

Professional Liverpool and its place at the 'top table' as membership soars



Professional Liverpool (PL) has seen membership numbers soar over the past year and is now looking to be a major influence on the city's political and economic development leaders.

The organisation, which represents the interests of the Liverpool city region's financial and professional services sector, now has 260 members – up from around 200 a year ago.

It originally set a target of hitting the 200 mark by the end of 2017 and PL chief executive John Hall says it is now in a position to be a powerful business voice in the city region.

"We definitely now have a place at the top table from where we can influence the decision-making process," Mr Hall said.

He added: "I think collaboration is the key word and we are now in regular dialogue with bodies such as Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Vision and the Liverpool City Region LEP."

Tough times

Mr Hall, formerly managing partner of Liverpool law firm Bermans, took over the helm at PL around five years ago when it was in a fight for survival.

Prior to his arrival the organisation's membership had fallen to around 60 and it had lost a big chunk of public sector funding.

Sustainable business

However, the turnaround since those days has been phenomenal. The growth in the membership roll has allowed PL to become much more sustainable.

"Word of mouth is spreading," said Mr Hall. "I no longer have to go out as much to recruit members as so many are now coming to us via recommendations.

"Our raison d'être is to promote the excellence of the professional and financial services sector in the city region.

"We want to tell people that if you need a top law firm or accountancy firm you don't have to go to places such as London or Manchester – we have all the expertise right here."

Telling the good news

PL now offers its members frequent events where they can network. Mr Hall says around 85% of its members regard regular networking as important to their businesses.

Liverpool Society of Chartered Accountants, along with a number of other professional sector organisations was a founder member of Professional Liverpool (PL), and has always been a very strong supporter, and indeed many members of our Society have served on their Board.

Our Past President, Andrew Lovelady has been Treasurer for a number of years, and has played a key part in PL's resurgence. Steve Stuart and Martin Heath of PWC are also actively involved with PL.

PL chief executive John Hall spoke recently with Tony McDonagh, formerly of the Liverpool Echo, and now at YB News about the phenomenal growth of the organisation and how he thinks the city region can grow its economy and create more jobs.

"We have speakers at our events who come and talk about the good news stories from across the city region," he said.

"In recent times we have had Andrew Cornish from Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Bob Prattey from ACC Liverpool.

"These days our events are nearly always sold out."

More jobs and office space

Mr Hall believes the city region could do more to attract blue chip occupiers to come and set up offices in the city.

He identifies the dearth of grade A office space as one of the main impediments to that.

"It is a real chicken and egg situation," he explained. "If we were to get an enquiry for say 40,000 sq ft of grade A space then we would not be able to accommodate it."

Liverpool city centre needs more grade A office space, says John Hall

"We really need to create more grade A office space but, at the moment, rents are too low to incentivise developers to build."

"We also need to create more jobs. So many students come to the city and love it here. They want to stay when they graduate but too often we don't have the jobs to offer them."

"In the past few years we have put a lot of resource into encouraging start-up businesses, and that is great."

"However, I think maybe we also need to focus more on established businesses to help them get on to the next level and create more jobs."

More information can be found at <http://professionaliverpool.com/> and their events page highlights a full diary for members.

With thanks to Tony McDonagh at <http://www.ybnews.co.uk/>



Professional Liverpool CEO John Hall, left with Liverpool Mayor Joe Anderson, centre, and PL Chair Jim Gill