

Paris Smith tailored to the region

Managing partner at sponsor Paris Smith, Andrew Heathcock, explains why The Business Magazine's Solent 250 launch is such an exciting initiative for the firm

When *The Business Magazine* talked to us about launching the Solent 250 we jumped at the opportunity of being involved as a headline sponsor. The Solent region is "our patch" and we make it a major priority to hone our professional skills and expertise to match the needs of the companies in our region. We intend to continue to develop the services that are needed and to anticipate future requirements. As we do this, we will add value to the companies we serve and continue to support the Solent community as we have done for generations.

The 250 list is an intriguing mix of the old and the new, the well known and the less well known, the exotic and the staple. A few years ago Xyratex was part of IBM; it now tops our list. Fitness First is a great, local success story of the past 20 years and other brand names like Lush Cosmetics and Sunseeker are also testament to the strength of the area.

There are many examples of companies in retail and in the motor industry in the list, as well as manufacturers, distributors and major academic institutions. We are aware of these concentrations and trends, and have developed teams geared to looking after established and growing sectors. As a result, we can count more than 25% of the top 50 companies on the list as clients and will be only too happy to assist others as the opportunity arises.

Rachel Saint, for example, has a wealth of experience in advising retail clients and Peter Taylor co-ordinates a team across many disciplines for our motor industry clients. For some time we have been conscious that the ever-increasing tide of regulation affects that industry, as with many others, and recently recruited Sarah Wheadon, who helps clients negotiate the minefield of regulations in place, avoiding issues in advance wherever possible and exercising damage limitation skills in other circumstances. She also helps in prosecuting those who stray and therefore knows the subject from all angles.

Although he will probably not thank me for saying so I doubt if there is very much that my partner Clive Thomson does not know about the intricacies of the licensing laws, having guided both the Rose Bowl and St Mary's Stadium from inception to the present day. We have been proud to be associated with the development of both stadia where we were fortunate to increase our expertise in the planning field with the recruitment of Janet May and Alan Sayle.

The Solent region is 'our patch' and we make it a major priority to hone our professional skills and expertise to match the needs of the companies in our region

We think that local knowledge still counts for a lot, none more so than in the property and development industries where Mark Howarth, John Mansell, Mark Withers and many others have an unrivalled, in-depth insight into their sector.

We are delighted, too, that our employment team led by Clive Dobbin and David Roath is ranked number one in the Solent, giving us comfort that investment in quality is the right approach and our clients have access to the best advice available.

Financial services and banking - love it or hate it - is an important cornerstone activity in the region and continues to attract the best, as the recent introduction of Santander exemplifies. Our head of banking, James McNeil, is in pole position to advise both banks and borrowers - although not at the same time - to make sure that the oil is in the system to enable businesses to operate successfully.

Family companies are well in evidence, illustrating how important these cherished and well-run organisations are to



Andrew Heathcock

our region. Who has not bought a tool from Draper, a car from Hendy or a stairlift from Stannah? I appreciate, however, that most of us can only dream of buying a boat from Sunseeker... Douglas Cooper's corporate team has for many years assisted such companies, whether in growing, succession planning or brand protection.

My personal favourite in the list is Robin Appel, not only because I count Robin as a long standing loyal client of mine and of the firm, but also because he exemplifies everything that is good in entrepreneurial business, displaying enthusiasm and energy in equal measure laced with calculated risk taking backed by instinctive judgment, as well as forward planning. He also happens to brew the best and most exclusive malt in the country via the Maris Otter brand and is a living example of my favourite word - "eponymous".

I look forward to the launch and ongoing development of the Solent 250, and to meeting new people as well as meeting up, again, with old friends.

Details:
Name
tel
email
web