



An enterprising Island business is showing firms how trimming the fat can result in greater efficiencies

"Not a typical businessman"

It was the experience gained as a Police Officer that eventually prompted the director of PropelFwd, Paul Byrne, to consider starting his own company when, armed with a scrapbook of jotted-down ideas, he approached the Jersey Business team for guidance.

Paul is not a typical businessman in that he is not solely motivated by the pursuit of money – indeed, some of the services provided by his company are free of charge, especially working with charities and non-profit organisations – and his early working environment was a police station rather than an office.

'I was a Police Sergeant and I retired from the States of Jersey Police in 2017 after serving for 22 years,' Paul explained. 'I was heavily involved in running process improvement projects during the last four or five years of my service with the Police.'

Start-up and growth

'After retirement, I built up my qualification levels as a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and that gave me the impetus to start my business. We have grown very quickly, and we now have three employees and our clients are located in Jersey, Guernsey, Ireland and the UK. Demand for our services comes extensively from the hospitality, retail and Public sector and the businesses we work for range in size from just four employees up to as many as 2,000.'

PropelFwd caters for a modern business world in which every potential cost has to be carefully scrutinised and evaluated and any advice that can help to achieve efficiency is keenly sought by company principals.

Lean six sigma

'We offer a professional level of service using the lean Six Sigma methodology,' said Paul. 'This is a proven way of identifying waste and variation in processes – the sort of waste which adds no value to a process such as over-production, over-processing, motion etc – and using Lean Six Sigma methodology shows how these can be eliminated from a process. We have recently developed a Business Process Improvement Programme (BPIP) where we train and mentor candidates through a chosen project within their own business area taking the training out of the classroom environment, so it is very relevant to them'

Navigating GDPR and data protection

Paul adds 'We also offer a service which guides businesses through the complexities of GDPR and Channel Island Data Protection compliance as well as training with groups sessions or a PropelFwd developed online course for GDPR / CI Data Protection awareness.'

Jersey Business helped Paul through the minefields of financial forecasting, basic bookkeeping, marketing to clients, establishing a social media presence, taking on an office lease and employing staff directly.

Paul's business philosophy has also developed as his business has grown. He explains 'Obviously the business has to be sustainable but recognise that small business can be overwhelmed by regulation and the cost of compliance. I am not interested in a money-making machine. My main objective was not necessarily to make money, it was to give something back to the community. There is a degree of the Police ethic in that, but it is also a valued Christian point of view.'

'Jersey Business has very much been a part of my business and will remain so especially as a great business sounding board.'

The Jersey Business factor

On one point in particular, Paul has no doubts whatsoever: 'PropelFwd wouldn't be here if it were not for Jersey Business.'

'When I first had my idea, I started a scrapbook in which I wrote down various ideas and plans. Then, in September 2017, I made an appointment with Jersey Business and met Chris Settle who has since become my business mentor.

'I showed him my scrapbook – which I was a little bit embarrassed about to be honest – but he genuinely took an interest in my ideas and helped me to turn them into a reality. I don't think that I would have had the confidence to have started the business without him.'

'The online guidance that Jersey Business has on their website, is invaluable,' he stressed. 'I still keep in touch regularly and any time I need advice, or just a listening ear, Chris is always available.'

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