

# CPA Profile

## John Kelly



**Title:**  
Director/  
Responsible Individual

**Company:**  
Deloitte

**Qualifications:**  
CPA

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

I started studying for a CPA qualification in 2004 when I was still playing professional rugby with Munster. I was 30 years old and knew that professional rugby wouldn't last for ever and I needed to start thinking about a new career. My degree in university was in civil engineering and I had a post graduate diploma in software engineering but I couldn't see myself working in either of those areas. My father had built his own successful accountancy practice in Cork and I was hoping to emulate his successful career.

### Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

CPA allowed me the flexibility to complete professional accountancy exams while I was working as a professional rugby player. I retired from professional rugby in December 2007 and completed my CPA finals in 2008. I started as a trainee accountant with KPMG in 2008 and completed my professional training contract in 2011. CPA allowed me to complete my exams before I started my training contract. This flexibility was the key to choosing CPA.

### Please provide a brief history your career.

I joined KPMG Cork's audit practice as part of their graduate trainee programme in 2008. All of the trainees who joined that year were accountancy, commerce and business graduates, all of whom were in their early twenties, except for me. I was 34 years old when I started and was often asked how I coped with the maturity levels of my peers.

The honest answer was that it was almost a step up in maturity considering the antics the rugby boys used to get up to. I stayed six years with KPMG, progressing to associate director level before moving to Grant Thornton as a director in 2014. GT in Cork was very much in a start-up phase and there was a big focus on business development. I learned a lot about the market and got a good understanding of services across all functions.

In January 2017, I joined Deloitte as a director in the audit and assurance department. In September 2018, I was made a Responsible Individual with signing authority for a portfolio of both private Irish clients and subsidiaries of multi-national clients. I enjoy working with a variety of businesses and being the engagement lead in the delivery of multi-disciplinary services and I enjoy working in Deloitte, a firm with a great team ethic.

My rugby career spanned ten years from 1997 to 2007. I played for Munster over 150 times and I had 17 caps for Ireland and played in the 2003 Rugby World Cup. I was on the 2006 European Cup winning team.

### What has been your biggest career achievement?

My biggest achievement in my working life has been the transition from professional rugby to a career in accountancy. In 2006 I was at the very top of my career in rugby and one year later I was starting at the very bottom of another career, as a very late starter.

The motivation and determination that I had as a professional sports person helped me to work as hard as

I possibly could and kept me focused on advancing in my new career.

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

There is increased regulation and scrutiny in the audit and assurance business. Quality is the key metric in our audit practice in Deloitte. Ensuring that our files are of the required standard is our primary focus. Our audit teams undergo rigorous training throughout the year and everything possible is done to ensure we reach the required quality standard. We also undergo both internal and external inspections. Getting a balance between achieving a file of sufficient quality while also delivering an efficient and cost-effective service is one of the key challenges that audit businesses face.

### What traits do you admire most in others?

I love working in teams and I like having people around me who want to work hard for our team in Deloitte. I admire leaders who are able to get the best out of their people, while being fair and honest with their team.

### How do you unwind?

I'm still involved with Munster Rugby in a voluntary capacity and have a role as Chairman of the Professional Game Board. This board works with the professional staff to ensure that there are appropriate strategies in place for the professional squads and we have oversight of recruitment of coaches and players. I love being involved with Munster because my involvement allows me the opportunity to go to a lot of the province's matches.