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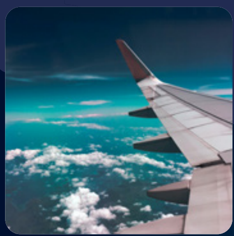

CELEBRATING PROFESSIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

EDITION #F01(ME)

DUBAI

'A seamless experience for international customers'
by **Stuart McCulloch,** DipPFS
Market Head, Middle East, The Fry Group

'Celebrating professionalism in the MIddle East' is a pioneering series of case studies, published by the Chartered Insurance Institute, to showcase professional practice and innovation in insurance

A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMERS

by **Stuart McCulloch,** DipPFS
Market Head, Middle East, The Fry Group

In today's globally mobile world, providing a consistent level of service is imperative to the success of many businesses that work across borders. Indeed the very concept of 'borders' is becoming less relevant for clients, who wish to access the same service wherever they are in the world. For companies such as The Fry Group, with offices in different countries, offering a consistent and trusted service lies at the heart of our philosophy.

In 2018, after a strategic decision to enter the Middle East market, I was given the responsibility of opening The Fry Group's office in Dubai. My top priority was to ensure anyone using our service experienced the same standard of advice and service that existed everywhere else within our business. In this article, I will explore the principles that have been developed throughout the company to build trust with internationally mobile customers, and how this affected the mobilisation decisions I took in Dubai.

AN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Since 1898, The Fry Group has offered financial advice to expatriates, and those living in the UK. Our long heritage, client focus and global presence means that working across borders has been ingrained in our operations since we were founded.

Given the worldwide nature of our operations, with offices in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, we are very aware of the need to ensure a consistent experience for clients, wherever they are in the world. Many of our clients have been loyal to us during a number of years, accessing our services from different locations as their careers have developed. For example, many clients join us while they are based overseas, before transferring to our UK teams when they come to return or retire.

Added to this is that many of our own people move between our offices during their careers – part of our ongoing commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and career progression. Our financial planners typically stay with us for 15 years, so it's important that they can deliver a consistent service whichever office they are operating from. As a result, providing a coherent 'feel' matters for everyone concerned.

A CONSISTENT EXPERIENCE

In developing consistency — especially across borders, offices and teams — it is vital that the essence of the company is clearly communicated at every level. We have developed a set of core values that sit as the guiding principles of our business, and these of course include client satisfaction. We use these values to manage not only our strategic planning but also the day-to-day business, staff engagement and our relationships with clients.

HIGH LEVELS OF SERVICE

When working with clients to look after their hard-earned capital, it is imperative that the highest standards of advice and professionalism are provided at all times. This means supporting our financial planners in obtaining Chartered status (as far as professional qualifications are concerned, this is certainly the gold standard), and training the next generation of financial planners through our internal Academy. Endorsements from internationally recognised third parties are also valued evidence of the priority we place on trust, transparency and client service, and provide valuable benchmarks for all staff and offices.

SEEKING FEEDBACK

One of the best and most transparent ways of understanding whether our service is meeting expectations is to regularly ask clients to share views on their own experiences — seeking feedback is now thankfully becoming more commonplace throughout our sector. Many of our clients reach us through personal recommendation, so in line with this unique standing we ask for continual feedback from our clients, staff and wider contacts. We work with a third-party provider to ensure this feedback is independently verified.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED COMMUNICATION

It is clear that transparency and a human touch in our communication go hand-in-hand with creating trust when looking after clients who are globally mobile. Indeed, the efficient transfer of clients from overseas to UK — or vice versa — provides peace of mind for the client and helps ensure an ongoing relationship.

To enable this, we've invested in the latest back-office technology to improve our client databases and ensure better segmentation of information. This universal approach to data supports the strict compliance requirements in each region and recognises each client's need for pertinent, timely information that takes into account the latest data practices and legislation.

MOBILISING THE DUBAI TEAM

All these collective experiences were at the forefront of my mind as I staffed the new Dubai office. We chose to recruit experienced financial planners who either held or were working through their CII qualifications. The location of the office, in the Dubai International Financial Centre, was chosen as a demonstration of our commitment to local and international standards of compliance, as well as ensuring trust with our clients.

The early results have been positive. Our team, using company-wide processes and practices, was well supported and the new office has already proved successful, winning Best Adviser – Middle East in the International Adviser Best Practise Awards 2019. ▲

The Fry Group placed fourth in the FT Adviser Top 100 list 2019

FURTHER READING

See the report ›

A World Of Risk
2019

See the report ›

A World Of Promise
2020

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CII membership
guide

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CII qualifications
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