

CPA Profile

Gillian Cregan



Title:
Business Manager

Company:
OBL (O'Brien Lynam) Solicitors

Qualifications:
FCPA, MBS, LIB

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

I always loved maths in school and in secondary school when introduced to Commerce and Business Studies, I just gravitated towards Accountancy. I knew there and then that it would be my chosen career. I remember in my final year in school going to an open day to an accountancy college and how encouraging they were, specifically to females entering the field, as it provided so much flexibility for women to progress their career.

Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

CPA provided me with the flexibility as a student to apply my studies in a practical work environment which anchored my career. It is also a worldwide recognised qualification and working for a US company, CPA helped me build my global view of business finance and elevate my career.

Please provide a brief history your career.

Having studied accounting in college, I got an opportunity to work in Deutsche Bank, where I decided to complete my CPA studies part-time. I enrolled in Griffith college to begin my CPA journey. In my final year of CPA in April 2000, I moved career from banking to insurance services as an accounts assistant. Little did I realise at the time where this move would take me.

I quickly found myself in the middle of a project to move the full finance function from the UK to Dublin. In 2001, I qualified as a CPA Accountant and within 6 months I was appointed Chief Financial Officer at the age of 25. As CFO, I reported directly

into the global group HQ which exposed me to global finance and US GAAP accounting. In 2015, I completed a Masters of Business in the IMI and was elevated to CEO of the Irish entity. In 2018, following the sale of the global insurance services group, I decided to take a break and undertake the Chartered Director Program with the Institute of Directors in Ireland. While continuing to study part-time, I am currently working for a growing and ambitious legal firm, OBL Solicitors, who are leading the way in innovation in the legal industry.

What has been your biggest career achievement?

I have been fortunate enough to have had a number of career achievements. My biggest career achievements though continues to be developing and encouraging those who report to me. Whether that is in accountancy or leadership, I see their successes as my achievements. I always spoke of how I started my career as an account assistant and with the right encouragement, belief and hard work became CEO of the same company and I encourage everyone who works with me to never give up on their career goals and aspirations.

What do you think are the most pressing issues for accountants?

Today, I think the role of the Accountant has changed. Companies expect so much more from their Accountant than checks and balances. The Accountant of today is confronted with huge challenges of technology which is driving every business forward. They must be commercially aware for growing the business and ethically and compliantly aware to protect

the business. It's a far cry from balancing the books, they can lead organisations in Strategy, Legal, HR, IT & Business Development. In fact, I can't think of another profession that is expected to have so much knowledge of areas outside their technical core. The partnership approach is the new reality for Accountants in business.

What traits do you admire most in others?

I believe the leaders that have the traits to put the company and its employees needs first are the people to admire. Some of the most successful companies have the most modest CEOs. I admire those that walk the walk at the coal face of business and social issues and make a real, lasting impact on people because they genuinely care. Just be genuine.

How do you unwind

I have four very busy children from a 2-year-old to a 13-year-old and so most of my and my husband Simon's free time is planned for us. We spend most of the weekends on the side of a football pitch. The discipline to know how to switch off and spend real time with your family is key. I try not let work invade family time and I certainly don't bring my children to work.