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Most Innovative Business Leader - UK

Zyda Law is a boutique law firm specialising in navigating regulatory and statutory processes, which involves achieve planning consents and environmental permits for major infrastructure projects. We spoke to Paul Zyda, Principal at Zyda Law, to find out more about their company, and how they provide a top quality city service at competitive regional prices.

A major testament to our success is that in the last 10 years, our blue chip client work has enabled infrastructure development worth an excess of £4 billion. This represents not only commercial client objectives, but wider community investment in jobs and local economies.

Furthermore, we have recently expanded our business, with the creation of the Planning Helpline, a legal planning service predominantly aimed at residential and commercial projects. Before we start work on a case, we offer an initial pro bono review of each matter. This is vital in building up a robust strategy, winning new business from SMEs who might not otherwise instruct leading planning law specialists, and ensuring that potential clients receive tailored advice on the optimum means of proceeding.

Although we traditionally work on gaining consents for large, contentious developments, we observed a gap in the market for a low cost, legal planning service. With few Legal 500 competitor firms offering such a service, we were inspired to bring this facility to clients. To achieve this, we have launched a national Planning Helpline.

Through targeting more residential and smaller commercial clients, the Planning Helpline has allowed smaller planning matters to be filtered through our service, leaving the larger matters to be dealt with under the Zyda Law brand. This maintains a distinction between the two and allows us, as a business, to resource matters more efficiently. This fresh approach to business, with a low cost, high volume model, demonstrates how we are constantly striving for new ways to provide market leading, innovative services to clients.

Moreover, The Planning Helpline service is primarily online, which means we can reduce our environmental impact and keep costs low for our clients. Additionally, it means that we can assist on matters all over England and Wales, taking advantage of the ability to submit appeals and applications via the planning portal.

As a result of our approach, we consider ourselves to be quite a pioneering firm. We form close and long lasting relations with our clients, we 'go the extra mile' and provide legally robust and commercially sound solutions to our clients' issues.

As well as our flexible Planning Helpline, our innovative service delivery is one of our features which most attracts our clients. We don't just offer the usual legal services; we help clients manage their entire project. With our extensive contacts, we bring in experts to form formidable planning teams. And we manage projects from start to finish with our creative cloud-based project management system: Daptiv. With this, everyone involved has uninterrupted and direct access to files, documents, costs and progress updates, which are all secure and available anywhere with an internet connection.

All of our innovations are due to the simple fact that the legal landscape is changing rapidly, and will continue to change well into 2016 and beyond. As such, we will continue to face a number of challenges, such as economic pressures, technological challenges, globalisation and market competition.

In particular, the changes to technology has created a huge impact to the legal industry. Law firms are now switching from a very paper-intensive service, to providing electronic systems to reduce the paper produced and lessen environmental impacts. We are proud to have used a cloud based system for over ten years. This has enabled us to provide our clients with more efficient service, and allows our clients access to our documents, files and progress updates at any time of the day. Likewise, technology is influential for the brand management of a law firm. We regularly write blogs and articles, which we publish online to both the Zyda Law and the Planning Helpline websites.

In terms of my role at the company, this can be quite varied and includes continuing to advise clients whilst also finding time to set strategic objectives and goals for the firm. I enjoy the mix and challenges of the role, and look forward to expanding the firm into new practice areas over the short to medium term. However, our success has been very much a team effort, and our staff are a key ingredient to the success of the firm. We recruit energetic and enthusiastic fee earners, who will be the next generation of planning and environmental law experts.

When training and mentoring new staff, we believe that nurturing our people is incredibly important. We sign up all our lawyers to the United Kingdom Environmental Law Association and encourage them

to attend conferences to stay up-to-speed on the latest legislature and innovation, and to network with peers and inspiring experts.

As a result, we provide our Trainee Solicitors with the knowledge, tools and opportunities to create a rewarding and successful career for themselves. We take the view that the best way to learn is to do. For this reason, we have been rewarded for our high level of training and recruitment, by recently winning "Best-Recruiter-Small Firm" at the LawCareers.net Training and Recruitment Awards 2015, and "Best Trainer-Small Firm" at the LawCareers.net Training and Recruitment Awards 2014.

As for the award, my team and I are delighted to have had our efforts recognised.

