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Building a Solid Legal Foundation

Interviews and Profiles





David Hirschfield

LEGAL DIRECTOR,
GALLIARD HOMES

David Hirschfield, legal director for Galliard Homes in the United Kingdom (London's largest private housebuilder), and recently honored as a Rising Star at the European Counsel Awards 2016, comes from a family of lawyers, and says he was exposed to legal discussions from an early age. It was a natural transition to follow into the same field as his parents. Being in a career that uses his talents for evaluating complex situations, he grew to master the commercial drivers for business practice and provide reasonable solutions to tough problems. The profession grew to reflect who he is as a person.

Born and raised in North London, Hirschfield attended the University of Birmingham, where he studied history and participated in an exchange program through the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Although he loved the sunshine and relaxed lifestyle that southern California is known for, he always knew that London was where he belonged.

"It was a great experience — especially as a student — to be in Los Angeles and living in an area sandwiched between Beverly Hills and Belair. It was amazing, but I love London. It's home," Hirschfield says.

In his opinion, Hirschfield believes that it's good, personally and professionally, to take some time out to pursue your interests before settling properly into the legal field. This is why he wanted to learn as much as he could about history, and travel before jumping into the busy schedules of his career.

"My passion for travel helped me grow as a person," he says. "I experienced other cultures whenever I had the chance, and have lived for a year in both Israel and America before embarking on a legal career. Following your interests and hobbies will help you become well rounded."

In fact, he feels his history background has helped him when it comes to analyzing legal work, constructing an argument, and looking at different points of view, which are all useful skills for any lawyer.

Before joining Galliard Homes, Hirschfield worked at the leading international magic circle firm Linklaters LLP before moving to Nabarro LLP to join their market-leading corporate real estate team. During his time in private practice, Hirschfield came across Galliard Homes, which ultimately led him to a meeting with the Galliard CEO, Stephen Conway. There was an interest in acquiring a legal director role at Galliard Homes, although the job wasn't formally advertised. Hirschfield began having conversations with Conway and other key Galliard directors about the company's growing need for an in-house lawyer. The rest fell into place.

A typical day for Hirschfield is always varied, and takes him through many levels. He manages Galliard's numerous real estate deals; stays on top of financing nuances; leads the team in all aspects of transactions from a legal perspective; meets with joint venture partners; and is constantly vigilant about relaying legal obligations to Galliard and its joint venture partners. During the course of an afternoon, he may find himself talking to banks about financing opportunities, and perhaps reviewing documents from a corporate structural perspective.

Every day is a different scenario, he says, and there are certainly challenges along the way. Hirschfield is the legal director at a company with over 550 employees and growing. But being the legal "go to" keeps him up to date on several areas, and he finds the pace exciting.

"I enjoy the responsibility, and working alongside the senior management team at Galliard is a pleasure. I know that sounds clichéd, but it's true," he says.

Pausing for reflection, Hirschfield says life is all about valuable experiences. It's important to explore opportunities, learn as much as possible from mentors and senior staff, and break out of your comfort zone once in a while.

"If there's a meeting, training session, or seminar presented to you, go for it, even if you're tired or can't be bothered," he says. "Take the time to develop a wide breadth of understanding. Expand your expertise and learn about numerous aspects of law, from finance to real estate to litigation. Know and understand what you're talking about and always strive for a balanced perspective. Having an overall understanding of different legal sectors will undoubtedly help you succeed in business."

And, you know, have some fun before it all starts.

"You're going to be working for a long, long time," he says. "Take some time to do what you love before your career gets going. It's not like when you start work, that's it, but you probably won't have as much free time. The experiences you gain will reward you many times over."

For almost 25 years, Galliard has established a reputation as London's most sought after and "best-selling" residential developer. As of June 2016, Galliard:

- Employs over 550 staff and 4,500 contractors;
- Is currently working on over 40 residential developments across the capital;
- Is delivering over 5,500 apartments and 800 hotel rooms;
- Has contracted off plan sales of EU£1.9 billion; and,
- Has planning applications in process for an additional 5,000 units.

Getting to know... David Hirschfield

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HISTORY SUBJECT OR TIME PERIOD?

The WW2 era is a period that continues to fascinate me, considering how it's outcome has undoubtedly helped to shape the free world that we live in today.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU LEARNED FROM A MENTOR THAT YOU SHARE WITH YOUR MENTEE(S)?

Always show the same courteous respect and manners to all your colleagues and business partners regardless of their level of seniority.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD AND WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO GET IT?

Either Italian or modern French cuisine. If you're in London, I highly recommend the recently awarded Michelin star restaurant, The Portland, on Great Portland Street.

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