

Q&A with Brent McAnulty, Head of Legal & Corporate Affairs at TVNZ

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Brent talks about what excites him at TVNZ, in the community, and away from work, and who has inspired him professionally.

This is the fourth in a series of Q&As with winners of the CLANZ Wigley + Company award for contribution to the community.

● ***What attracted you to the legal profession?***

I've always had an interest in justice and a good, rigorous argument, and failing fourth form science certainly put an end to any hopes I had for medical school. I should also say that LA Law was on television at the time and I loved that, it made being a lawyer seem really exciting.

● ***What excites you about your work now?***

The variety of work I get to do in my TVNZ role – a broad range of IP, commercial, governance, reputation management, and all the issues that arise in a building that produces news and entertainment. We are not a big company, but there is considerable interest in what we do so that scrutiny keeps us on our toes.

● ***Who has inspired you in the profession?***

I've been lucky in working with people I've really admired, both people I've reported to and people who have reported to me. My early career was at Wynyard Wood, which had eight partners and two staff solicitors so I had lots of good people to mentor me. The things I learned there particularly from Bob Eades, a former president of the Auckland District Law Society, really set me up in the profession. He taught me a lot about ethical issues and making the right call. My boss at Telecom, Grant Fraser, was a fantastic person to work for and his very calm manner earned him everyone's respect. TVNZ's CFO Rodney Parker, who was until recently my boss, has taught me a lot about business and how to manage issues.



● ***Work / life balance – how do you achieve that?***

I've got a fantastic employer in TVNZ, as I also had at Telecom. I live close to the office, which frees up more time for me, and I use technology to ensure I'm not tied to the office all the time. Having email on the go has freed me up rather than tying me to the office. For example, I can attend activities at my children's school because I can be contacted while I'm there if something urgent comes up.

● ***How do you enjoy spending time away from work?***

I've got three young children and my wife and I love spending time with them, getting outdoors as a family. On an ideal weekend we'll take a ball

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down the park for a kick around, or jump on our bikes, or go to the beach. You have to put your own hobbies and interests on hold to a certain extent when you have children, but I still follow a small selection of underperforming sports teams.

● ***What prompted you to get involved in community work?***

When we were living in the United Kingdom my wife Leanne did a four-month stint in Ghana, helping to educate children who couldn't afford to go to school. I visited her while she was there and I thought what she was doing was incredible. It made me committed to getting into some sort of community work when we returned to New Zealand, and the perfect opportunity presented itself when Sport Waitakere was looking for trustees. I was able to combine my love for sport and the area I grew up in to help turn that organisation around. It was the perfect match for me. I think it is incumbent on all of us who can to give something back to the communities we live in.

● ***What community work has given you the greatest satisfaction?***

My work with Sport Waitakere. It was within a few weeks of having to close down at one stage due to underperformance and facing issues in getting the Trusts Stadium built. I'm very proud of what we achieved as a board in turning the organisation around. The stadium was built, and we passed our next audit with flying colours. I've also enjoyed my work umpiring cricket and helping with sports teams, and helping Leanne with fundraising for our children's kindergarten and school.

● ***What do you get out of it?***

A lot of people rely on the support of others because they haven't had the same opportunities, or life has treated them harder than others – so the more you can help, the better it is for everyone. My work at Sport Waitakere also taught me how local government worked, and gave me a real appreciation of the need for networking skills and learning to get alongside people to get them on board. That experience has been a great help to me in my current job.

● ***What's the best piece of word advice you ever received?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the people you're talking to and ensure you're expressing yourself in a way that they understand. Think of things as simply as possible – that doesn't mean dumbing things down, but using plain English that people understand, and not getting caught up in corporate speak.

● ***What advice would you give to young lawyers?***

Always remember that you are a service provider and get engaged with your clients. Take a genuine interest in them, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Meeting your client's objectives has to be your main goal.

And get involved in your communities – as lawyers we all have an obligation to provide people with access to justice, regardless of their means to pay for that access. You'll build a broader skill set by getting involved and feel more fulfilled professionally and personally.