

CPA Profile

Eithne O'Brien



Title:
Head of Finance

Company:
Laya Healthcare

Qualifications:
FCPA

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

For me it all started in secondary school where we had an amazing business and accountancy teacher who made the world of an Accountant sound so great. I decided there and then that's what I wanted to study and work in as a career.

Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

When I weighed up all the various accountancy bodies, I felt that the CPA route was one that would deliver the most rounded and adaptable qualification as it offered the flexibility to go into practice or take the industry route – CPA could offer me the choice of both and that excited me.

Please provide a brief history of your career.

I started out in the public sector whilst in college working in the finance team for Aer Rianta at Cork Airport – I loved my time there and made lifelong friends. Then I took the leap into the private sector where I worked for some US Multinationals in the manufacturing and security industry and enjoyed the opportunity of global travel that those roles afforded me.

In 2003, I joined Laya Healthcare (then known as Bupa), now the second largest health insurer in the market and a proud part of AIG. We look after the health and wellbeing of over 600,000 members, with lines in travel and life insurance also.

I started off in the finance team as a Management Accountant and during the intervening years I have held multiple roles across the organisation. I am now the Head of Finance at

Laya Healthcare and I feel extremely lucky to work with a busy team of finance experts ensuring that we are providing relevant, reliable and timely information to the business to inform our business strategy and commercial decisions. Our finance department is at the heart of Laya Healthcare.

My role is incredibly challenging and interesting, and I am proud to be part of a very bright, dynamic, and innovative team of senior leaders driving the business forward into the future.

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

Opportunity – an accountancy qualification can open so many doors and offer so many avenues which you can go down along your career path.

What has been your biggest career achievement?

Most recently, it's how we responded to the enormous challenges – both human and operational – that Covid-19 presented us as a business and as a team. We have managed to navigate the Pandemic through a single-minded focus on looking after our members and our team as a priority, and we're coming through it stronger as a result.

Having worked in Laya Healthcare for 18 years now, there have been quite a few stand-out career moments and all of them involved our success in dealing with transformational change.

Whether it's navigating a change in ownership, or the challenges brought about by the market, we have continued to grow our business and team at Laya Healthcare in new and exciting ways.

We've grown a successful health and wellbeing brand that is trusted, that puts our members and team first, and one that is committed to our promise to Looking After You Always, which is what our name stands for!

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

Be open to all opportunities even if not in the finance stream, adaptability is the key to success. Focus on being a business partner in every aspect of your working day – manage your own personal brand.

Be creative and open to what technology can deliver and constantly strive to add value to every problem-solving event you encounter.

Einstein is quoted as having said, "If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions." The point made is important: preparation has great value to problem solving.

How do you unwind?

What is that!? Busy work life and busy homelife so I tend to jump from one to the other – however my guilty pleasure is a good Netflix binge or getting lost in a good book every so often (which isn't often enough though)!

What traits do you admire in others?

Hard work, Honesty and above all else Trustworthiness.