

Case Study

Fintan O'Toole – South London



After many years working for major corporations, including Securicor Recruitment Services where he was Managing Director, Fintan O'Toole retrained as a barrister. He had been working for a year as an independent consultant when he heard about The HR Dept.

"The more I found out about The HR Dept, the more it appealed to me," says Fintan. "When I met with Sue and Mike (The HR Dept's Directors) I discovered they were absolutely straightforward and I tuned into their values at once.

"The strong brand and the effective support network convinced me to make the move from working as an independent on my own to joining the team as a licensee. The product offering is superb and the indemnity insurance in particular is a real benefit, as this is something you simply can't get as an independent."

Product offering

The simple proposition and clear product offering is what Fintan feels distinguishes The HR Dept from other HR consultancies. *"I know it's a hackneyed expression but The HR Dept 'does what it says on the tin'. For a small company we are their HR department and we deal with anything and everything that staff in a large corporate organisation would go to their internal HR department for – yet at a fraction of the cost of employing an in-house resource. It's a very easy message to get across to potential clients."*

Based in Sutton, Fintan's business covers South London. He currently works with around 30 clients, ranging from cheese importers to publishers to letting agents.

"Most of the companies I work with are SMEs, which means the main issues I deal with are around the avoidance of risk in employing people, compliance, grievances, dismissals and contracts," explains Fintan. "The diversity of clients I work with makes the work very interesting."

Start-up support

Fintan was impressed with the start-up support available from The HR Dept. *"There is so much involved in setting up a new business but The HR Dept takes the headache out of it all,"* explains Fintan. *"They give you the brand and identity, marketing literature, phone number and website. This support is invaluable as you can get going straight away and concentrate on your core services to clients. Being part of a network also leads to economies of scale in acquiring things such as legal precedents and templates, which can take years to develop when you're working on your own."*

Camaraderie

What Fintan finds most valuable about working with The HR Dept is the interaction with other licensees around the country. *"The network offers a fantastic sense of camaraderie. We all bounce ideas off each other and share best practice. You never have to make decisions on your own or feel isolated. Every day two or three topics are being discussed by email with people asking for help and advice from others who may have more experience in particular areas. We also get together a few times a year, which are great opportunities for learning from one another."*

Best of both worlds

Companies using The HR Dept get the best of both worlds according to Fintan: *“They get a local, personal service from a dedicated consultant with back-up support and cover when that consultant goes on holiday. As part of The HR Dept team, you enjoy all the benefits of working as an independent while being part of a much wider national network with real substance and weight.”*

So does Fintan have any advice for other HR professionals who might be considering going it alone or taking on a licence with The HR Dept?

“It is quite different to corporate HR. You are not just running a department or function. Of course you need HR skills but at the end of the day you are running a business. While there’s tremendous support available for you on the business side of things, you do have to become a sales person and a customer relationship manager.”

“As franchises go, The HR Dept is proven – it does work. There are excellent opportunities for you to use your own brain, skills and resources. This is something I enjoy immensely. It’s rewarding being part of The HR Dept team. I choose when I work, who I work with and the amount of time I put into it. I am completely my own master. There is very little to restrict me in building the business I want to run. But when I need support, it’s always there.”