

Meet the Outset team

Darren Stevens

Head of Employment Law



outset.

outsetuk.com

Meet the Outset team – Darren Stevens

1

Describe your role and how you support our clients (in no more than 100 words)

Primarily, I see my role as supporting people. When working with my clients, the circumstances I advise on are often contentious, and emotions are frequently involved. I coach clients towards identifying the best solution for them amongst the range of available options, given their perceptions of risk, relevant working relationship issues in play, and desired outcome generally. I then "stay with the situation" and help clients execute on the strategy that we have identified together.

I also have a leadership role here at Outset. In that capacity, I see myself as a facilitator. We have a really superb independent minded team here, so my role internally involves helping team members "around the edges" to achieve their goals and objectives, both on client advisory issues and in terms of their own personal development aspirations.

2

Give us a brief timeline of your career so far

I don't have a "typical" solicitor career history.

I left school when I was 16. Never did A-Levels. Had I gone to university as a young adult, I'm not sure I would have done much work at that time of my life. Too many distractions!

So, at 16, I started work in the insurance industry as a negotiator. Foundational experience for later legal life, especially as I got to see the world from a perspective other than that of a lawyer. I went to university at 27 as a mature student and loved every second of it. By then, I had acquired a real work ethic, loved the learning, and did pretty well. After university, I joined Brachers as a trainee solicitor and left 10 years later having become a partner.

After Brachers, I joined Outset as a consultant in 2012 working from home initially, mainly so that I could spend much more time with my children. In 2016, I became Head of Employment Law here at Outset.

Meet the Outset team – Darren Stevens

3

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?

We - all of us - tend to walk around with unchallenged beliefs about ourselves. Firstly, that we are perceiving reality accurately; secondly that our perception is not only accurate, but valid; and thirdly, that if it's obvious to us, it must be obvious to others.

And all it takes is a single moment of reflection to realise that none of that is necessarily true.

4

What has been your biggest challenge in your role

Combining the "deep work" necessary to do the tactical and strategic thinking that is often necessary when supporting clients, with the high frequency of smaller tasks and interactions which punctuate the working day. I have developed some tools and systems to manage this, and I've become reasonably proficient at rapid task switching; but this is certainly still a challenge, as it probably is for most people I guess.

5

What do you enjoy most about your job?

That's an easy one. Supporting clients think through their desired outcomes. The employer clients that have worked with me for a long time know that they can use me to think through aspects of a situation which go beyond "just" employment law. In many ways, the work I do is less "employment lawyer", more "non-executive support".

Meet the Outset team – Darren Stevens

6

What do you think sets Outset apart?

Firstly, my Outset colleagues, without question. Every single person here is a) passionate about providing great service; and b) personable and engaging. We have a diverse team; but cultural fit is of paramount importance when we recruit.

Secondly, most professional services providers "talk the talk" about transparent fixed fee pricing. We "walk the walk" - our preference is always for fixed fees and long-term relationships; but we don't try to impose that on clients if that's not what a client is ready for.

7

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

A scientist. For no other reason than I loved The Incredible Hulk. I thought David Banner was a god.

8

What do you enjoy doing when you are not working?

I have two young daughters, and a significant focus of my spare time is on them.

When I'm not with my kids, I read lots of books/audiobooks. I love walking and, ideally, combining walking and book reading/listening. I have a route around Mote Park in Maidstone which I know like the back of my hand, so I frequently walk miles around there listening to audiobooks/Kindle reading. It's amazing how many books you can get through just by chipping away at them every day. (I also enjoy swimming - and, surprise surprise, I have an underwater iPod for audiobook listening!)

Meet the Outset team – Darren Stevens

9

Who inspires you most and why?

Charlie Munger, Warren Buffett's business partner. He is 96 years old and his focus and passion in life every day is still learning more about the world. He still has an ethos of childlike curiosity about life, which is one of the things that I admire most in adults.

I agree with Munger's sentiment when he says "In my whole life, I have known no wise people (over a broad subject area) who didn't read all the time - none, zero. You would be amazed at how much Warren [Buffett] reads - and how much I read. My children laugh at me. They think I am a book with a couple of legs sticking out".

10

What piece of advice would you give someone in business?

Specialisation in your subject is important, but don't specialise to the exclusion of reading widely. Total specialisation can only lead to incremental innovation. Broadening your knowledge and areas of study leads to genuine multi-disciplinary thinking, and recombinant innovation. Incremental innovation makes things a bit better, but slowly. But recombinant innovation is where the magic happens - by combining ideas from different areas, the innovative leaps forward can be enormous.



Darren Stevens

Head of Employment
Law

Darren.Stevens@outsetuk.com

Scan the QR code with
your phone camera to
download and save
Darren's contact details.

