

Dean Lowe: JET's greatest ambassador

We have been overwhelmed by messages of support after we lost our colleague Dean Lowe and his son Charlie in a suspected hit and run on 5 August 2023.

Here is our tribute to him, a version of which appeared in the Jersey Evening Post on 9 September.

It is difficult to sum up Dean Lowe because there were so many sides of him, and so many which crossed over into the office. Colleague, friend, musician, Manchester United football fan, allotmentee, vegan.

And, above all, proud father to Charlie.

Dean started working with the Jersey Employment Trust in 2006. It was very much the early days in the development of the employment service, which supports people who have a disability or long-term health condition in the workplace.

Jocelyn Jacques, who was executive officer of JET for 17 years, said: 'The best part of Dean, from the moment he arrived, was his enthusiasm. And sometimes the most difficult part to manage was his enthusiasm! He threw himself into his job and he totally believed in what he was doing.'

'He just fired from all cylinders about everything. If you ever needed help with anything, weekends, evenings, it didn't matter, he would be there. He always went the extra mile for his clients too. He was inherently a caring person. He loved people and he would do anything to help the people we work with.'

Jocelyn added: 'With the birth of Charlie, I saw him mature. His energies became more focused. He loved him to bits, and he was the very essence of him.'

Dean's favourite photo of Charlie sat on his desk. He always spoke of what his son was doing in and out of school, his love of drama club, what they got up to on holiday, how he was looking forward to secondary school.

He was always excited to share his son's successes, and at the end of the last school term he brought in a silver plate that Charlie had won for drama.

Operations and Quality Assurance and Manager Sarah Boydens also remembers the early days. She says that from the outset, Dean demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment to JET. 'He thrived on getting the message out there and educating employers,' she said. 'He was always one of the first to volunteer for any promotional events, evening, breakfasts or weekends. He established some of our excellent links with employers, the prominent one being with Seymour Hotels which we still have to this day.'

'I remember when he was a support worker and worked with Marvin Curtis on a caseload each morning he would come in with his toast wrapped up ready to eat at his desk but first he would ask Marvin to guess what he had on his toast, every day without fail.'



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'Dean had longer hair then, was very loud and knew everyone. The only thing that changed was the length of his hair. Dean was known for his enthusiasm and keeping clients motivated. Some may have found it too much, but for hundreds of others they say he helped change their lives.

'Dean was always one for office banter and jokes and did not cope well with quietness in the early years in the office. He thrived on being busy.

'You always knew when Dean was in the office as you would hear his chuckle after he told another funny story or recounted an old comedy sketch. You would also hear lots of other laughter from those he was sharing with (and interrupting their work).

'He was a nerd with spreadsheets and reports and loved everything in order with lists.' His colleagues all agree, you always knew when Dean was in the office at the Oakfield Building. You could hear him before he opened the door as he rattled his keys, and he even ate his Frazzles at full volume.

Employment Co-ordinator Jo Anderson said: 'We would roll our eyes at his stories of how marvellous he had been when networking but secretly – and not so secretly – I was so impressed by his ability to make everyone feel welcomed, feel they had a part to play and nothing was outside of their abilities. He was such a mood enhancer, it was never quiet when Dean was in, sometimes that was good, sometimes not so appropriate, but never a big problem. I will miss our Monday morning football round-ups, our Friday afternoon 'panics' about our teams, his crisp munching, the frenetic spiralling on his new office chair (which panicked us all!).

'As time goes on the realisation is starting to hit that he isn't coming back and that is truly a major loss to us all.'

Dean had a new office chair after he broke his back in a trampolining accident in his garden last summer. Despite it being an exceptional heatwave, he couldn't wait to get back to work.

One of Dean's favourite sayings was: 'If I were a stick of rock and you cut me in half, I would have Jersey Employment Trust written through the middle.'

He could walk into the Pomme d'Or Hotel, banter with every member of staff, no matter who they were, walk through the kitchens, and spontaneously speak Portuguese, not that any colleague ever could tell what he was actually saying.

Employment Co-ordinator Kerry Robinson sat next to him. 'I already miss his innate ability to make me cry with laughter. I miss him taking the mickey out of me every day. I miss his Dastardly and Muttley villainous laugh,' she said.

'I miss our daily chats about his dietary choices for the day and us rating his accompanying "condiment island" on the top of whatever he chose. I miss harassing him every week to remember to take the compost bin home for emptying and the constant digs that it is "ok to make coffee for more than just yourself".

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'I miss his rocking around our desks on his ergonomic stool like a cowboy and his tripping over said stool on a daily basis as he hastily flew around the office in true whirlwind Dean style. I miss the lighthearted chaos that reigned wherever he went and the kindness of every bone in his body. He is irreplaceable.'

Dean's line manager Emma Powell agrees.

'Dean was my wingman. What he brought to the JET team both professionally and personally will never be replicated,' she said. 'He was truly one of a kind. Dean was always prepared to go the extra mile. He loved any opportunity to promote and advocate on behalf of the service and clients. The JET family have lost a very special colleague and friend.'

One of his passions was his allotment and this year the 'green team' at the Oakfield office introduced a compost bin for food waste for Dean to take back to his allotment.

Oakfield colleague Linda de Jesus said: 'I helped him for many years on his allotment. He believed wholeheartedly in improving the environment and always grew organic produce. As a vegan, he was passionate about animal welfare and always tried to show others why, whilst respecting their own choices. He put 100% into all of that as much as he did in his work, his singing and his family.'

Last summer Dean needed help to move a shed from his allotment near his St Clement home to Acorn. It is still there. Steve Ball, a Training & Development Co-ordinator at Acorn, plans to refurbish it, perhaps for seed storage, and decorate it with Beatles lyrics.

'What I loved about Dean was his tireless passion,' he said. 'I can't imagine anybody being better at the role he did and the knowledge he had.'

The Beatles were one of Dean's favourite bands, alongside The Fall, The Smiths, Oasis and The Verve.

Tony Greed, who works at Acorn Reuse, has known Dean for 23 years. Under the name 24-Seven, they gigged together at pubs, parties and weddings. They played the night before he died.

'There is only one word to describe Dean, and that's passionate,' he said. 'He was passionate about his music, his football, his family, his work, and anyone he came in contact with that he could help. His passion was helping people. When I think of Dean, I think of the good times. We really did have the best of times.'

In the last video made for JET's social enterprise Acorn, Dean was instrumental in leading the 'cast', strumming his guitar and singing Summer Holiday. He also ran 'singing for fun' lessons with Jersey Mencap and would give up his own time to volunteer at the Salvation Army on Christmas Day.

This year, as soon as he heard the suggestion that he could wear some squirrel accessories while walking 26.2 miles of the Virtual London Marathon, he couldn't resist, and he and Kiley Henley went on to raise more than £1,200 for JET.

In the last couple of years Dean had developed his role as Employer Engagement Manager, allowing him to network and introduce JET to more employers.

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Executive officer Penny Shurmer said: 'He was promoting the work of JET and the benefits of thinking of our clients first when recruiting, bringing diversity to the workplace. This year I asked Dean to be part of our IoD Equality Diversity and Inclusion sub-committee's breakfast event, and he showed how at home he could be as a panellist discussing neurodiversity in the workplace.

'We had lots of plans for the future. We were just in the process of him training to be a Neurodiversity Champion and we'd started discussions about collaboration with our colleagues at charity All Matters Neurodiverse. His passion to connect with others and make a difference in the community was a driving force. He wanted the best for our clients and he also wanted employers to understand all that JET is and does for our Island.'

Helen Ruelle, chair of the Board of Trustees, said: 'Dean embodied the values of JET. He was so genuine. He always had the same warm welcome and friendly smile for everyone. We will miss his infectious personality immensely. And I hope that this will be his legacy, that we learn to accept each other as we really are, that we treat each other equally and with respect and that we bring some light to each other's lives.'

The Jersey Employment Trust extends its deepest sympathies to Dean and Charlie's family and friends.

Public tributes

'I owe my career to him... Without his dedication to creating an inclusive society for all Islanders, for being a voice/ally to the disabled community and being a champion of neurodiversity, I would have never received the right "tools" to get me through education, unlock my potential and enjoy the career I have today.'

'Dean was the funniest, caring and kindest person I have ever met. He always lit up the room when he entered and was brilliant at making people feel special and valued. He was very dedicated and passionate about his job and was loved by everyone he knew.'

'What a light for every room he was in. What a warrior for any underdog in life. What a loss to our community.'