



## Deirdre Kiely

Deirdre Kiely is the newly elected President of CPA Ireland. Here she talks through her career and views on business.

**TITLE:**  
Principal

**COMPANY:**  
Kiely & Co. Accountants  
and Business Advisers

**QUALIFICATIONS:**  
CPA, BL

**QUALIFIED AS A CPA:**  
1990

# CPA Profile Deirdre Kiely

## Your Career

### Why did you choose to become a CPA?

Accountancy was always my preferred subject in school. I was fortunate to obtain a traineeship in a CPA accountancy firm that encouraged its trainees to undertake the CPA qualification. Similar to today there were great local educators of the CPA qualification in Cork who facilitated me attending evening lectures, whilst working as a trainee during the day.

### Can you provide a brief history of your career?

I have worked predominately in practice for all my career. I obtained great experience in smaller practices which allowed me to develop my career at a much faster pace. I was appointed to partner at the age of 31 and went on to lead the Audit, Advisory and Assurance department of top-ten accountancy firm RSM Farrell Grant Sparks, now part of Grant Thornton. I set up my own accountancy and business advisory firm in 2015 and I also have a number of Non-Executive directorship roles.

### As a Barrister do you feel there are synergies between the 2 qualifications?

Definitely. Law plays such a big part of the role of an accountant. As practitioners we are regularly being asked to advise on company law, taxation and employment law issues. As an auditor and accountant you have to be able to interpret legal agreements to ensure they are being accounted for correctly. Analytical skills are a necessity in both professions as is the ability to see both sides of the argument and draw a defensible conclusion.

### What is your biggest career achievement to date?

I am very fortunate to have had a number of career achievements to date but two of note for me personally are being appointed to the board of Tusla, the child and family agency by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Ms. Katherine Zappone, and recently taking up the role as President of CPA Ireland.

## Business

### What are the challenges and rewards of running your own firm?

The biggest challenge of running your own business is that you are responsible for everything from sourcing the work, finance, quality and marketing but the reward is the freedom to make your own decisions.

### Tell us more about your passion for social enterprise

My passion for "social" commenced with volunteering. I was invited to become a member of the finance committee at the children's charity Barnardos, which was a great honour. I was subsequently invited to become a board member and chair of their audit committee and I was privileged to witness the great work the charity does to improve the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged children. As my tenure at Barnardos was coming to an end I was invited to become a board member of the Social Finance Foundation whose mission it is to provide loan finance to projects that have a strong social impact. The Foundation plays an important role in supporting social enterprises that produce a social dividend. A social enterprise is most typically defined as an enterprise that trades for a social purpose where at least part of its income is reinvested in a social objective. This combines two of my interests, the "social" and the "enterprise".

## Life

### How do you unwind?

I like to run on the lovely path around UCD or when I am in the west, on the beach in Lahinch or near Clahane beach.

### What motto do you live by?

Integrity, honesty and working hard. I believe in doing good deeds as often as possible and supporting equality. I also believe in giving back to society.