A member’s view: Graeme Fox

Briefings

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This month’s CIOT member spotlight is on Graeme Fox, Hillier Hopkins LLP, Senior Tax Manager.

How did you find out about a career in tax?
I started my career in general practice accounting where I did a bit of everything, but I always enjoyed the tax aspects of my work. When I was looking at moving to a new job, by chance I was offered an interview for a tax focused role. It sounded exciting to be able to focus on an area I enjoyed, the interview went well and I never looked back.

Why is the CIOT qualification important?
Coming from general practice as a qualified accountant, I felt I had a good level of understanding of tax, as I had always been able to deal with the issues I had come up against. Once I moved to my current employer, dealing with far larger and more complex issues, I realised I knew far less than I thought.

The CTA qualification gave me the knowledge to handle any issue, brought my skills up to a higher level, and gave me confidence to take on any challenges.

Why did you pursue a career in tax?
It is an area that has always interested me, and once I was given the opportunity to work in tax and study towards CTA, I knew it was the right fit for me. The work was challenging but rewarding, it gave me the opportunity to develop my skills, and it felt like a career path I could follow.

How would you describe yourself in three words?
Dependable, calm, professional.

Who has influenced you in your career so far?
There are a few, but of note would be a past boss who was an example to me of what not to do; the owner of one of my past roles who allowed me to see up close how to successfully develop a business; the tax Principals of my current role who guide me; and lastly my parents and wife, who have supported me through job changes, studying for exams and listening to me after the trickier days.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing the CIOT qualification?
If you are serious about working in tax, a CIOT qualification will help you tremendously. The exams are not easy and will require many hours of dedication, but once you achieve them, they will set you up for the rest of your career.

What are your predictions for tax advisers and the tax industry in the future?
There will always be a need for tax advisers, and no one should be panicking that our industry will disappear. Improvements in bookkeeping software and AI have changed the landscape since I started working in tax, making data gathering and reporting far better than the manual processes of yesteryear. But it has not removed the role of the trusted adviser.

While simpler matters can be handled by taxpayers themselves, there has been minimal impact in my experience to higher end issues, particularly when judgement is involved. Many tax issues swing on subjective points which cannot be learnt overnight. How we deliver our advice might change, but so long as we adapt to that the role of a tax adviser will remain.

What advice would you give to your future self?
Always keep learning as tax never stands still for long.

Tell me something about yourself that others may not know about you.
I obtained my motorcycle licence after becoming interested from watching my dad ride.