

CPA Profile

John Galligan



Title: Finance & IS Manager

Company: CPA Ireland

Qualifications: CPA



Why did you decide to start out in a career in accountancy?

It was never a conscious decision to pursue a career in accountancy. When I finished college, I wanted a recognisable business qualification that would stand to me, and an accounting qualification seemed a logical fit, as well as equipping me with a set of skills useful in any business.

Looking back now, we had a small family business in Cavan, and from an early age I was involved in the daily cashing up, ordering of supplies and pricing, so obviously something struck a chord.

Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

I hadn't studied accountancy at secondary school, so I wanted to start from scratch without any exemptions. The first-year accountancy exams for CPA Ireland almost exactly mirrored my university subjects.

At the time I was working as a trainee with a Chartered practice in Dublin, but I knew that emigration was likely, and CPA offered a more flexible learning and exam route. I did emigrate to the UK for a period and CPA proved flexible, even to the point of sitting most of my exams in London.

Please provide a brief history of your career.

As mentioned, I started in a practice firm for about 12 months in Dublin after university which was an incredible learning experience and started my interest in pursuing a career in finance.

I moved to London in 1989 when unemployment was high in Ireland

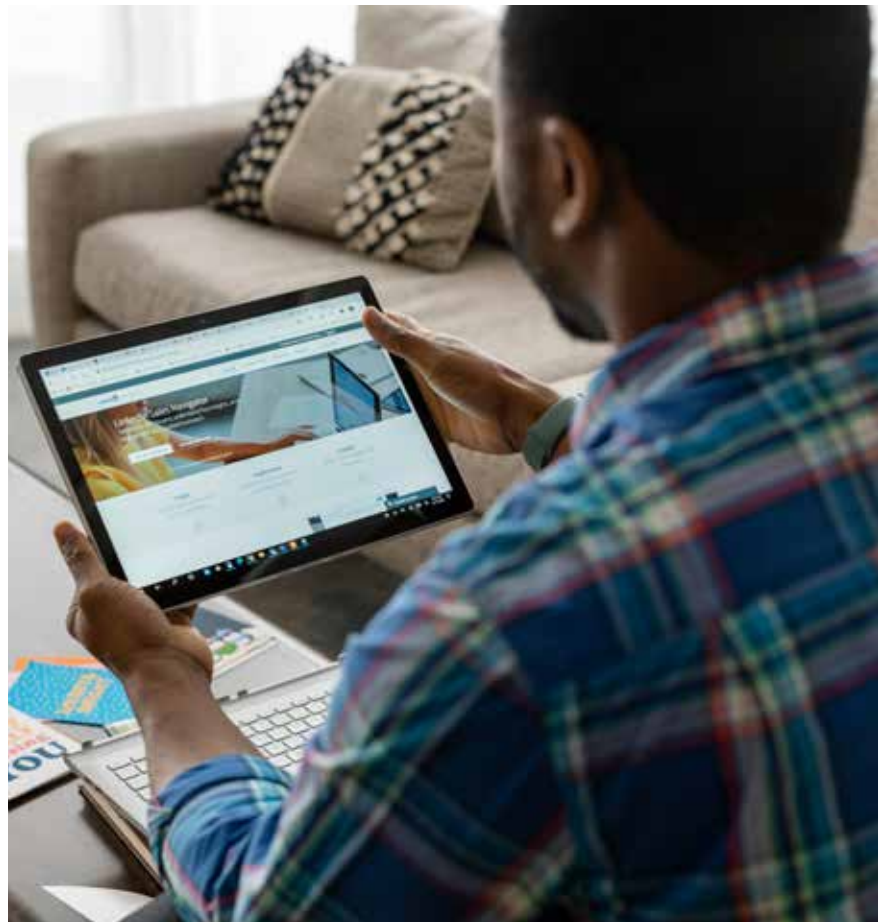
and secured a position within the finance department of Johnson Matthey (a leading producer and refiner of precious metals such as gold, silver, platinum, and palladium), based on North London, after working there for a period as a temp. I spent 11 years there in various finance roles and eventually relocating to their facility in Hertfordshire.

During the last years at Johnson Matthey and subsequent roles, I have become more involved in finance projects and system implementations as I have a preference for this area of finance and have developed an aptitude for problem solving finance processes. Continuous improvements

and development of finance systems to drive automation is a passion.

By the time I had qualified and met my wife to be, we decided to return to Ireland. I immediately was offered a job working in Fermanagh for the Quinn Group as Group Systems Accountant at a time of unprecedented growth within the company. This role led me to Quinn Direct Insurance and Liberty Insurance in what proved to be a real learning experience as a finance system specialist.

When I moved to CPA Ireland in 2015, I was aiming for more of a Finance role with less systems and out of hours work. It's fair to say I now have



the perfect balance of lots of variety and lots of work.

What one word describes what your CPA qualification has given you?

My first thought was capability: the ability to cope in any situation and the grounding to understand that everything is solvable. I feel as a CPA I can deal with most situations or challenges, and then there's always Google!

What has been your biggest career achievement?

I'll start with passing my CPA exams, as it gave me the passport to my career and was a significant achievement while I worked a full-time job concurrently.

However, during my career, there were many times in Quinn Insurance when my team and I developed and implemented ingenious design solutions. We liked to simplify the process, rather than complicate it, and there were always new challenges. There's nothing like working in a high performing team that operates as one cohesive unit. As a team we were agile, forward thinking and given the freedom to implement the best solutions. Those times were the highlight, as even a small systems improvement had a big impact due to the quantity of daily transactions.

What or who inspires you most in business?

My wife, as she is a firm believer that success cannot be measured on a

spreadsheet. There are intangibles that accrue just by looking after your staff properly. Building a strong team is challenging, but patience is key – she has shown me that it is important to choose colleagues who will benefit the team, not just the role. I see her work smart, encourage innovation and celebrate success within a business where trust is a given. She encourages me to push myself out of my comfort zone, always has my back, is my best mentor and ensures my moral compass is always working!

What advice would you give to those recently qualified or currently studying for their CPA qualification?

If currently studying, it is really hard work, especially if you are also working full time or active in sports or other outside interests, but very much worth it in the end. Stay strong!

For recently qualified, there are many different avenues to pursue and many not confined to finance. I've had some great experiences and opportunities, so look around at what's out there, be picky, choose the company that feels right for you, don't be afraid to travel or work outside your comfort area, as the experience you gain is worth it.

How do you unwind?

When I was younger, I played football at the weekends, and then always a weekly 5-a-side game or two. Now it's travelling with the family as much as possible, reading, music and home time as my wife travels a lot with work. I completely switch off at the weekends, a pleasant change from a prior life doing weekend system implementations. Living in rural Ireland is a nice contrast to working in Dublin, and hybrid working allows for a better balance without the commute, the downside is that I always have jobs in the garden!

What traits do you admire in others?

People who do the right thing, rather than the easy thing, honesty and respect. It's nice to be important, but more important to be nice.

