A member‘s view: Sarah Ibbotson

Briefings



21 February 2024

This month’s ATT member spotlight is on Sarah Ibbotson, Senior Tax Manager at Co-op Legal Services.

How did you find out about a career in tax?

Accidentally! After a Psychology degree, I applied for a job within the Civil Service. My first choice was HM Customs & Excise – I had some romantic notion of heroically uncovering drug smuggling rings, having watched too much crime drama. In the end, I got my second choice, was recruited as a Tax Officer (Higher Grade) with HM Revenue & Customs (Inland Revenue in old money) and began my tax career.

Why is the ATT qualification important?

I was keen to obtain a professional qualification in tax to further my career. I knew that if I wanted to be taken seriously as a tax professional, it was an important and desirable qualification to have. ATT has grown and expanded, and those in the tax industry recognise that qualifying as a Taxation Technician indicates an individual’s

commitment to the field.

Why did you pursue a career in tax?

I have always liked numbers and maths, and the logic of tax calculations appealed to me. My work involves dealing with tax matters for deceased individuals and in the administration of their estates.

I often feel like a detective or a forensic analyst, piecing together information needed to get a picture of the individual's tax position. It requires research, initiative, experience and problem-solving techniques. Since joining Co-op Legal Services in 2018, I have enjoyed the most interesting and challenging tax work of my career.

How would you describe yourself in three words?

Diligent. Committed. Honest.

Who has influenced you in your career so far?

During my time at HSBC Trust Co (UK) Ltd, I was strongly influenced by David Byrom and Ian Degville-Thompson – both my seniors, and David unfortunately gone too soon. They encouraged me to have confidence in my ability and judgement, inspiring me with their expertise and skills. They were excellent mentors, colleagues and friends, extremely professional and with great integrity.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing the ATT qualification?

If you are committed to a career in taxation, it's the best thing you can do. It will give you a great grounding in tax, and will show your current and potential future employers that you are a serious individual who will be an asset to their business.

What are your predictions for tax advisors and the tax industry?

Despite the 'tax simplification' promises of years ago, it has not got any easier for the man on the street, and I do not see that changing any time soon. Digitalisation is being implemented and will no doubt continue. How this will be managed around tax

matters of deceased individuals remains to be seen, but I will await developments with interest.

What advice would you give to your future self?

Remember that ‘in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes’. If you’re facing a potential redundancy situation, you’ll be fine and will get another job in tax. Good tax professionals will always be needed.

Tell me something about yourself that others may not know about you.

I almost lost the tip of my finger in a lawnmower accident when I was a child. Playing horses and carts with my Staffy, Honey, who didn’t enjoy the game as much as I thought she would!