

THE CARLES CUESTA EXPERIENCE

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Eight years ago, José Carles and Carlos Cuesta founded their firm with their vision on how to

practice law, always having in mind the best practical solutions and good relations with the client. From the beginning, Carles Cuesta was perceived as a firm capable of competing with the big names in the market



Today this solid tandem of managing partners leads a team of 15 lawyers with specialized departments of Litigation and Negotiation and Dispute Resolution, Arbitration, Commercial and Contract Law and Public Law. The international presence (in markets like Europe, USA, Latin America, the Middle East) is so strong that already 35% of Carles Cuesta's turnover comes from outside Spain.

If we look at the firm, one might think that, perhaps, they intend to be for the legal sector what "The Jimmy Hendrix Experience" was for music. What it does seem, so far, is that their clients are finding it just as addictive. Iberian Lawyer wanted to find out why.

Why did you decide to leave Garrigues to start a new firm?

During the month of August 2011, we decided to do the Camino de Santiago together. On that trip, we talked about what law meant to us and the importance of providing rigorous and agile solutions at the same time. Garrigues was a great business law school where we had colleagues to whom we owe a lot of what we are today. However, within our idea of rigor and agility, the flexibility and desire to innovate that accompanied the service we wanted to provide clashed with certain policies that, although very respectable, we needed to overcome.

Was it a difficult decision? At that time you were quite young. What were the taken into account?

It was not a difficult decision. Although we were 28 years old, we had been handling lawsuits and business recoveries at Garrigues for a long time (sometimes being the direct interlocutors with the client). If you are lucky enough to work with an elite team like ours was, the legal assurance you gain in 4/5 years may be more than enough to break down certain barriers and continue to grow your way. The truth is that we have always had a degree of "madness" that, frankly, is essential to make a turn like this one. You have to think that these two were willing to combine technical rigor with more agility and fewer disclaimers. Together we have known how to diagnose problems and, without failing to explain the risks to the clients, design strategies that cannot move away from what we would do in their place.

What has been the most difficult part or aspect of creating your firm?



The most difficult part - also surmountable and overcome - has been to convince our current senior colleagues of what we like to call #CarlesCuestaExperience. The madness we mentioned requires an exercise of trust that it is not always easy to transmit to the lawyers you are incorporating into the firm and who, in the vast majority, come from very large firms where, although they do an excellent job, it is done differently. We have never seen a lawyer from the firm as an employee but as a colleague who joins a project in which he has to pour his essence and accompany the client.

This time, the form of advice will include the effort to know, before giving a technically impeccable solution, what that person or organization (that is trusting us) wants. It is difficult to make them

understand that the client needs the best advice but that he wants your opinion taking into account the moment -good or bad- through which he is going.

And did you encounter any unexpected problems during that process?

No problems but some things were unexpected, yes. The one that surprised us the most was that, from the beginning, we were perceived in the market as a firm capable of competing with the big names, something that, by the way, we never intended when we started. It was hard for us to realize that there were firms that acknowledged us in a sense that they felt they had to defend themselves from us because they presumed we had the competence to harm them. Neither then nor now have we wanted to compete with more firms than Carles Cuesta itself, who will have failed the day it fails to be better than it was yesterday. This unforeseen event helped us a lot to position ourselves in the rankings where we share a place with the biggest firms, thanks in great part to them.

The Managing Partners	
José Carles	Carlos Cuesta
	
Before co-founding the firm, he was a financial analyst in the investment banking sector at UBS Investment Bank (London) and a lawyer in the Restructuring and Insolvency department of J&A Garrigues. He speaks Spanish, English, French, German, Italian, Catalan and Hebrew.	Before co-founding the firm he worked as a lawyer in the Restructuring and Insolvency department of J&A Garrigues. Both of them combine their activities as lawyers with teaching, among others, about Bankruptcy Law in the Master's Degree in Access to Law at the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas (ICADE).
They also have extensive experience in penitentiary facilities where they direct and teach permanently, programs and seminars aimed at the social reintegration and development of the academic and professional skills of the inmates.	

What will be the next step in the development of the firm?

We are currently working on the development of an idea with which we can demonstrate, empirically - and here is the complication- the involvement of Carles Cuesta lawyers with their clients. And we are not only talking about making them perceive our obsession to know their industry or project but, much further, our desire to be an active part of all that worries or concerns them. Those who turn to a lawyer have a legal question that needs to be resolved in a precise and agile
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What qualities are you looking for when hiring new lawyers?

We need good people. Although many people may not think so, we lawyers can also be good people and, in Carles Cuesta, excellence either goes hand in hand with sensitivity or it does not fit in the project. If they asked us if we were looking for good academic records, we would answer that we try to sign with the best ones. If it is a slightly more senior lawyer, his record must be impeccable. However, it is essential to know who is behind the university results, the international experiences and any quality or recognition they may bring.

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When you started the firm did you take clients from your previous one?

No. This was another unforeseen event we suffered when we left Garrigues. Some clients, in spite of the youth you referred to before, wanted to continue with us but our response was unquestionably negative. Legally, there was no problem but, beyond that, the respect for our colleagues - in this case, teachers, too - was sacred. Besides, the client who believes in you usually follows in your footsteps and counts on you.



What is the best way to increase the customer base when you create a new firm?

You have to be on the street. An entrepreneur's office (of any kind) is where the entrepreneur is. If you want clients, you have to replace your work desk with dinner tables, lunches, auditoriums, and armchairs to keep track of what's going on. In the case of lawyers, there is only one drawback. Technical rigor requires study and great care with every word you write which, in law, is always loaded with dynamite. This inconvenience is overcome by taking advantage of time. There is no more mystery. The street, newspapers, social networks and a lot of studies. The most classic lawyer is usually lazy to "do the street". Now, as we say in Carles Cuesta, "if you don't go, you haven't gone". And, if you haven't gone, you've missed it. You have to go to (almost) everywhere and even try to be in two places at once.

What advice would you give to other lawyers looking to start their firm?

Let them do it. If they have clear the idea that setting up their firm forces you to be a lawyer and also an entrepreneur, go ahead. There are as many ways to do it as there are ideas that will fit in the heads of those who dare to take the step. There is no better platform to develop yourself and help

people than a law firm.

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