

A member's view: Jivaan Bennett

Briefings



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This month we shine a spotlight on CTA member Jivaan Bennett, who tells us about his motivation and passion for taxation.

How did you find out about a career in tax?

In my first week as a final year undergrad law student, I had the privilege of shadowing two extremely impressive tax barristers – Keith Gordon and Ximena Manzano (both now of Temple Tax Chambers). That experience left me so intrigued to know more about tax law. What gripped my attention the most was how intellectually stimulating taxation is. Taxation is so multifaceted; it covers a range of disciplines from law and economics to accounting.

While studying for the Bar, I followed up the mini-pupillage with a week of shadowing a (now former) tax judge (Dr Kameel Khan). This confirmed that a profession as a tax lawyer was for me. It has been pure bliss since.

Why is the CTA qualification important?

I practise as a tax disputes lawyer. This involves, in some cases, observing a particular aspect of tax law under a microscope and arguing for a particular interpretation. However, the best tax disputes lawyers I've observed have a panoramic view of the legislative landscape such that they can draw from other areas of tax law in relation to the particular area of law in dispute.

The CTA allows me the opportunity to quickly broaden my knowledge of tax law to areas I do not often come into contact with in practice, while specialising in a particular area of tax.

How would you describe yourself in three words?

Adventurous, tenacious (or maybe stubbornly persistent?) and unrelentingly optimistic.

Who has influenced you in your career?

I've been very blessed that they are too many to name and I wouldn't wish to inadvertently omit anyone. Different persons have had leading roles at different stages in my career. Mentors and sponsors have been crucial to my career to date and have enabled me to learn from their wisdom and benefit from their support.

What advice would you give to someone starting off in their career?

Three pieces of advice would be:

- There are no shortcuts. Invest time and effort in continuously developing your skill set (both technical skills and soft skills) and building relationships.
- Treat EVERYONE the way you would want to be treated.
- Run your own race - comparison with others' career journey tends to be the cause of bitterness or vanity.

What are your predictions for tax advisers and the tax industry in the future?

We continue to see a push to regulate the standard of tax advice provided to clients. This is an interesting development and I am keen to see how it develops.

What advice would you give to your future self?

Hard to say. If instead I had to offer advice to my younger self, it would be to travel even more.

Tell me something about yourself that others may not know about you.

Although I fail on a daily basis to drink enough of it, I love everything associated with water whether it is swimming, scuba diving, kayaking or discovering new waterfalls. If a career as a tax lawyer did not work out, a promising, fun-filled life as a fisherman on the island of Tobago awaits me.