

# Inksters

Set up by Brian Inkster in 1999, Inksters is a Scottish law firm headquartered in Glasgow with a presence as far north as the Isle of Skye and the Shetland Isles. Having grown in under two decades from an outfit with one fee-earner to a multiple award-winning firm, Inksters is particularly recognised now for its niche specialisms in property transactions, information law, crofting law and parking law.



Brian Inkster, Founder

Brian discusses the different facets to the company's growth strategy and its desire for Alternative Business Structure (ABS) implementation in Scotland, with reference to Mitchell Kowalski's profile of the firm in his book, *The Great Legal Reformation - Notes from the Field* (a collection of dispatches from the cutting edge of legal business).

## Forward thinking law

The partnership model for law firms is outdated and possibly dying. I set out to transform Inksters into a 'partnership' with a difference. One that is more flexible, agile and dynamic than the norm. There are no equity partners. Instead we have self-employed consultants directly sharing in the income that they bring into the firm. Consultants who join Inksters are experienced in their field of law, with a client following and a desire to build on that.

I give such consultants the opportunity to work on their terms, avoiding the politics of a traditional law firm partnership. They can be their own boss and build their own business all the time supported on that journey by me and my team.

Operating under the Inksters' umbrella gives a consultant a recognisable brand to be associated with and takes care of all the administrative, regulatory and insurance headaches that they would otherwise face if going it alone. It also provides the consultant with the technology and back office support required to effectively and efficiently do their work. Consultants can work whenever they want and from wherever they want. In short, we help them achieve the work/life balance that so many lack in the modern era.

"The culture here makes me feel more valued. I don't have to justify to anyone why I'm going to my kids' events. There's also autonomy and mutual respect here. Brian is key to what is happening. He has a very clear vision."

An Inksters' Consultant as quoted in: *The Great Legal Reformation - Notes from the Field*.

## Technology

The advancement of technology helped my ambitions. In 2011, I moved all of Inksters' Information Technology (IT) systems into 'the cloud'. At that time, with a new office in Inverness and solicitors often working remotely from Shetland, I wanted

### AT A GLANCE INKSTERS

- » Headed by Brian Inkster
- » Established in 1999
- » Based in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Forfar, Inverness, Portree, Wick and Lerwick
- » 18 team members
- » Law Awards of Scotland: Managing Partner of the Year 2014 (Brian Inkster); Chairman's Award Winner 2013; Corporate Social Responsibility Law Firm of the Year 2012; Trainee of the Year 2011 (Louise King); Solicitor of the Year 2006 (Brian Inkster)
- » Arts & Business Scotland Placemaking Award 2014; Valuable Content Award 2012 for web content; Web Marketing Association Award 2009 for scotsproperty.com
- » [www.inksters.com](http://www.inksters.com)



Inksters is a forward-thinking law firm

to have the best possible infrastructure to enable all our solicitors to have easy access to their case work wherever they may be and whatever device they might be using.

In 2013, we then installed a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phone system which enabled solicitors working remotely to be connected by phone through one switchboard operated from our head office in Glasgow.

I had put in place a cloud based digital dictation system well before 2011 enabling solicitors to dictate work wherever they may be and for that work to then be dealt with by the support staff back in Glasgow. Implementing this cloud technology for IT systems and telephony enabled me to more easily expand Inksters and recruit more consultants working in other remote locations.

### Marketing

A big emphasis is put on digital marketing at Inksters; we currently operate five websites and five blogs. Consultants joining Inksters benefit from our marketing. Inksters were the first law firm in Scotland on Twitter and with a dedicated YouTube Channel.

Inksters also do tactile marketing with our famous Inksters Christmas hats, our own Inksters 'Select Tea' and, more recently, novelty stress relieving gavels linked to sponsorship of 'This is Your Trial' (an improvised comedy court room show) at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

### Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a critical pillar of strategy at Inksters. If you are successful in business I believe you should give something back.

Inksters have been involved in a number of CSR projects over the years such as building homes in Argentina for Habitat for Humanity, raising funds through charity raffles for the British Heart Foundation, will writing to benefit Barnardo's and taking the Scottish Ensemble to Shetland.

### Investing in the business

I see it as being extremely important for the long-term future of Inksters to be continually reinvesting in the business rather than drawing profits out of it. This is the opposite approach to that taken by most traditional law firm partnerships where the equity partners will draw most of the profits each year.

"[Brian Inkster] understood the need to re-invest to keep the lawyers happy, and to constantly show them where their money was going. And he continually demonstrates that he is in service of the firm rather than in service to himself."

*The Great Legal Reformation -  
Notes from the Field*

### Challenges

The main challenge facing Inksters currently with regards to the growth of the company is that I must finance growth personally from firm revenue or loans. Publically available grants that might be available for business growth are invariably excluded from access by professional service firms. Outside investment in law firms is not yet permitted in Scotland through Alternative Business Structures (ABS), unlike in England & Wales.

Whilst the Scottish Parliament approved the introduction of ABS as far back as October 2010, we have been patiently waiting for a scheme to be put in place to make ABS a reality. A draft scheme has apparently been battling back and fore between the Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish government for some years now. The time it is taking them to put this in place is extraordinary.

"One can't help but feel that Brian Inkster (and by extension a new generation of Scottish lawyers) is being unnecessarily held back from greater success by Scotland's antiquated regulatory regime which encourages short-term thinking by forcing lawyers to fund all innovation from firm revenue or personal loans."

*The Great Legal Reformation -  
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