CIOT Vice-President’s page, October 2018

Welcomes

01 October 2018

Reach out… and we’ll be there

One of the core strengths of the CIOT and ATT is its extensive network of local branches spanning the length and breadth of the UK from Aberdeen to South West England and Northern Ireland, Jersey, and a number of overseas locations. There are also dedicated ‘HMRC’ and ‘Commerce and Industry’ branches.

None of this can happen without the large and committed number of volunteers who run our branch network. I have had the pleasure of lecturing to well over half our branches and my experience is our volunteers are always a friendly, professional, and enthusiastic bunch. At the last count, we had over 300 volunteers who together dedicated an estimated 4,000 hours running our branches and putting together some 300 events last year – an incredible feat.

Looking through the 2018/19 branch handbook, I can see the range of courses and seminars being offered by our branches is extremely diverse. For example, there are courses on:

- Charities – An update and how to avoid common problems (Mid-Anglia)
- The sale and purchase of development property (Bristol)
- Mock first-tier tribunal (East Midlands and HMRC (joint))
- De-enveloping residential property tax-efficiently (Harrow and North London)
- EIS and venture capital reliefs (Manchester)

…and the Commerce and Industry branch is even daring to run a Customs and Brexit event!

We live in an age where there are so many competing demands and distractions for our valuable time. But I often ask myself: where else can tax advisers and tax professionals obtain access to such a wide range of high-quality tax courses at a very affordable price? I am also encouraged to learn that around 20% of the attendees at these events are non-members, which helps to fulfil our charitable remit of tax education to the larger public

While most of our branch events are strongly supported, it would be great to see more of our members at these events. I regard attending branch courses as an invaluable part of my life-long learning in tax and I know that many of my tax professionals do as well.

Some of our branch events are specifically aimed at ‘tax students’. However, in my view, students would benefit from attending all our branch events. This would enrich your understanding of the practical application of various tax topics and issues, which now forms the main emphasis of our exams. For those of you who have just qualified, attending branch events gives you the opportunity to network and make friends with fellow tax professionals.

On a personal level, I have really enjoyed ‘getting involved’ in the committee work of our local branches and have made many lifelong friendships along the way. I think Rob Adams, recent chair of our Merseyside branch, sums up his experience very well: ‘*You get to run a little team (the committee). None of them are your employees and you cannot order them to do anything. So you learn how to work with different people and how to get the best out of them. Some are keen, self-motivated and hard-working and some are not. Above all, there has been the sense of achievement from being able to make things happen. Whilst we are obviously a charity and do have procedures laid down by head office, there is a considerable amount of freedom to do what you and the committee think best in your own location and indeed try new things. Although it was a bit disconcerting at first to try to work out exactly what I should do, I have enjoyed learning, bringing forward new initiatives and growing into the role. I definitely leave the role with a sense of pride and achievement for having done it*’.

I am sure many of our branch Chairs would entirely echo these sentiments. I hope that some of you will get involved with our friendly branches at some stage in your tax careers, but there is no better place to start than at the beginning! Just ‘Reach out … and we’ll be there’!

I would like to conclude by saying that we are extremely grateful to all our branch volunteers and I thank each and every one of them for their generous support for our valuable work.

Peter Rayney

Vice President, CIOT