

CPA Profile

Mary Gleeson



Title:
ATI President

Company:
Financial Management
& Accounting Practice

Qualifications:
FCPA, FIATA

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

My first introduction to accountancy was helping my father maintain the old red ledger books for our family business. This gave me an appreciation of running a business in rural Ireland, as well as the importance of SMEs to the economic and social landscape to so many of our towns. Supporting enterprise became a key driver in studying to become an accountant.

Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

I first qualified as an accounting technician with Accounting Technicians Ireland which provided me with a solid foundation to go on and study management accounting. After a year, however, I switched to study accounting with CPA Ireland as I felt the programme was more suited to the demands of an SME and private accounting practice.

The CPA course structure gave me the flexibility to work full-time and study at the same time. The level of support which CPA offers its students is to be commended and I always found the staff friendly and approachable.

Please provide a brief history of your career.

In my 25th year as a member of Accounting Technicians Ireland (a milestone I still can't believe!), I was elected President in June which is an honour and a real professional highlight. And, for the past twenty-two years, I have enjoyed working as Financial Controller for Ballyhoura Development CLG which is a community-led development company which works with communities and businesses in East Limerick and North Cork.

Having graduated as a Certified Public Accountant in 2001, becoming a Fellow in 2014, I established my own CPA practice in 2011 with the mission

to support start-up enterprises. I'm also a founding member of Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (SERI); a new initiative which supports enterprise and complements my own commitment to community development. Being able to see businesses develop and grow is what drives me to start work each morning.

How do you find your CPA qualification has helped you in your role?

Having a professionally recognised qualification, and the ability to use the professional letters FCPA and FIATA, has been of immense benefit to me when seeking funding to support my clients.

The CPA qualification helped prepare me for my role in supporting SMEs, such as budget forecasting and implementing financial accounting systems, and respond to the challenges of sourcing funding and embedding good governance.

What has been your biggest career achievement?

I'm fortunate to have a number of career achievements which I'm proud of, but the one which I found most rewarding was my work with a charity in Peru. Working with Accounting for International Development (AfiD), I took up a placement in Peru where I implemented a new financial system providing reassurance for funders that their support was delivered for the benefit of the charity.

What or who inspires you most in business?

I really admire entrepreneurs who take their idea and grow it to become a sustainable business and employer, in turn providing a better lifestyle for people working and living in an area. Having supported a number of start-up businesses in their development, I continue to be in awe of the courage and determination demonstrated by the people involved.

If you were advising someone just starting out with their CPA qualification, what tip would you give them that would make their journey smoother?

I think the fact that you have decided to take the initial step and enrol on the course is an achievement in itself and is to be recognised and celebrated.

To remember that studying and developing in your career is a journey in itself. And finally, you're not on your own. The CPA staff are always there to help and support you along the way.

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

I think the changes to the way we are having to work in light of Covid-19 presents many challenges. Balancing working remotely with being on-hand and available to our clients is something which needs consideration.

The Government has put a number of supports in place to help our clients through this pandemic and as a result, our clients depend on us more than ever. Thankfully, there are many channels of support for accounting professionals being provided by both CPA and Accounting Technicians Ireland alike.

How do you unwind?

As I spend so much of my working day inside and in front of a computer, I really enjoy getting out into the countryside at every opportunity. I'm a keen horse-rider and walker – nothing beats a good Sunday stroll.

What traits do you admire most in others?

Hard-work and determination, as demonstrated by so many of my clients over the years, are always to be admired.