



Mark my words

Mark Goodson is a pretty sociable sort of chap. He likes to chat and share a few stories, like that hole in one he sank - when no one else was around!

editorial rick hopkinson / **pictures** richard brimer



It's no surprise that the art of the spoken word is what originally inspired Mark Goodson to take up a legal career that now finds him as an Associate at Napier law firm Willis Toomey Robinson. After all Mark enjoys a good debate, wherever he is. It could be a social one at the 19th hole of the Napier Golf Club or a business negotiation at the office on behalf of one of his corporate clients.

Words come easily to this inspiring young family man who left a high-powered career in one of London's top law firms, to seek a more balanced Napier life back in his city of birth. "I changed career paths in my second year of accountancy at Victoria University when I realised that figures didn't really do it for me," explains Mark. "I was reasonable at numbers but I was much better at talking." Regrettably something that his former teachers back at Napier Boys' High School would probably vouch for!

Mark took up law and soon discovered his true passion, something that was undoubtedly already in the blood. You see Mark's father Brian had been a highly respected lawyer in Napier and a partner in Willis Toomey Robinson for many years, so it was a natural progression for the only son to follow in the paternal footsteps. "Virtually every aspect of society is governed by a set of rules and I was fascinated by the concept of being one of the people who knew what the rules are," says Mark. "From the start I saw how many areas of the law could have a large impact on the lives of most people and that made it an attractive subject to study and continues to make it an attractive profession to work in."

After stints in the commercial / corporate team at Bell Gully in Wellington and the in-house team at Angel Trains in the UK

(plus fitting in a marriage proposal to long term girl friend Monique Cull), Mark was offered a high profile position in the London offices of the international legal practice DLA Piper. Here Mark specialised in aviation finance law and was involved in a variety of major contract negotiations, ranging from agreements between major airlines for the sale and purchase of aircraft to a long term maintenance contract for all the engines in the Easy Jet fleet.

Yes Mark was flying pretty high by this stage with late night meetings and early morning taxis the norm. But it was a chance overheard telephone conversation that changed Mark's life ultimately for the better. "I remember hearing one of the senior partners saying goodnight to his kids over the telephone and realised that this was a regular occurrence," Mark recalls. "Surely there has to be more to life than that I thought, and started planning our return to New Zealand the next day!"

Mark hasn't looked back since starting with Willis Toomey Robinson late in 2007 after choosing the obvious benefits of his home town over the dubious, big city opportunities offered in Wellington or Auckland. He now enjoys arriving back home before 5.30pm most afternoons and spending quality time with his young daughter Ellie and wife Monique, who just happens to be expecting number two in a few months. Mark is expecting a full life ahead, where he can enjoy the varied challenges of working in the region's leading legal practice, combined with the exceptional and inspiring Napier life style.

In his own words, "you just can't beat the work, life balance Napier has to offer."

TOP RIGHT: Mark Goodson at the Willis Toomey Robinson offices.

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