructure the firm's resources to meet the change in strategic outlook.

JAMES' APPROACH TO COACHING

I benefited hugely from the sessions I had with my own Business Coach during my time in my leadership role. I found it incredibly helpful to take time out of my hectic schedule to pause and think. I found that my thought process was clearer when I was in the company of someone entirely external to the business, with no agenda of their own, who would act as a constructive yet challenging sounding board. I welcomed the safe space in which I could start a conversation with "I'm not sure ..." or "I don't know what to do about ..." things that can be difficult for a leader to say inside their organisation.

I invariably returned to my desk with much greater clarity about what needed to be done. My PA once told me that she could always tell when I had been for a coaching session because "you are very energised and very focused - and that's very tiring for the rest of us!"

When I stepped down from my leadership role, I decided to retrain as a Business Coach in order to offer this support to others. I was accepted



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onto the Meyler Campbell Business Coaching Programme and my experience of completing the BCP over the next 12 months confirmed my initial research that it is simply the best course of its type in the UK. The Programme was the first course in Europe to be accredited by the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC) and it was awarded the European Quality Award by the European Mentoring and Coaching Council in 2012

And so now I have the privilege (and it is a privilege) to support other senior leaders in partnership environments as they grapple with many similar issues to the ones that I had to deal with. My goal is simple, to help them embrace their challenges with energy and focus in the same way as my coach helped me.

I do that not by 'telling them what to do' but by offering that confidential reflective space in which they can do their best thinking. Solutions and plans generated by them will always be more powerful than any that someone else might recommend. I offer constructive challenge and honest feedback and pose questions designed to stretch their thinking and self-awareness. The support I offer reflects my personal empathy with the challenges they face and a deep understanding of the partnership context in which operate.



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