

THE QUOTE THAT  
INSPIRES ME:  
"IF YOU CAN DREAM  
IT, YOU CAN DO IT."  
WALT DISNEY

# Christian Ellul

CEO,  
E&S GROUP

APPROACHABILITY AND RELIABILITY  
ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

JUST OVER EIGHT YEARS AGO, DR CHRISTIAN ELLUL SET UP E&S GROUP WITH PARTNER KARL SCHRANZ, REDEFINING THE FUTURE OF CORPORATE CONSULTANCY IN MALTA. BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATIONS OF APPROACHABILITY AND EXPERTISE, E&S HAS EVOLVED FROM A TWO-MAN START-UP TO AN INTERNATIONAL FIRM WITH A TEAM OF MORE THAN 40, WHICH OFFERS AN ARRAY OF CORPORATE, TAX AND ADVISORY SERVICES TO A MULTI-NATIONAL CLIENT BASE AROUND THE WORLD.

Although a lawyer by profession, E&S Group's CEO Dr Christian Ellul always knew that working in business was his passion.

"My mother and other members of my family were all in business, so I was inclined in that direction," explains Christian. "Nevertheless, I studied and specialised in tax law, gaining a Master's degree and lecturing in the Netherlands, before returning to Malta to work for one of the 'big four' audit

firms. But I found tax advisory too specific and I wanted to see all other aspects of the transaction too – so I went on to work with another established corporate service provider, until I set up E&S with my Partner Karl Schranz."

The choice to transition from lawyer to businessman and create a new start-up seemed an obvious one to Christian, spotting a lucrative gap in the market for his unique skillset.



I'm quite an early riser, and I usually wake up with numerous tasks on my mind for the day ahead. I'll normally go straight to the gym first thing in the morning, which is excellent stress relief, and maintains my motivation as I begin another hectic – but positively hectic – day!

"In my previous job – since I had a tax background and legal knowledge – I often worked face-to-face with clients, travelling overseas to meet them, and explaining the benefits of all they could achieve in Malta's booming business climate," Christian recalls. "Then Karl and I realised we had the know-how to do this ourselves, so we started the business from nothing. Thanks to word-of-mouth recommendations, both from our contacts and by clients to other clients, we've kept growing ever since."

As one of the co-Founders and Directors of E&S, the appointment to CEO was a natural progression for Christian, but he was determined that the title would not undermine one of the core principles of the company: approachability.

"I don't really call myself a CEO – we don't have such a hierarchy in the sense that we encourage a more open-door style, both for employees and clients," he explains. "We have become known by our clients for our hands-on approach, where we prioritise communication with them and work as a team to address their concerns. Likewise, our friendly staff operate on a

first-name basis, and we have a happy, motivated and respectful environment here. We all know it's a business, but we try to have fun at the same time."

However, Christian says that recruiting team members who have the required skills to join the E&S team is one of the challenges he faces as Malta's financial services sector grows. "The business environment in Malta, including the boom in blockchain, means it is more difficult to find suitable staff, so we have recruited from overseas to create a multi-national employee base. Many of them have come here to work in industries that are increasingly present locally but provide fewer opportunities abroad, such as blockchain and cryptocurrency."

In fact, it is Malta's new dominance internationally in blockchain, cryptocurrency and Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs) that inspired E&S to refocus towards these innovations. "E&S offers a range of corporate, tax and advisory services to an international clientele across a variety of industries including superyachts and private jets, as well as the manufacturing and the services industries. However,



around a year ago we started branching into blockchain and crypto-advisory, which I developed a personal passion for a few years ago and am now lucky enough to have transformed into the subject of my work,” Christian observes.

“Malta has always had a strong financial services sector, but we have a big opportunity now to make Malta the ‘blockchain island’, since we adopted blockchain early and have already managed to attract some big names. Now we must keep that momentum going, grabbing this opportunity to make our financial services sector more diverse and less reliant on specific sectors such as gaming, for example. There have also been some internationally ground-breaking laws recently passed in Malta, which are making Malta the go-to jurisdiction for blockchain.”

No matter the industry, though, moving forward Christian hopes that E&S will continue to keep contact with clients at its heart. “I want us to remain a boutique

firm known for our hands-on approach with clients, and for always being responsive and nimble. I don’t want E&S to grow so big that we don’t know our clients – it’s better to have a few, large, quality clients than have many to whom we would not be able to give the same attention to detail.”

As for Christian himself, the future will hold more work to promote Malta on an international scale, following in the footsteps of his mother, prominent businessperson Helga Ellul. “Mum was one of my biggest inspirations in business, but I also saw what she did for Malta, in that it wasn’t always about money, but also what she could give back,” he shares.

“That’s something I believe in too – I want to give back to Malta and convince clients that Malta is the right place for them to be. That, I hope, will be my business legacy: to be one of the people who helped make Malta the ultimate international business destination.” ●



Quick-fire Questions...  
with Dr Christian Ellul

**What did you want to be when you were growing up?**  
A plastic surgeon!

**Business formal or business casual?**  
I tend to prefer business casual, but it depends on the event.

**Late nights or early mornings?**  
Today I prefer early mornings.

**Travelling on land, sea or air?**  
I love boating or going for a drive, but if I have somewhere to be, then flying is a must.

**Smart phone: always on or often off?**  
Unfortunately, always on.

**Sundays: full of activity or complete relaxation?**  
A mix of both.

**What was your first car?**  
A maroon and beige-coloured Citroen ‘Dolly’ 2CV.

**What’s the question you always ask a job applicant?**  
Where do you see yourself in five years’ time?

**What’s the answer that will always get them hired?**  
‘As CEO!’ I like ambitious people.

**Which is your must-read business book?**  
I don’t read many business books, but I liked ‘Rich Dad, Poor Dad’ by Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon Lechter.

**What are you really into outside of work?**  
Physical activity, cars, boats, watches, beach, skiing, travelling...

**How many unread messages are in your inbox right now?**  
Too many! I would estimate 200 or so.

**Which philanthropic cause are you most passionate about?**  
Helping the environment. I’d like to start an initiative where businesses donate part of the profits towards financing the planting and maintenance of trees in the local area, so that they can actually see their contribution.

**What’s your prediction for the year 2040?**  
Change is so rapid now, it’s difficult to say. But there will probably be technology with greater AI capabilities. There are also the environmental issues to think about – I really hope we will have been able to stop the overuse of plastic.

