

CPA Profile

Declan Rigney



Title:
Assistant Secretary

Company:
Revenue Commissioners

Qualifications:
CPA, CTA

Why did you decide to start out in a career in accountancy?

My brother in law was working in practice at the time and I was keen to gain a professional qualification while working in the Civil Service. I always enjoyed book-keeping and accounting in secondary school, and the subjects covered in studying accountancy at the professional level were very diverse and gave good insights into many aspects of business and commerce.

Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

I liked the study and exam cycle provided by CPA, which was September to May each year and, the flexibility offered in the final year, while trying to balance work and study pressures, was also very appealing.

Please provide a brief history of your career.

I'm a career Civil Servant, working for almost 40 years at this stage. Apart from an eighteen-month spell in the Department of Defence at the start of my career, I've worked in Revenue for the rest of the time. I've been very fortunate to have worked in many varied and interesting roles along the way and successfully progressed through the ranks during that period.

What one word describes what your CPA qualification has given you?

Knowledge. Studying for the CPA and ultimately successfully achieving the qualification gives a great grounding in the various disciplines that are to be found in everyday business enterprises. There are obvious linkages between the primary books of record, financial accounting and taxation but covering other subjects to a high standard like management accounting, corporate law and audit/assurance have stood to me and are still areas that I would regularly draw upon in my day to day work.

What has been your biggest career achievement?

I have been lucky enough to have worked in many different roles in Revenue that have included assisting the Department of Finance in the early days of licencing of IFSC companies, drafting capital acquisitions tax and stamp duties legislation, as well as leading high-performing and dedicated teams to implement local property tax and the modernisation of the administration of PAYE.

However, I believe that the collective effort of a large number of people in Revenue over the past eighteen months to quickly get to grips with the challenges faced by the economy and to deliver a range of supports for businesses and citizens in the form of the wage subsidy schemes, business support schemes and debt warehousing has been immense. To have been involved with that effort has been incredibly rewarding.

What or who inspires you most in business?

Innovation and re-invention. Given the pace of change due to technological advances, increased digitisation, the environmental and other challenges facing economies, standing still is not an option. The ability of Irish businesses to be early advocates for new technologies, products and services and doing this in the competitive international market has always impressed me.

In Civil Service and international tax administration terms, I'm very proud that Revenue is recognised as an innovative and leading-edge administration that actively seeks out opportunities to make it as easy as possible for business and for citizens to comply with their tax obligations. Recent examples of using technologies to support tax compliance include significant investment in high-quality online

services, the use of real time payroll data from payroll systems for the PAYE modernisation programme – which in turn facilitated the delivery of COVID wage supports, the interactive valuation tool to assist residential property owners to value their property for local property tax purposes and applying advanced data analytics programmes to identify data outliers and focus valuable compliance resources on non-compliance. More of these innovative and imaginative approaches to tax administration can be expected in the coming years.

What advice would you give to those recently qualified or currently studying for their CPA qualification?

Obtaining the CPA qualification opens up all sorts of career possibilities including working in practice, industry and, increasingly, in the Civil Service. At one stage the number of accountants working in the Civil Service was quite small but that has changed in the last number of years and large numbers of accountancy professionals, including I'm pleased to say fellow CPAs, are now making very successful careers for themselves in leadership positions.

How do you unwind?

I like watching most sports and particularly enjoy Ireland's international football matches. I actively play (bad) golf but my real therapy is the one hour a week where the stresses of the day are forgotten and replaced by the adrenalin rush of moderately competitive 5-a-side football.

What traits do you admire in others?

Probably selflessness especially in the form of those people who devote a major part of their lives to improving the lives of their fellow citizens.