



Introducing - John Gould, Senior Partner at Russell-Cooke

John's area of particular expertise is regulation and public law. He specialises in the analysis and solution of complex regulatory problems, advising regulators, government departments, law enforcement agencies, and statutory and professional bodies. Chambers (2008-2011) has described him as "an important figure", "highly intelligent and innovative" with "unsurpassed knowledge of regulatory powers", "particularly apt at handling complex and sensitive matters", "very bright indeed; very thoughtful".

Who or what influenced you to pursue a career in the law?

No one in my family had any connection with the law but even as a young child it seemed to me that there was something special and important about legal knowledge. By the time I went to university my enthusiasm for other academic subjects had waned and law was something fresh and different."

What path did you take to legal qualification?

In those days there was nothing like the same competition for training contracts as now and I remember being very casual about getting articles. I liked the fact that Russell-Cooke had a long established office in Lincoln's Inn but also did substantial amounts of legal aid work in those days in South West London. I wanted to handle my own cases and help people directly. By the time I qualified I had a lot of very interesting hands-on experience and was very confident about what I could do. With hindsight perhaps I was too confident and taking more risks than I knew.

What is a typical day like at your firm and how do you manage your work life balance?

A good day is one in which I can plan the order in which I do things. I've always been lucky enough to have a short journey to work and I've found that concentrated work within hours works better for me than diffused work over a very long day and at weekends. I've generally aim to be working from 8.30am to 6.30pm. These days there are numerous evening engagements as well, but I'm very happy that I was there whilst my children grew up. I have always discouraged the idea that it was good for lawyers to be seen in the office late at night. Sometimes the clients need long hours but more often very long hours mean that someone is working too slowly or is under pressure to maintain appearances.

You have had an extensive career in the law and have been involved in some complex cases, what particular area of the law has interested you the most?

I have always found the activities of clever criminals who happen to be lawyers very interesting. I have

been lucky enough to be involved in many of the most notorious cases involving solicitors over the last twenty years on behalf of the regulator. Some of those individuals were able to do significant harm over long periods and helping to stop them has always felt like worthwhile work. I have also been very interested in public law because it often relates to issues of law and logic rather than disputed facts, witnesses and documents. I have also been lucky enough to act for many clients who were interesting in their own right because of their position or achievements or simply because they were interesting characters.

What have been some of your highs and lows in the legal profession?

A low many years ago was taking on a large international dispute that was beyond my experience and finding that the lawyers I instructed in two other jurisdictions were hopeless and out of control. I ended up, for technical reasons, having to apply to set aside the English judgement I obtained. This caused both the opposition and the court considerable amusement. Sometimes it is best to say that another lawyer would serve the client better. It would seem immodest to talk too much about high points, but I've always enjoyed finding elegant solutions to messy problems.

What do you think are the challenges facing the legal profession in the next 12 months?

For those involved in legal aid, the mismatch between what justice requires and what the state is prepared to fund. For smaller firms, how to compete with the productised approach to legal services. For large firms, how to provide value for money in a global market.

What would you like to see changed in the legal profession in the next 5 years?

A significant simplification of the over-complex regulatory arrangements which have followed the Legal Services Act 2007. I would also like to see an improvement of the prospects of those looking to pursue law as a career. These days too many would-be lawyers have to spend years working in administrative jobs to get a chance to practise.

What sets your firm apart from others?

Only a small number of firms of comparable size offer a similar breadth of specialist services to such a range of clients. The majority of us work in South London but most of our work is about being a central London firm. We have lots of clever people but aren't ruinously expensive for our clients. We don't rate things according to how much money they make.

You've recently published a book; can you tell us more?

After so long managing a law firm, acting for legal regulators and many lawyers I thought it would be good to create something from the law I have practised. I was also struck by how inaccessible much of the relevant law is to busy non-specialist practitioners. The book is called *The Law of Legal Services* and is published by Jordan. It is, as one kind reviewer put it, a comprehensive and reliable repository of the law of lawyering. It's a substantial book running to 650 pages without materials which are provided on a free supporting website. It's intended as a single accessible reference work for all the topics that lawyers may need to check including not just regulation but also negligence, retainers, legal duties, costs, protection of goodwill, insolvency and practice structures. I think it is excellent value (but I would say that wouldn't I). Lord Neuberger wrote a very generous forward which was almost sufficient reward for writing it in itself.

What are the qualities that make an effective lawyer in your opinion?

I can see from the range of people in Russell-Cooke that it's dangerous to generalise. An effective litigator may not be an effective drafter of wills. However, I would say that a lawyer is nothing without integrity. A belief in the value of representation to clients who need it and the rule of law is a stronger motivator than financial rewards (which for many lawyers these days is just as well). Persistence and attention to detail are important. It also helps to know the relevant law.

What motto do you live by?

I don't know if I live by a motto and I hesitate to offer a cliché or seem pretentious but how about - Good people almost always live up to the trust you place in them, but a lack of trust makes even good people untrustworthy.