

A Moment with Kevin Hall - Regional General Manager

October 2013

With a 'head for figures' and an interest in finance, New Zealand-born Kevin Hall seemed destined for a career in financial services. He studied Accountancy at the University of Auckland and his first job was with the National Bank of New Zealand where he worked in general banking and as a branch accountant. This was followed by a role as the financial controller for Trust Bank - a new bank that was being set up in New Zealand, where Kevin then spent 7 years.

Kevin's first foray into the world of law firm management came when he joined leading New Zealand law firm Brookfields in 1996 as financial manager. During the next 11 years, Kevin's role grew to include managing the IT, marketing and administration functions of the business and he was appointed CEO of the firm.

It was in 2007 that Kevin began thinking about the next step in his career and with their children away at university, he and his wife Arlene began thinking about opportunities further afield. "We originally considered Hong Kong - a lot closer to home than the Middle East!" laughs Kevin. "But an opportunity arose at Al Tamimi & Company which all of a sudden made Dubai seem like an attractive option."

Kevin travelled to Dubai to meet with the partners of the firm and was immediately enthused at the prospect of the role at Al Tamimi. "The firm had a great reputation and an exciting vision for the future. I was confident my skills were transferable and my meetings with the management team were very positive - I was sure I could bring a lot to the firm and play an important part in its growth."

Indeed, since Kevin joined the firm in 2007 Al Tamimi has witnessed phenomenal growth. The firm has seen new international offices open in Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and lawyer numbers grow from 99 to over 240. As General Manager, Kevin is responsible for the firm's overall business operations, with key functions including developing and executing strategic and operational business initiatives, preparing financial budgets and helping to manage the firm's overall financial performance. With a regional management team in place, Kevin also keeps a handle on the firm's day-to-day operations, including Accounting, HR Management, Marketing/Business Development and IT.

Kevin has been quoted as being 'instrumental in successfully guiding the firm through unprecedented tumultuous economic times in the Middle East' and his leadership skills and professionalism have earned him the respect and admiration of many who work with him. This feeling is entirely mutual as he credits the best part of his job as being "the people I work with - hands down." Kevin has nothing but the highest praise for the people he works with - from the partners and lawyers to the support and administrative staff - and considers everyone's contribution to the success of the firm as invaluable. "We work in a very multi-cultural environment at Al Tamimi - which is both rewarding and extremely interesting. As a firm we celebrate Eid, Diwali and Christmas and I think the inclusive, supportive and respectful environment we have created for all of our people - no matter what faith or nationality - speaks volumes about the nature of the firm." Kevin goes on to state that "we are without a doubt the most successful firm in the Middle East and it is great that everyone gets to be a part of that."

Managing so many people and being involved in so many departments means Kevin's role is a varied and challenging one. "No two days are the same," he says. Kevin has to be available to deal with the non-routine issues that arise when managing a firm of Al Tamimi's size but he also has to focus on the long-

term strategic plans for the firm. "It certainly can be challenging," he notes. "Law firms are unusual and totally different to standard corporate structures. Dealing with a partnership where numerous people have an interest means everyone needs to feel included."

Managing the business services side of the business means Kevin also has a responsibility for client service - another area that brings an array of challenges. "The world is constantly changing," he says. "The days of writing a letter, sending it by post and waiting a week to receive a response are over. We constantly need to upgrade our technology and evolve our own internal compliance processes to meet these challenges. We have an obligation to operate in a way that protects our clients and ourselves and not getting it right would be catastrophic... Not getting it right is not an option".

Kevin is quite clearly a man committed to Al Tamimi and someone who speaks extremely proudly of the firm and its achievements. Happy at work and happy at home - he and his wife 'love life in Dubai' - Kevin sees no move back to New Zealand for the foreseeable future and looks forward to being a part of Al Tamimi's success for quite a while longer.