Interview with Barry Horner, Paradigm Norton

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Barry Horner, CEO of Paradigm Norton Financial Planning Limited, takes the time to talk to us about the journey so far as well as his interests out of hours.

How has Paradigm Norton evolved over the years and got to where it is today?

Paradigm Norton was started in 2001 by myself and William Pratt who together shared a vision that that there was an opportunity to create a very different and distinctive business based on the professional services model where we would recruit individuals without any baggage and free from ‘old habits’. Over the last 10 years we have typically recruited and built the team based on those with high technical competence and who have a shared vision of building the UK’s leading financial planning firm.

In 2005 as a result of the tragic and sudden death of David Norton we suddenly had the opportunity to acquire Norton Partners, which was a significant turning point in our business. We found ourselves with an outstanding tax and estates team and the capacity to win higher value work.

We are thrilled with what has been achieved so far and we are excited about the future. We have recently recruited two highly competent financial planners and an operations manager who has joined us from KPMG. We are excited to see the development and creation of the profession of Financial Planning and play our part in building that profession.

In 2009 we, as a result of significant and lengthy discussions decided to partner with Macquarie Bank to help us move the business to the next stage. We have an agreed acquisition programme and a plan to significantly increase our operational efficiency and effectiveness. We are delighted with our partnership with Macquarie.

What do you think has made Paradigm Norton a success?

In my view there are only a few key factors which make for a successful financial planning business and these are:

- A clear vision of where you are heading and what you want to achieve.
- Employ the 'right' people. There are only two types of employee – owners and hired hands. Thankfully our team is made up of those with the 'owner' mindset.
- Great clients. We are very fortunate that we have a dedicated client base who refer other quality clients to us.
- Good systems and processes. We have a system, process and standard for everything. This drives our operational effectiveness.

Why do you enjoy your role and what is your biggest challenge?

I love being CEO of Paradigm Norton as I have a great team to lead. Every day is different and we are currently in a growth phase, which requires me to be very focused on where I spend my time and energies. I am a great believer in '*only do what only you can do'*. I am responsible for our overall strategy, risk management, sales and marketing and managing a small book of our higher value clients.

My biggest challenge is appropriately allocating my time across my key areas of responsibility within Paradigm Norton and at the same time fulfilling my duties as the President of The Institute of Financial Planning.

What are the biggest issues affecting your clients now?

Many of our clients are lawyers, so just as the financial planning community prepare for the FSA led retail distribution review, lawyers are thinking through the implications of the Legal Services Act and how the new legislation will impact their businesses. Doubtless we will see a significant fall in the number of law firms in the UK and for our clients and the senior partners within the leading law firms it's a question of seeking to position their firms as winners in the new regime.

How did you become involved with the IFP and when did you become President?

I believe that you can really only influence change by getting involved. My passion is to see the profession of Financial Planning emerge in the UK and I sense that the tide is turning and there is more recognition of financial planning within the consuming public, but that we have a long way to go.

I joined the board 5 years ago and have been a key supporter of a number of the initiatives which have been launched which further position the IFP as 'thought leaders' in this space. I took over as President in September 2008 and will hold this office until September 2010. It is an extremely exciting time to be involved with the IFP as many businesses prepare and equip themselves for the impending changes that will soon be upon us. With only 12 months to go before I step down I am keen to push ahead with the development of the profession, see our membership build and seek to support Nick Cann and the team as they deliver our strategy on a day to day basis.

How will RDR affect the financial planning profession over the next three years?

For the vast majority of IFP members the key proposals outlined in the latest version of the RDR report will present few challenges for them. Those running and managing financial planning businesses have some time ago recognised the need for a more robust and well capitalised business, encouraged their team to hold the highest level of qualifications possible and will have transitioned their businesses to a recurring fee based model. We do feel as an Institute that we are ideally positioned to help businesses in transition and we have recently issued guidance on what the ‘classic’ financial planning firm needs to look like. We will then, as an Institute, provide guidance and training to ensure that such firms can be included in the IFP’s register of Financial Planning firms, providing that they display the key attributes and are committed to offering a comprehensive financial planning service to their clients.

What would you be doing if you were not the CEO of Paradigm Norton?

I am extremely fortunate in that I do a job that I love. However if I was not at Paradigm Norton I would probably set up another business that offered solutions to clients in terms of how to effectively gift money to charity. More and more clients are challenged by how to give their money or assets away effectively. This should not be the case. I would combine this project with undertaking a Masters degree in International Development at Bath University.

What is your favourite website?

Ski GB – A great resource for planning and arranging skiing holidays. The website provides excellent guidance on snow conditions, which resorts are open and when and has a members only section where you can access Ski TV.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Outdoor stuff - Horse riding with my wife, skiing with my three boys, mountain biking and Starbucks.

If you could have three people around the dinner table, who would they be?

My three boys after a great day of ‘off piste’ skiing where we share stories of near misses and wipe outs.