

# GETTING TO KNOW YOU



Mark Brazier, Managing Director of PAB (Coventry) Ltd

This is a feature where we ask clients of HH a range of obscure questions in order to get a better appreciation of their life and interests.

This edition features **Mark Brazier, Managing Director of PAB (Coventry) Ltd.**

- 1. Where were you born?**  
*Rugby in Warwickshire, (yes where the game was invented, and a great place to visit if you like the game of Rugby.)*
- 2. Can you summarise your business career in a few words.**  
*I've only ever worked at PAB and feel extremely lucky that my father set the business up and handed it over for me to run.*
- 3. Where would you like to be in 5 years?**  
*Heading the PAB Group of companies.*
- 4. What do you enjoy most about being in business?**  
*Being my own boss and giving people a chance to succeed.*
- 5. What one piece of advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?**  
*Don't be afraid to get some help and advice of other people, even the best sport persons in the world have coaches so why shouldn't the best business leaders.*
- 6. What is your most memorable event in your life?**  
*Apart from my kids and wife, being given the opportunity by my late father to run his business and succeed.*
- 7. Who has influenced you the most in your life whether business or not?**  
*My old bank manager, he gave me some very wise words which have guided my decisions in business and most of the time the decisions have been right and succeed.*
- 8. What fictional character would you most like to be?**  
*Tony Stark.....all that money*

- 9. What was the biggest challenge you faced in your business and how did you overcome it?**  
*The financial crisis in 2008/2009 most of our customers stopped building cars for 4 months. It was a close call at the time and we thought we were going to lose the business. We acted fast and hard (to some it seemed too hard) but we cut everything down to the bone and we got through it and were better for it.*
- 10. If you could travel in time, where would you go first?**  
*Into the future to when space travel is affordable and available to everyone.*
- 11. If you had one wish what would it be?**  
*For everyone to have tolerance for each other.*
- 12. What is the highlight of your career to date?**  
*Growing my business to the size it is now.*
- 13. What did you wish you knew this time last year?**  
*How much some people can lie to you.*
- 14. What would your ideal Sunday be?**  
*A Sunny day, a couple of poached eggs and a coffee on the balcony, mow the lawn in the morning, couple of beers early afternoon and then a spot of Sunday dinner, then a film on TV in the evening.*
- 15. If you could invite anyone for dinner (living or deceased, real or fictional), who would it be and why?**  
*My late father just so he could see how his business had flourished.*
- 16. What is your biggest regret and why?**  
*Not listening to my lawyers enough in the past and knowing that I would be in a better position now if I had.*
- 17. What motivates you to work hard?**  
*I love to see the company evolve and change as the years move on and how I can influence that. It gives you a great sense of achievement.*
- 18. What did you want to be when you grew up?**  
*I always wanted to either work with computers or be a chef. When I was young I convinced myself that I was pushed into engineering by my father but as I get older I realise that I made the decision and glad I did.*
- 19. If you could change one thing about yourself what would it be?**  
*Stop being worried about how people percieve my actions.*

## YEAR END REFLECTION

Our Corporate Partner, Colin Rodrigues was recently interviewed by the Legal 500 (defining directory of worldwide law firms). This is what he had to say.....

### 1. WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MAIN POINTS THAT DIFFERENTIATE HAWKINS HATTON FROM YOUR COMPETITORS

Every firm talks about service and cost effectiveness. However, the proof of the pudding is always in the eating. Being a niche corporate practice allows HH to focus on SME clients only.

SME Entrepreneurs are driven individuals who demand quality of service at all times, but as part of this they expect that service to be in a wrapper made up of commerciality and not a thin veneer of legal opinion without guidance.

### 2. WHAT'S THE MAIN CHANGE YOU'VE MADE IN THE FIRM THAT WILL BENEFIT CLIENTS?

Being a niche practice, we constantly evolve. As part of this evolution, we have always copied clients and their advisors into all emails, but now advice on transactional documents is presented in the format of a table which specifically allows clients to insert instructions and/or comments with regard to particular aspects of documents we produce for review by them.

This innovative approach allows clients to scan risk areas and report back to us without having to worry about cumbersome reports.

### 3. CAN YOU GIVE US A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU HAVE HELPED A CLIENT TO ADD VALUE TO THEIR BUSINESS?

A current client of HH who sold 20% of his business for £12m found the underwriter who bought into that business now no longer wants to provide underwriting facilities to the client. The underwriters are based in America and as part of this negotiation; we coordinated and prepared agendas for our client. We rehearsed calls with our client and their advisors so they were better able to present a way forward as part of the negotiation process.



Notwithstanding there were CF advisors on board, we found an inventive solution to allow the client to standstill with the underwriter for a 6-month period, in order to allow them to work out the funding arrangements to buy out their underwriter/ investor.

### 4. ARE CLIENTS LOOKING FOR STABILITY AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION FROM THEIR LAW FIRMS?

Without a doubt. Anybody can provide legal solutions; however the key is to ensure that the legal solution has been commercially thought through and presented in a way which allows the maximum chance for it to succeed.

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## THE SHOP THAT “JACK” BUILT

*For those of you who are my age you may recall a shop called Kwiksave which is still around. I regarded Kwiksave as one of Britain’s original discount stores. Tesco is now taking the fight back to Aldi and Lidl by creating its own version of a no-frills supermarket under the brand name Jacks which Tesco has just recently unveiled.*

*Some of you may be thinking why is the name Jacks whereas those of you who follow back stories may know that the founder of Tesco was Jack Cohen and he started the Tesco brand in the 1920s, so there is no more fitting way to give tribute to Mr Cohen than by naming Tesco’s new venture Jacks.*

*Supermarkets have already had a foray into the convenience store sector, which has long been saturated by independent shopkeepers and cooperatives. Will Tesco win this new fight against the German discounters? Lower prices and scale will be the answer to this question and this will only become apparent when we know how many new stores are rolled out throughout the UK and become established. In the short term it is expected that 10-15 stores will be opened in the next 6 months.*

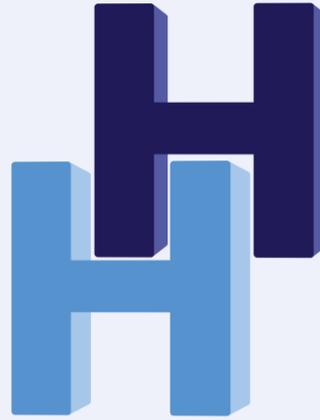
*The idea behind Jacks is very similar to the model of Kwiksave, Aldi and Lidl in that it will be smaller in size and will carry a more limited product range under its own label of Jacks. The shopping habits of UK consumers have changed as a result of the arrival of Aldi and Lidl in that brand appeal within shops has been outweighed by value for money. Indeed consumer habits have changed within the supermarket sector generally, as there is a cross-section of consumers*

*who are attracted by constantly low prices across the range which the German discounters have promoted so well.*

*In order to keep costs down the Jacks stores will not be aesthetically pleasing but more basic and functional. Is there place in the discount sector for another player to come in and take on the established German discounters? Is this Tesco taking on Aldi and Lidl at their own game rather than trying to adopt the historic tactics of attracting customers by cheaper petrol, 3 for 2 offers and loyalty schemes?*

*Sainsburys on the other hand has taken a different route by trying to add new dimensions through its takeover of Argos and potentially Asda in the New Year subject to getting regulatory approval. That is not to say that Tesco has not tried to conquer the food sector in different ways as it was not so long ago that Tesco took over the “Booker’s” cash and carry.*

*It will be very interesting to see next year what happens when figures are published about consumer spending in the supermarket sector how much of every £1 spent continues to go to Aldi and Lidl and how much is taken by Jacks.*



Colin Rodrigues

## COUNTERPLAS CONTINUES INJECTING VIGOUR INTO PLASTIC INJECTION

Counterplas, has long been one of the Midland’s and UK’s leading technical, plastic injection moulder operators, who has over many years, built a strong and enviable reputation in its industry for innovation and excellence. Counterplas has not only continued to expand its product range, but it has bolstered its expansion by acquisition.

Paul Isherwood, managing director of Counterplas, has been at its helm enabling the company to stay ahead of its competitor’s through the manufacture and design of new products, using the latest energy efficient machines for plastic injection moulding. Mr Isherwood, has now negotiated Counterplas’ acquisition of a leading competitor.

Paul Isherwood said “I have, for a long time, had respect for Showpla Plastics and how it operates as a specialist plastic injection moulder within the Midlands. For me, it just seemed that the Counterplas wrapper around Showpla Plastics would neatly encapsulate the expansion of Counterplas, in one fell swoop. Thereby creating a showcase plastic moulding business, which would become the benchmark for quality and innovation

within the plastic injection moulding industry.”

Pete Simpson (Partner of Bache Brown Accountants), who has long been the go-to business advisor for Paul Isherwood and Counterplas said that “I have known and worked with Paul for a long time, and so I have a good understanding of how he conducts his business. Therefore, Paul would only look to expand Counterplas through an acquisition where there is a true synergy. That is why the incorporation of the Showpla business within Counterplas will continue to strengthen what is already a formidable business.”

We have acted for Counterplas for a number of years as its corporate counsel, Colin Rodrigues our corporate partner, said “with the event horizon of Brexit fast approaching, I have always been a strong advocate of investment as a way to improve productivity. Knowing the business of Counterplas and Showpla and the industry in which they operate, investment is the key to productivity and as such, the combination of the two businesses will create a stronger and more highly efficient business.”



Left to right - Paul Isherwood, Pete Simpson and Colin Rodrigues