

# Leadership Insight:

## John McCarrick

### What led you to a career in accountancy?

During my secondary school education, I enjoyed studying accountancy, economics and mathematics.

My first choice of career was in the area of sport, I had hope to gain an athletic scholarship to one of the American universities back in the early 1980's that was offered to a small few. I was lucky enough to have been able to represent Ireland in track events from 200m, 400m & 800m both indoor & outdoor events European and World Athletic Championships.

From a young age, I knew that this mixture of scholarly pursuits and personal know-how was a space in which I could succeed in and the accountancy profession offered me that fabulous opportunity. I began my career as trainee accountant in 1980 with a firm of Chartered Accountants based in Fade Street, Dublin 2 and had a great mentor in Conor Ryan who allowed me progress to be appointed audit manager and remain with this firm until 1990.

I always had an ambition to start my own practice and commenced John McCarrick & Associates in July 1990.

### What have been the greatest challenges you have faced leading teams in the new world of work following the impact of the pandemic?

The Global Pandemic presented enormous challenges both human and operational in the SME & SMP sector. To successfully navigate through the pandemic we needed to focus more on our staff and our client's wellbeing.

The most challenging and stand out event for me was the loneliness faced as leader in the new world of work particularly in the small & medium practice.

### As we launch the CPA Ireland Sustainability Hub we appreciate you contributing to our bank of case studies with the work you have done in Kenya. Can you tell us about the work you do?

I have been able to guide The Kenyan Child Foundation CLG and Irish registered charity in the successful development of two education projects in Kenya over the last 8 years.

The building of St Patrick's Primary School in Kawese, Makeni County, Kenya now has 12 teachers, 11 classrooms and 292 pupils built over 5 years from 2015 to 2020. The school is a modern educational facility that provides a breakfast club to the students each day, a sustainable school building with water harvesting & solar power systems, building and ground maintenance programmes.

The opening of the Songa School & Children's Centre a modern and functional, 14,900 square feet educational facility that will serve children living with disabilities and the first of kind in the Mukuru Slum of Nairobi, Kenya.

The school building project is completed within the Project Budget & within the 54 week build time amid the challenges posed by COVID 19 Pandemic.

In addition to supporting the community to deal with these social, health and economic adversities, due to stigma, children and people

living with disabilities are sometimes seen as a source of fear and shame in Kenya. Some tribal cultures even view disability as a curse. Faced with such marginalisation, people living with disabilities are five times more likely to be abused in slums in Kenya.

Part of the Kenyan Child Foundations aim is to use quality education as a tool to dispel such beliefs, primarily by offering new educational opportunities to these children.

### That's a huge commitment to take in in addition to running your own accountancy practice, why have you taken it on?

During the last economic recession in Ireland the practice of John McCarrick & Associates had time and the expertise to consider how best our firm could help the less fortunate.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals guided all of this work.

We set clear targets for the SDGs: on quality education, zero hunger, gender equality and clean water and sanitation.

We are equally dedicated to inspiring excellence, teaching our staff to be the best they can be reaching out and building success in the wider community, especially to those less fortunate in Ireland and further afield. Our firm has a developed a culture of diversity and inclusion that is embraced by our Partners and Staff. Developing our outreach programmes and work of the charity and through our advocacy work.

By reaching out to a much wider audience, John McCarrick & Associates is now making a difference to the lives of over 500 children in Kenya.

Our actions will have far reaching benefits into the future for the children and will give them the tools to help them in making a difference to society.

**By doing this incredibly important work you are answering the call of the United Nations to take action on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals – which of the goals are you meeting with this work?**

**Understanding the UN Sustainable Development Goals SDGs & Mapping**

While all 17 UN SDGs are relevant for society’s progress as a whole, many organisations choose to focus on delivering lasting change in a number of core areas where they hold expertise.

For the purposes of this and following the core work John McCarrick & Associates in partnership with The Kenyan child Foundation activities, the organisation stands prepared to contribute sustainably to the following SDGs:

- SDG 2 – Zero Hunger
- SDG 4 - Quality Education
- SDG 5 - Gender Equality
- SDG 17 - Partnership for the Goals

Many of us forget that sustainability doesn’t just relate to counting our carbon footprint, why is it important to focus on areas of education and poverty.



When citizens are offered high-quality educational opportunities, all individuals benefit through providing a long-lasting, intellectual contribution to society, as well as investing in solutions that offer economic, social and environmental growth for their country.

CPA Ireland is one of Ireland’s leading professional accountancy bodies. It provides stellar, accredited training opportunities for accountants to qualify in their profession and become recognised by the Irish state, among other jurisdictions.

CPA Ireland and its members provide a secure and solid framework for accountants within which to operate, which is essential for a society to maintain a stable economic, legal and social fabric. Similarly, the institute also offers a range of professional development courses linked to accountancy, touching on the soft skills as well as technical areas in which to take further steps in their career.

Further for the future: in order to completely understand the organisation’s impact, it would be highly useful to understand metrics for these capacity building opportunities, alongside setting a target for growth.



**SDG Wedding Cake:** the goals can be thematically divided into three broad categories. The objectives of peace and partnership provide an overarching structure to the areas of People, Planet and Prosperity.



**What did you find most challenging about starting the project and what are your biggest challenges now?**

I believe from my experience working internationally over the last 20 years good collaboration & trust is most important.

This is not always the case and the international volunteer & donor organisations are often taken for granted, by some leaders in civil society these actions are doing the Kenyan people and the wider global community a huge disservice by such bad governance & self-interests.

**Finally, you were in Kenya this past August, can you describe how your visits impact you?**

This month, we officially opened the SONGA School and Children's Centre in Nairobi.

I was delighted to welcome the Irish Ambassador to Kenya, H.E. Fionnuala Quinlan – to the school for children with disabilities.

The Kenyan Child Foundation has been working hard on this project for the last three years amid

I know that SONGA will make a big difference to over 200 students with disabilities each year – as well as to their families and the broader community of Mukuru in Nairobi, Kenya.

"A dream does not become a reality "True Magic "it takes sweat, determination & lots of hard work". These are the famous words of "Colin Powell "The Famous American Military General and First Black US Secretary of State".

I want to mention our volunteers by acknowledging them and thanking them for making this dream become a reality and being part of the Magic!



**John McCarrick**

**Title:** Principal Partner, Trustee & Chairperson

**Company:** John McCarrick & Associates, The Kenyan Child Foundation CLG

**Winner of the Irish Accountancy Award 2022 for CSR initiative of the year: Back to School.**

