



## Q&A with Cameron Madgwick, Associate General Counsel at Contact Energy

*Cameron talks about what excites him at Contact, in the community, and away from work, and who has inspired him professionally.*

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

January 2013

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

I didn't start out wanting to be a lawyer. I fell into it at university and really enjoyed it. What attracts me about being in the profession is the capacity of the law to make New Zealand a better place for people to live in. Our legal system is really important in holding the country together, and everyone, regardless of their means, needs to have access to it.

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

Both in my paid work in the commercial world and my work in the community I get to interact with some really fantastic people, and to help them achieve the outcomes they want. It's about enabling people to achieve things, and that's a really cool thing to be doing, it's very satisfying.

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

My early years in the law were at Russell McVeagh and looking back I can see that I've formed my own style based on the attributes of the lawyers I interacted with most when I was there – Cheryl Gwyn, Stephen Kos, Justin Smith, Richard Mehrtens and Grant Wilson. I learned the importance of the client and achieving the client's objectives.



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

I think that the traditional line between the two has become a bit blurred and being able to let our work sphere overlap with our personal life is a good thing – it's good to be able to take some time off during the day to deal with personal things if you need to, because you make the time up in other ways. More generally, I try to get regular exercise, eat well and enjoy the company of my friends and family.

Q&A with Cameron Madgwick, Associate General Counsel at Contact Energy

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

I have a wonderful young family and try to spend as much time as possible away from work with them as they grow up. We like to be outside as much as possible as a family, whether in our garden or out enjoying New Zealand's great outdoors.

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

To be honest, it was because of a girl I was keen on at university – she was interested in working in the community law programme and I was interested in her, so that's how I got involved. The relationship with her didn't last very long, but my involvement in community work has, so I'm grateful to her for inspiring me.

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

I get great satisfaction seeing community law centres operating as a co-ordinated whole, having a good outward image and being able to meet their clients' needs. The establishment and operation of the Community Law Centres of Aotearoa has given centres a strong and consistent voice with all stakeholders. Good organisation and governance is important, and this is something lawyers can contribute to very well.

● ***What do you get out of it?***

Strong communities are really important, and we need to ensure they stay that way because

they are the glue that holds things together and help build a stronger, safer society. If our communities are strong, New Zealand will be strong, and the work I do contributes to that. While I'm giving my professional skills to the community, I'm also gaining a lot that's useful for me in my corporate work. Listening skills, empathy and things like that are sometimes lacking in the corporate environment and I bring that back in from my community work.

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

Context is key. If you don't understand the context of the issue you're dealing with, you can totally miss the point. Don't leap to assumptions, or you'll probably get it wrong.

● ***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.