

Meet the team

Andy Poppleton

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What do you do at Outset and how do you support our clients?

I lead Outset's commercial offering, helping our clients with their contracting requirements. That might cover sourcing materials, buying in services or selling to customers. I also support clients when formulating their contracting strategies as there can often be alternative solutions which may not have been previously considered. Key to doing the job well is getting to know the clients' businesses, which suits me well as I've got quite an inquisitive mind.

Give us a brief timeline of your career so far

I trained at Wragge & Co (now known as Gowling WLG) where I was fortunate that the approach was very much to "throw you in the deep end", meaning I gained a lot of experience with a broad range of clients very quickly. After 4 years I decided I wanted to experience working in-house so that I could be more embedded with my clients. I then spent 7 years working in the energy sector, first for National Grid, then SGN. Going into energy was an interesting challenge as the sector is heavily regulated, meaning there were a great deal more things to consider than just the usual legal and commercial concerns. After moving to Kent I joined Outset where I've sought to bring a business partnering approach, as would be seen in-house, to the delivery of private practice legal services.



What has been your biggest challenge in your role?

I'm a big believer in looking for new and more efficient ways of delivering legal support, so I find the biggest challenge is making time to think about and develop those future solutions whilst supporting clients' requirements in the here and now.

It has been really exciting to see some of the developments at Outset, such as the Primed offering and some of the technical solutions our property team have developed for managing support across larger property portfolios, so I'm looking to follow suit with similarly innovative solutions for commercial contract support.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

There's a great line in the film *The Devil's Advocate* where Al Pacino's character says "The law, my boy, puts us into everything. It's the ultimate backstage pass."

Putting aside the fact the character is about as negative a representation of a lawyer as you could ever see, I think he's got a point.

In my role I get that "backstage pass" to find out about how a huge variety of businesses work, which I find really interesting.

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What do you think sets Outset apart?

My main reason for coming back into private practice with Outset was the willingness of everyone to explore new ways of doing things. I don't think the traditional law firm model is particularly great for either clients or (in the majority of cases) the lawyers, but change in the profession has been very slow.

Change is treated as an exciting opportunity at Outset, rather than a potential threat to the status quo.

When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I'm told that I was asked this question as a 4 year old, and answered "either a doctor or a pussy cat". It seems I took a detour somewhere along the way...

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What do you wish someone had told you when you started out? Or what piece of advice were you given early on that has stuck with you?

The Partner in my first seat as a trainee was one of the most brilliant minds I've ever worked with, so when she told me "don't let perfect be the enemy of good", I took that on board.

That doesn't mean there is any excuse for being sloppy, but rather a case of understanding that some things warrant significant amounts of attention and detail, while others just need to get done. Knowing the difference means being able to deliver real value to clients by focussing attention on the things that really matter.



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What do you enjoy doing when you are not working?

Aside from playing with my son, I volunteer a good deal of time coaching a squad of sprinters and hurdlers out of Tonbridge AC. The squad are a lot of fun and have enjoyed a fair amount of success in recent years – as at the time of writing we have 4 athletes ranked in the top 10 in the UK in their respective age groups.

Who inspires you most and why?

In years gone by I probably would have named a writer or sports person, but I think a year of lockdown restrictions has generally made me more reflective of my own life, so now I'd have to say my father.

Put simply, he's just a really good man, full of love and kindness for those around him. Lots of little boys grown up wanting to be like their dad. I still do.



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What piece of advice would you give someone in business?

Don't be afraid to change.

I really enjoy a podcast series called "Business Wars" which charts the history of various rival businesses. There are some great examples in that series of "wars" that have been won and lost based on businesses' willingness to adapt – the Netflix/Blockbuster/HBO episodes are particularly good.

And finally... What is one thing you've learnt during lockdown?

How much I enjoy seeing friends and family. It's so easy to take that for granted until the possibility is taken away.



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