

## Case Studies



### Stewart Cherry

Senior Vice-President, New York

Stewart Cherry's journey at Oliver James began in April 2011, when he joined the contract GI actuarial desk, carving out his own market and progressing quickly within the business. "What started out as development of our GI competencies led to me overseeing both the finance, and oil and gas teams." Fast-forward five years and you'll find Stewart heading up our American division, as Senior Vice-President of the New York office. "It was an incredible honour to be given this opportunity, and marked a real difference from my previous experiences in recruitment."

Prior to Oliver James, Stewart worked at Michael Page on the contract desk, but felt that the stricter business model meant he couldn't make a real impact.

**"As a very traditional company, there wasn't a lot of room for new approaches, so I never got to change anything there. I was looking for a company that would allow me to realise my vision alongside theirs, and I found that in Oliver James."**

But Stewart's path wasn't always so recruitment-driven. "I studied History and Politics at Queens University in Belfast, then got a scholarship to an institution over in Michigan. After that, I went travelling around Asia, finally settling in South Korea to teach English and coach football." There were also the two summers he spent as a lifeguard, showing the diverse directions Stewart took before discovering recruitment. "I actually first learned about the industry when I spoke with a guy on a beach in Thailand who told me he worked at Hays recruiting builders. It was such a surreal moment, and really stayed with me, so when I came home, I looked into the field." What attracted Stewart to Oliver James was the freedom to control his own career.

**"I liked how OJ was governed by a principle of meritocracy, in that my success was completely down to how much I grafted."**

Stewart also noted the huge earning potential, the opportunity to work with market specialists and the unflinching honesty of OJ's directors. "Oliver and James told me if you're good at what you do and have the DNA of the company, you'll succeed – and that's exactly how it's been from day one. Every opportunity I was ever offered, I accepted with open arms, and I've achieved a lot by doing that." With a new promotion for every year he's been here, we're inclined to agree.

Day to day, Stewart is responsible for the management and commercial strategy of the New York office. "I like to be hands-on, helping my guys plan their weekly and monthly set-ups, assisting with client visits and providing training as and when required. I also spend time liaising with the executive board and our marketing team back in the UK." To do all this successfully, Stewart relies on the exceptional talent around him, though concedes "it's difficult to find and nurture good recruiters in such a competitive market. We all want to do well, which means we're all battling for the best consultants."

So how does Stewart cope with challenges like this? Delegation has been useful, though difficult for him to implement. "This is a profession where you're used to handling everything, so relinquishing that control was quite alien at first. But allowing my colleagues to look after certain duties has enabled me to deliver on broader objectives." He makes

sure to take advantage of his downtime too, using it to explore the amazing city around him. "I love the variety of things to do in New York; gigs, shows, and the culture that waits at every turn. Oh, and I can't forget to mention sports; soccer, boxing and cross-fit definitely help to focus me." Stewart also cites performance as a big driver. "I'm motivated by the fear of failure; of not living up to what's expected of me. I never want to miss out on the next opportunity, and that pressure is imperative to my success."

It's a philosophy that's yielded impressive results, with the New York headcount growing from three to 26 in just over 18 months. "We also took home the 'Global Team of the Year' award at the OJ Christmas party, which was an amazing achievement considering how fresh we were." Accolades aside, Stewart finds the fact you can "always see your next opportunity" to be incredibly rewarding. "Though that's something I'd only attribute to Oliver James!"

**This is a company Stewart feels is "incomparable to anywhere else I've ever worked. There's something new to do every day, within an environment that's constantly abuzz. If you want a competitive, challenging and charismatic company, with high expectations – and no shortage of opportunities – you've found it."**

In terms of the future, Stewart is, of course, aiming high. "I want New York to be the most successful division in the OJ group, and it would be great to open another three offices across the Americas." With his track record, we won't be waiting long.