



Great North Run 2016

GAMEKEEPER TURNED POACHER...

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Life on the 'other side' of the fence

I joined Solomons in 2014 and have really enjoyed my time with the business so far. I have been afforded the opportunity to develop both professionally - by working with some of the largest, most recognisable contractors in the business, as well as personally in my role working alongside the rest of the senior team.

Our staff are the key ingredient to our business' success. Maintaining a happy, healthy work life balance for everyone is crucial in delivering to the high standards which we set ourselves.

Having worked as a PQS on the client side for ten years prior to joining Solomons, some of the most common questions I find myself posed with by former colleagues are... "How have you found the jump into the unknown?", "What is the difference between what you did then and what you do now?", "Gamekeeper turned poacher – how's that been?"

My response?

The move from PQS (client side) to Contractor QS:

The main difference I've found is that my day to day duties have been realigned to the core QS skills I learnt whilst at university. I am now wholly responsible for procurement, financial reporting (CVR's), cost control and management, change management, subcontract management and client liaison whereas my previous role was very much focused on cost planning (at feasibility / design stages) and project management duties (during construction).

Whilst I found the transition to be challenging initially, what I can say is that it has been and continues to be much more rewarding than my previous role (despite the fact that I remember my time on the other side of the fence with much fondness). The ability to appreciate and understand both sides is a significant benefit, particularly during negotiations, but it is much more stimulating having ownership of your work as opposed to checking / using the red pen on the work of others (which I regularly found myself doing on the PQS side)! I have been intrigued to not only see how different contractors are set-up, but also by being fully engaged and empowered in trying to ensure a profit is derived from the works!

Work-Life Balance:

Whilst I won't deny that it is also hard work too, the one key factor behind why I remain happy and focused in my role is something I mentioned earlier – Solomons' drive and desire to ensure a happy, healthy work life balance is maintained for all.

Outside of work I love spending time with the family and I enjoy the majority of sports (football in the main – I still play often, whilst I also have a season ticket for a local side). However, I have recently taken up running again. I guess on some level I have always run, I ran at school and at university and despite going through a period without doing 'runs', I did participate in other sports such as football and squash. However, I took it up again a few years ago after suffering the loss of our first baby boy. In the aftermath of that devastation, I decided that I wanted to do something positive, whilst also raising money for a couple of brilliant local charities who helped us in this period to show my appreciation. I love getting out in the fresh air, I love the fact that I can run, I love the space and time it gives me to clear my head, and I love the buzz of beating another PB (I love entering events but I don't see it as competition - the competition is with myself and beating my own previous best times!).



Since rekindling my running obsession (and getting my wife hooked too!), we have raised over £10K for the charities I mentioned which really makes it worthwhile. I have entered several organised events such as the GNR, Kielder Half Marathon, Edinburgh Half Marathon, and Blaydon Races to name a few... And whilst the distance and frequency of my runs varies – currently I am running around four or five times a week and just prior to the new year, I managed to complete the 1000 mile challenge I set myself to run in 2016 which was a huge achievement!

So, next time I'm posed with the gamekeeper turned poacher question, my response is likely to be something like "It's great - give it a go, but give it a go with Solomons!!"



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