ATT Welcome: A passion for education

Welcomes

23 August 2022

Hello, and welcome to the Deputy President's page for September. I do hope that you've managed to avoid the worst of the heatwaves and have not been too overwhelmed by the media coverage of a certain leadership election, the result of which should be known by the time that you read this. Whoever is elected as the new Conservative Party leader and Prime Minister will, I'm sure, propose a number of tax changes that we'll need to get to grips with. But tax is always changing, and ATT members will do what they always do in these situations – work tirelessly to help their clients to understand the changes and comply with their obligations. It's all part of the job.

But talking of leadership changes brings me to why I am writing this page and not David Bradshaw. In time honoured tradition, David stepped up to be 'le grand fromage' at our July AGM, taking on the presidential role. In turn, I stepped up to the Deputy President's role, which is why I have the pleasure of penning a few words every month.

I guess I ought to start with a few words of introduction. I studied Maths at University and, upon graduating, decided to pursue my fascination with numbers. I trained as a Chartered Accountant and qualified in 1987 with Arthur Young. Whilst I learned a lot, I decided that there must be something more to life than being an auditor, so I embarked on a career as a trainer with The Financial Training Company (FTC) and fell in love with the idea of educating others. I particularly enjoyed the fact that some people actually listened to me – something that rarely happened at home.

I'm currently working at LexisNexis, heading up the Tolley Exam Training team, where I've been for the last 16 years.

I should add that at this point, if you think my name sounds familiar, it could be that I taught you over the years. If that's the case, I hope that it led to success in the examinations – if you are reading this as an ATT member then chances are that it did – success which would have been far more attributable to your hard work than my teaching. But if you think you remember me from presenting on Blue Peter, then you're showing your age! Also, we just happen to share a name...

My first involvement with the ATT came in 1992 when I started lecturing at the student training conferences. It has continued ever since, weaving a path that included stints on various working parties, the Audit Committee, the Business Development Steering Group and the Member Steering Group, which I chaired for three years. I now serve on the Finance Steering Group. I first joined ATT Council in 2003 and served for a very enjoyable 12 years and I was therefore delighted to be invited back in 2018. Presumably, this will continue until I finally get it right.

But enough about me. Most of my working life has been involved in education and that passion for education was what interested me in getting involved with the ATT in the first place. As you will know, ATT is an educational charity and given my background, this is particularly important to me. The ATT exams are an important part of fulfilling that objective, but not everyone is able to find the time to study for a formal professional qualification. That's why I was particularly pleased to be involved with the development of our Foundation Qualifications, which allow individuals to dip their toe into the water of the world of tax and study and sit their assessments where and when they want, to see if tax is for them.

Even the Foundation Qualifications are aimed at those who have completed their compulsory education, though. I believe that we need to do more to educate our wider society about tax, what we pay, why we pay it, and how it benefits the country as a whole. Looking back to my own school years, I wish that I'd learned more about how to deal with money, and been able to understand the fundamentals of tax.

I'm therefore delighted that the ATT is involved in a programme to encourage our young people to understand more about tax. Our Technical Officers have put together some lesson plans, which can be used in conjunction with the HMRC video, for members and volunteers to use in their local schools. These are interactive and really get children thinking about tax. If you would like to present a session in your local school, the lesson plans can be found at www.att.org.uk/hmrcs-junior-tax-facts

We would be interested to hear from any members who have presented in their local schools, and you never know – we might even feature you in *Tax Adviser*!