

The Muckle 2 lengths and 5 keys

We introduced the "2 lengths" model at Muckle in February 2011. It is now very much embedded as part of our culture and provides clarity to everyone about what we, and they, need to achieve to support the success of the business. The model has been adopted by businesses as diverse as a bakery, a PR and communications agency, a multi-national insurance sales team and a housing association. Each developed and adapted it to their sector and business needs, but the underlying principles remained the same.

So, what's the background?

Chris Cook's story is inspiring: from being a middle ranking club swimmer born in South Shields to winning 2 gold medals and 1 silver in the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games and representing Team GB in the 2004 Athens and 2008 Beijing Olympic Games – quite a journey. He attributes his successes to one thing: focus on a single objective and working out how to achieve it. What was that objective? Not winning medals. Not breaking records or winning races. Purely and simply Chris concentrated everything on trying to swim 2 lengths of the pool as fast as he could.

Why?

Because to keep the objective simple and easy to understand meant that he could focus very clearly on it to the exclusion of almost anything else. Before he did anything he would ask himself one question: if I do this, will it help me to swim 2 lengths of the pool as fast as I can? He then worked out the 5 things that would have the biggest impact on that objective if he improved on them (his "5 Keys") – and that was where he focussed his energies. He then applied a single-minded determination to do the things that gave him the best chance of succeeding as a matter of priority. Of course that is a gross oversimplification of what Chris did over a sustained period – but the theory makes sense. Simple, focussed and designed to succeed. The results speak for themselves.

To link that to a business and its performance is not immediately obvious – surely being a law firm is far more complicated? But is it? If we could be very clear about what the business is really trying to achieve would that help us? If we could make sure that our primary objective was simple, easy to remember and logical

would that help us? Would it give us all a better chance to understand what we need to do on a daily basis and go home knowing that we had done our very best? We think so. Whilst the sporting and business contexts are completely different the underlying principles apply perfectly to both:

- focus clearly on what you want to achieve;
- give yourself the best chance of succeeding by working on the key areas; and
- get the entire team pulling in the same direction by making sure that they understand the goal and how they can best contribute.

Two lengths

Our "2 lengths" is a simple and straight forward statement that describes what we are trying to achieve – **providing the best advice and service we possibly can, profitably.**

How do we do that?

We are a people business. Our product is knowledge. There are a great many law firms out there that have the legal knowledge and skills to do what we do. The difference is the way that we apply that knowledge to the challenges and opportunities that our clients bring to us. That is what differentiates us. Our people and the way that we work together is what makes Muckle what it is. One Team.

Without clients we have no business. They sit at the centre of everything that we do. We wrap the Muckle team around them. No one team is any more important than another team here. We all have a job to do and only if we all do our job to the best of our ability will we realise the full potential of the business. Yes, our lawyers are the people that give our clients the advice that they need..... but they can't deliver the best advice and service without everyone else in the business working with them. That is why the one team principle is so important to us.

Five keys

At the heart of what defines us are five fundamental principles. Others might call them values; after our time with Chris Cook, we call them keys.

- We are one team with various complimentary skills, working towards a common goal and operating with trust, accountability and interdependence. **"One Team"**
- Our business will only ever be as good as its people and the relationships they create. We encourage our people to develop and use their individual styles and personality because we know that one size does not fit all. **"Right People and Strong Relationships"**
- Excellent service means different things to different people. To us it is simple: provide clients with what they want, when they want it, at an agreed cost and through people who have personality. **"Excellent Service Model"**
- We will always work as hard as we possibly can to make sure that everything that we do is of the highest possible quality. **"Quality, Risk and Compliance"**
- We are proud of the communities in which we live and work. Being a responsible business through our charitable giving and volunteering, pro bono work, external roles and care for the environment is a very important part of who we are. **"Being a Responsible Business"**

You are really important

We believe that if you have the right people in the business who have the right attitude, who enjoy what they do and who feel valued and respected, then the logical outcome is that the service experience that any client receives will be great. Contrast that with a business where the people don't care, don't enjoy what they do and have no respect for each other. You can hopefully see how a culture like that could have an adverse effect on the experience that any client might have.

The desire on the part of the firm to develop our culture and engage with everyone who works here is very strong. It underpins everything that we do and will continue to do so for a long time to come.

What does it mean for me?

Everyone has individual "2 lengths" and "5 keys" – your personal objectives. Your individual "2 lengths" and "5 keys" will be specifically tailored to your strengths and to what your team needs from you in order to deliver its "2 lengths". Your team's "2 lengths" and "5 keys" will similarly support the overall objective of the firm - **providing the best advice and service we possibly can, profitably**. Hopefully you can see how everything fits together and the way in which the model works for the whole business.

How often are the 2 lengths and 5 keys reviewed?

The firm, team and individual 2 lengths and 5 keys are reviewed at least annually. Any changes to the firm 2 lengths and 5 keys would be communicated at the 6 monthly firm presentations. Team 2 lengths and 5 keys tend to be reviewed in advance of the performance and development review (PDR) cycle in June/July and individual 2 lengths and 5 keys are updated in your PDR and reviewed at least every six months.

