

A member's view: Graeme Connell

Briefings

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This month's member spotlight is on Graeme Connell, Senior Tax Director at Alvarez & Marsal and member of CIOT.

How did you find out about a career in tax?

I did an accountancy degree at university, so there were always presentations from professional services firms about the career opportunities available.

Why is the CTA qualification important?

The CTA qualification is the gold standard qualification for those working in the tax field. I think they are so important in providing students with the depth and breadth of knowledge required to practice in tax, especially in general practices. Whilst other professional qualifications include some tax content, the CTA is a specialist qualification which gives those who have done it a fantastic grounding in the subject.

Why did you pursue a career in tax?

Tax was always a subject I enjoyed at university. In my third year, I was fortunate enough to get a tax internship and was able to see what it would be like to work in tax. I enjoyed my time (and was glad I had a graduate job), so came back the next year for a full-time position. The analytical and computational aspects of the job really appealed to me, and I really liked the people I worked with.

How would you describe yourself in three words?

Ambitious, hard-working, determined.

Who has influenced you in your career so far?

My wife and family – who see things from a different perspective.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing the CTA qualification?

Absolutely go for it, if it is what you want to do – but go into it with your eyes open. It is not an easy qualification and requires hard work and commitment. I have interviewed many graduate applicants and I always spend part of the interview explaining to them the work involved in passing the ATT and CTA exams.

For those who are just graduating from university, the new need to balance full-time professional work and studying can be difficult. For those who have been out of the habit of studying for some time, this can also be a

challenge. Sometimes social sacrifices will need to be made. However, it is definitely worth the hard work in the long term.

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

It is hard to overlook the rise of AI and how that could change our profession. As the technology has only really come into popular use in the last six months, the progress is very impressive. However, it is not yet at a point where it can be relied upon for accurate advice. I do think that we will see it coming into use in more of what we do as the underlying technology continues to be developed, but I don't think we need to worry that we will be replaced any time soon.

What advice would you give to your future self?

You thought every decision was the right one at the time, even if that later turns out not to be the case.

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

I'm a national level referee with the Scottish Rugby Union and also play drums in a wedding band.