

Off the record



Vital Statistics

Name:	Janice Lau-Burke
Job title:	Partner
Company:	Crowleys DFK
Qualifications:	CPA MIATI

As the female partner in a major accounting firm, Janice Lau-Burke is in the minority. But as a Malaysian woman of Chinese origin working in a Dublin firm, it's probably safe to say that she's one of a kind.

"I feel my appointment as partner is rather unique," she smiles.

Lau-Burke's parents were "firm believers in the necessity for a good education to put their children on the paths to prosperity", and sent their daughter to be educated at the highly-regarded Anglo Chinese School in Perak, Malaysia. Being there, she says, opened up a window to the west.

When one of her childhood friends followed her brother – a medical student – to Dublin, Lau-Burke jumped at the chance to finish her second level education here. Although many of her Malaysian friends returned home after university, Lau-Burke decided to stay on and make Ireland her home.

"Coming to Ireland was not as big an adjustment as expected," she says now. "I read many English authors at home in Malaysia, and that gave me an insight into life in the west."

Having always been "attracted to numbers", Lau-Burke decided to study for a CPA qualification at the suggestion of a friend of her Irish husband - and hasn't looked back since.

"The flexibility of phasing the final year was very appealing to me as it allowed me to complete the exams in my own time. It also facilitated me working in both industry and practice," she says.

Lau-Burke worked for thirteen years with the firm JJ Curran & Company, where she gained hands-on experience in all areas of accountancy, taxation, company secretarial and practice development.

She joined Crowleys as Practice Manager in 2000 and became a partner in 2004. She works primarily with private sector clients in the IT, catering, retail, not-for-profit, manufacturing and wholesale industry sectors.

On a daily basis, this can range from "meeting prospective clients, providing advice on business start up, business plans, corporate finance, taxation and dealing with staff related matters."

She also serves on the Finance and Audit Committee of the CPA Institute.

Lau-Burke believes accountancy continues to be very male-dominated at the top levels. But she's been relieved to see increasing numbers of women "breaking through the glass ceiling and juggling career and family. In the past the playing field was not always level for men and women of any profession, but time and modern attitudes are changing this. It is no longer such a taboo for men to stay at home," she says.

"Being career-driven and succeeding, for men or women is demanding enough – with or without children."

Is the country she lives in today very different to the one she arrived in 20 years ago? She's emphatic in her agreement. "Ireland is essentially a very different country to the one I arrived in 20 years ago. Its dramatic change into a multi-racial country is phenomenal – and in my opinion will continue to accelerate."

Jenny Daly is a freelance business reporter

Two minutes in the mind of...

Janice Lau-Burke

What's the most pleasurable part of your working day?
Successful completion of priority items on my daily task list

What are the best and worst pieces of professional advice you ever received?
Best: Don't leave till tomorrow what can be done today
Worst: The graveyards are full of people who overworked

Which three people would you most like to invite to dinner?
 Nelson Mandela, President Mary McAleese, Jeremy Clarkson

What would be on the menu?

The incredible power of the human spirit; diplomacy packaged in charm and which car should I buy next?

What do you drive?
Audi A3

What's the best career decision you've made?
To pursue an accountancy qualification

What's the last book you read?
Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy

What's the most rewarding aspect of your job?
Having the freedom to make my own carefully considered decisions

What's the most essential item in your briefcase?
My pocket PC

Where's your favourite restaurant table?
Roly's Bistro, Ballsbridge

What's the nicest thing you've done today?
Having a brisk walk in sunshine from my home to my office

Where do you go to clear your lungs?
Walking in the open air

What three items would you bring to a desert island?
A survival kit, a clockwork operated radio and The Bible

The best thing money can buy you is....
A better lifestyle

What's in your CD player at the moment?
Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21

"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion" – true or false?
Unfortunately true in some instances

Which adage do you live by?
It is only necessary for good men to be silent for evil to prevail

What's the most valuable piece of advice you could give to someone starting out in your profession?
Diligence will earn its own reward

*Janice Lau-Burke is a Partner
 in Crowleys DFK*