

JAMES WILSON

Business Background and Personal Profile



Profile of Career at Ince & Co LLP (1983-2016)

James Wilson was the Global Senior Partner of International Law firm, Ince & Co LLP, from March 2008 until January 2015, combining the functions often divided between 'Senior Partner' and 'Managing Partner' in other large law firms. It equates to a combined role of Chairman and CEO in a corporate structure.

With 90 partners and a total compliment of over 600, Ince & Co has a reputation as one of the leading international law firms specialising in Shipping, Energy & Offshore, International Trade and Insurance. The firm comprises 11 offices generating an annual turnover of approximately US\$135m.

Under James' leadership, the firm's turnover grew from US\$100m in 2007/8 to \$150m in 2012 with a corresponding growth in profits of 50%, notwithstanding the impact of the world recession on the firm's key industry sectors. Two additional offices were opened, in Beijing and Monaco, and a bespoke Singapore law firm was established in 2011.

Over the period 2009-2012, James oversaw a major project to introduce an entirely new management, remuneration and governance structure in the firm. This involved designing and implementing a process to engage the partnership in understanding and agreeing the need for change. A working group, representing different elements of the partnership, was chaired by James to develop proposals for the required changes. A successful consultation across the international partnership resulted in the changes being adopted in principle in March 2012.

James thereafter led the actual implementation of the changes to structure, remuneration and governance. This entailed the selection, appointment and training of 5 divisional managing partners and 10 heads of office. It also involved the establishment the firm's first Board comprising the 5 divisional managing partners, the firm's Director of Operations, two regional representatives (all appointed by James as Senior Partner) and an independent Non Executive. The Board was chaired by James from its inception in May 2012 through to January 2015.

The changes to structure, remuneration and governance were implemented alongside a complete revision of the firm's risk structure through the adoption of a 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.

While James was at the helm, the firm also initiated a review of the firm's Business Support Services to identify changes that might be introduced to better deliver all aspects of the firm's services across the international network in a more cost-effective and efficient manner.

Personal Profile

Having gained an MA in Law from Cambridge University, James joined Ince & Co as an Articled Clerk in 1983. After an extended posting to Hong Kong and a period on secondment in Norway, he was promoted to Partner in 1991. James was Ince & Co's youngest ever Global Senior Partner when elected to that role by his fellow partners in 2008.

Throughout his career at Ince & Co, James was immersed in the maritime and insurance sectors, advising many of the world's largest shipowners and their insurers. His area of specialism was maritime casualties and in his capacity as legal advisor and Head of Ince's Marine Casualty Team (1999-2008) he and his team were intimately involved in the response to most of the world's major maritime accidents in the past 20 years, many involving well publicised pollution or loss of life. On the back of that experience he has provided training to many organisations on crisis management, with a particular focus on the preservation of commercial reputation.

Having trained and practiced as a commercial mediator since 2001, James found those mediator skills invaluable in leading an organisation where partnership decisions were taken on the basis of consensus.

In his leisure time, James is a keen cyclist (recently completing the Hamburg 100 and the Etape Caledonia; he also started and now co-ordinates an informal local cycle club) and golfer (he is a member of Hempsted Forest CG). He also enjoys his tenor part in a local choir. He has been married to Jane for 30 years. He spent many hours personally training his Labrador, Woody, mainly so that in a household with four children he had some prospect that at least his dog would occasionally do as he asked.

Associations/Other Roles

Former Director of Maritime London - a not-for-profit company formed to promote maritime professional services in London and the rest of the UK

Qualified and practised as a commercial Mediator since 2001; co-founder of Maritime Solicitors Mediation Service, a multi-firm collaborative venture to promote greater use of mediation as part of the maritime dispute resolution options offered in the UK. Member of the mediation chambers at www.seamediation.com

Associate Member of the Baltic Exchange

Associate Member of the Association of Average Adjusters

Liveryman and Assistant to the Court of the Honourable Company of Shipwrights