

A member's view: Andrew Dickson CTA

Briefings



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This month's CIOT member spotlight is on Andrew Dickson CTA, ADIT, Director at Fieldfisher and Notary Public.

How did you find out about a career in tax?

I initially wanted to be a company commercial lawyer. However, post-recession there were no jobs in that area at the firm I trained at. I therefore took a job on qualification in private client in the Kingston office and have loved this area of law ever since. While I was a trainee solicitor, I remembered a partner passing the CTA and he was gifted a garden gnome on passing these 'very difficult' exams. I later decided to give it a go (maybe I wanted a gnome too!).

Why is the CIOT qualification important?

The CIOT qualification raises standards across the industry by having candidates push themselves to learn and apply new knowledge. Personally speaking, it has enabled me to connect with many interesting people and keep up to date with new developments affecting my clients.

Why did you pursue a career in tax?

As a private client lawyer, tax is so pervasive and putting my head in the sand didn't seem a good option. It's now the most important part of my practice.

How would you describe yourself in three words?

Determined, calm and fair.

Who has influenced you in your career so far?

I am lucky to have worked with so many talented people working across great firms. If I had to pick two, it would be Kieran Bowe at Russell-Cooke (who fielded many silly questions while I was newly qualified and supported me when I started the CTA) and Claire Randall at Farrer (who fielded many silly questions when I was more qualified).

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

It's a great investment in yourself. There are also excellent networking opportunities at CIOT through local branches and conferences. Then try the ADIT if you haven't had enough of exams!

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

We all know about technology and how it is transforming the world, including AI, but my feeling is that the softer skills we need to look after clients will still be paramount. We see a difference with in-person meetings in building connections with clients. We mustn't neglect the need to continue to listen to inform us of how we can be useful to clients.

What advice would you give to your future self?

I suspect my future self should be advising me, not the other way around. But it's good to stay interested as you get older, in whatever that may be, so I would hope for my future self to be kind and to be hungry to learn about the world.

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

I worked on death row cases in Louisiana USA as a volunteer intern in around 2005. I took my first of three solo trips to the Louisiana State Penitentiary to visit clients, but the small car that I hired to take the trip was not available, so I had to drive a large pick-up truck to the prison instead. While I was driving on the US highway, I thought: I have never driven abroad before, I have never driven on the right-hand side of the road before, I have never driven a pick-up truck before, and I have never driven to death row before!