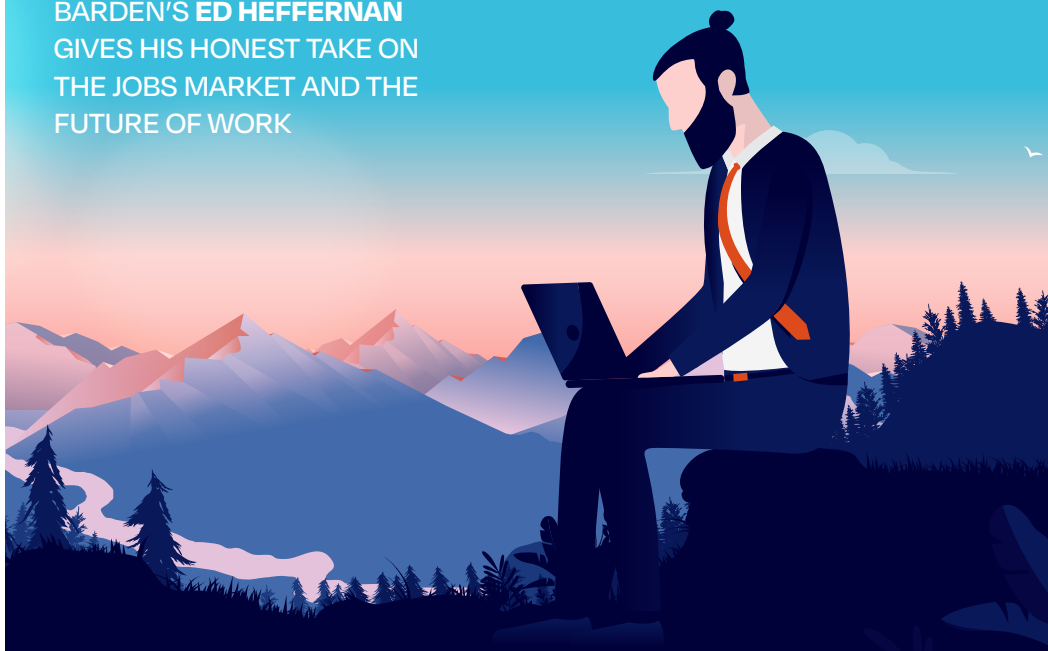


Career Guide

JULY 2020

Is remote working here to stay?

BARDEN'S ED HEFFERNAN
GIVES HIS HONEST TAKE ON
THE JOBS MARKET AND THE
FUTURE OF WORK



HOW TO JOB SEARCH IN THE AGE OF COVID-19 | 6 SKILLS TO
SUCCEED IN THE 'NEW' WORLD OF WORK | HOW TO NETWORK IN A
VIRTUAL WORLD | 5 STEPS TO REMOTE WORKING SUCCESS

Ed Heffernan
Managing Partner
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Chairperson
CASSI

PARTNERING WITH POTENTIAL



Entire professions have been turned on their head since the COVID-19 pandemic shot into focus, not least professional services. And despite the easing of lockdown restrictions in Ireland and elsewhere, many Irish businesses are planning for a new working environment: 78% of CFOs building greater remote working and work flexibility into their future plans, according to the latest PwC CFO Pulse Survey.

New ways of working will invariably require new skills and fresh approaches to work – both on the part of the employee, and the manager/employer. To that end, we have asked several experts to share their tips and insights in this new edition of the Accountancy Ireland Career Guide as both trainee and qualified Chartered Accountants begin to emerge from the frantic response phase and look once again to the horizon.

Whether you're about to embark on a job search or simply wish to refresh your skillset as firms and businesses reimagine the world of work, you will find much food for thought in the pages that follow. I hope you find it useful and, as always, we would welcome your feedback.

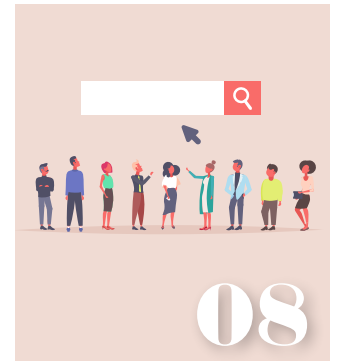
In the meantime, stay safe and good luck – whether it's with your job hunt, professional development, or upskilling endeavours!

Stephen Tormey
Managing Editor,
Accountancy Ireland

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Market outlook: the future for jobs and work

FLEXIBLE WORKING WAS A 'NICE TO HAVE' SIX MONTHS AGO, BUT COVID-19 HAS GIVEN IT POLE POSITION IN BUSINESS STRATEGY AND PLANNING. AND THAT WON'T CHANGE AS THE CRISIS FADES, **WRITES ED HEFFERNAN.**



Ed Heffernan is Managing Partner at Barden.

We can be sure of very few things in the next 12-18 months. Right now, some fundamental changes are happening in the world of work – changes both in the jobs market itself and in the way we work. In Barden, we have a few predictions for you about precisely that.

WHAT WILL THE JOBS MARKET FOR ACCOUNTANTS BE LIKE IN THE YEAR AHEAD?

In the short-term, people will work harder. Companies will be reluctant to replace headcount in finance or hire additional finance people, for a while at least. That means the current workload will be shared among the team that is now in place. This will likely result in a higher workload per person, but it may also offer a more diverse mix of activity in finance roles (which could be positive if approached



and managed correctly).

The market has shifted from candidate-driven to client-driven. Supply will, for a time, exceed the demand and this will have an impact on salaries. We predict that wages will drop by roughly 5% in the next 12 months, but are unlikely to drop much further. The majority of accountants are still gainfully employed and will continue to be remunerated at pre-COVID-19 levels. Good accountants are less likely to move for less money. Bonuses and salary increases for 2020/21 are very likely to be put on ice in most companies. And don't expect salary reviews in the next 12 months to be as favourable as those in 2019.

Candidates will also have

to work a little harder and be a little more flexible when looking for a role. With less demand for people, candidates will have fewer options and must, therefore, be less prescriptive in their job search. They will need to be flexible when it comes to trading variables such as location, salary, the nature of the role, the kind of employment (more on that below), the type of business and so on if they want to advance their careers externally in the years ahead.

Contract roles will rebound faster than permanent roles. As with all previous recessions, the jobs market will rebound first through contract positions, followed

by permanent roles. Why?

1 Contract roles represent a temporary commitment/spend and are therefore easier to get approved in an uncertain market.

2 Contract roles are often a "must hire" to cover key personnel during maternity/paternity leave.

3 Project work associated with finance business process transformations to drive efficiency (and ultimately lower costs) are often recruited for on a contract basis.

4 Many roles that are usually permanent will be recruited on a contract basis initially and, assuming improved trading conditions, will ultimately be made permanent (which has the knock-on effect of reducing the number of permanent roles that come to market). The value of contract roles for ambitious people should not be underestimated in the months ahead.

While a near full recovery is predicted by many for 2021/2022, the jobs market for accountants will lag slightly behind as many companies will invest in direct revenue-generating recruits first (sales roles, for example) and indirect revenue-generating recruits second (such as accountants). It will take some time to return to a normalised jobs market, but the astute finance professional that spends this time wisely will position themselves well for when that time comes.

HOW WILL WORK, WORK IN THE FUTURE?

First, flexible working will become more normalised. At a basic level, people will likely have more flexibility on start and finish times (staggered working patterns), more flexibility when it comes to

working between the office and home, and more options to structure their working week to suit themselves (four-day weeks, condensed working hours, or a 40-hour week but work when you want, for example). Wider adoption of flexible working will have enormously positive effects on how life and work interact, as well as productivity.

Second, companies will re-think how they view the connection between job and location. Right now, these things are synonymous – a financial controller role in the New York office, for example. In the future, the two may not be so tightly connected – a financial controller role supporting the New York business, for example. In this context, flexible working enables remote working within the business itself. If companies are happy for their people to work from home, does it matter where that home is?

This thinking has both opportunity and risk for accountants in Ireland. The danger is that this thinking further enables the relocation of jobs to lower-cost locations. The opportunity is that this thinking might enable talented, sought-after people to choose where they live first, and what company and role they want second. If a highly skilled statutory accountant lives in Waterford, they may be no longer limited to jobs in

their immediate vicinity; they could take a role previously held by an office-attending person in Dublin – or London, for that matter. The blurring of the connection between job and location is not a new concept, but the adoption of remote working policies has the potential to bring it to a whole new level. This shift could see Ireland change from a local jobs market to a global jobs market, which would have enormous and far-reaching consequences.

And third, there will be a shift in the tools we use every day. Companies will need to invest in infrastructure, security, and team working tools to both enable and make the most of this new flexible working landscape. Expect the continued proliferation of virtual meeting technology and its rapid advancement to virtual reality meeting technology. Expect a complete reorganisation of recruitment and onboarding processes to accommodate this new approach to working. Expect home office set-up costs to become a part of benefits packages. Expect the creation of HR functions to accommodate, monitor, and enhance flexible working processes. Expect all this, and a whole lot more.

The future of work will not look like the past, but with change comes opportunity; opportunity for those willing to embrace change.



The market has shifted from candidate-driven to client-driven... We predict that wages will drop by roughly 5% in the next 12 months, but are unlikely to drop much further.



How to job search in the age of COVID-19



NIAMH MCINERNEY SHARES PRACTICAL TIPS FOR JOB-SEARCHING DURING A PANDEMIC.



Niamh McInerney
is Head of Graduate
Recruitment at
PwC Ireland.

When we look back over the last six months, the speed of change from a growth economy to one with a challenging financial path ahead is staggering. COVID-19 has had an immediate and unprecedented impact on businesses with some able to work through, some temporarily closed, and others closed permanently. What does this mean for jobs, your prospects, and the ability to find the right job for you in this new environment?

While we have seen recruitment freezes over this

period, the economy is now starting to open up again and businesses are beginning to hire. In that context, here is some advice on how to put your best foot forward.

LEVERAGE LINKEDIN

We all know how vital LinkedIn is when looking for a job, but LinkedIn is also a critical channel when a company is looking to hire people with specific skills. Here are some ways to boost your prospects:

- Step back from the language and read it through to confirm that it reflects your CV in the round.

- View other role models' profiles for inspiration.
- Ensure that your profile includes language akin to job descriptions relevant to your search.
- Follow the companies in which you are interested.
- Only 'like' relevant posts with which you agree.
- Share relevant content on LinkedIn (think of it as Facebook, but for your professional life).

BE PROACTIVE

As the market re-opens, it will be competitive. There are some practical, proactive steps you can take:

- Research the companies and roles in which you are interested. Check out the latest news sites for the issues they are commenting on, as well as their website.
- Scan relevant jobs boards regularly.
- Reach out to recruiters and share your CV. While there may be a hiring freeze in certain sectors, you might be called first if they have your details.
- Follow companies' social media to get better insights, and also to hear about job opportunities they may have.
- If a company is hiring, find out the closing date and apply well in advance of this to avoid any technical issues.

USE THE TIME TO UPSKILL

While you may have more time on your hands, smart upskilling will help you bridge the gaps on your CV to what companies are looking for in their job descriptions. There are many free resources available online or through courses that will help you. An excellent place to start is somewhere like Coursera – there are thousands of courses available online on a range of topics. Webinars are also an excellent opportunity to learn from industry experts, so have a hunt around and sign-up to useful webinars in relevant industries.

Digital is key to everything we do now; this has been highlighted since working from home, and collaborating with our teams is set to continue as we seek to serve our clients' needs. There are great quick wins here, like Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets courses. You can also make considerable advances in more specialist software like Alteryx or Tableau, which are used increasingly in businesses. Many of these courses are free and have communities to help you upskill (for more on this, see page 22).

PwC has also developed a digital fitness app, which assesses your capabilities and suggests mini courses to help advance your digital skills and track your progress. It can be accessed through the App

Store and Google Play Store, with the login code 'IRNALL'. PwC adds new learning assets to the tool weekly to reflect the latest developments and thinking. Once you download the app, be sure to take the self-assessment, which takes less than 15 minutes to complete. Upon completion, you'll be given your digital fitness score and your personalised learning feed.

AVOID OVER-LOOKING THE SHORT-TERM

Although a job may appear to be short-term on the surface, do not say no straight away. Such roles can sometimes lead to long-term opportunities. I moved to my current position, for example, from assurance on secondment for one year. Four years later, I'm still here.

Even if a position remains short-term in nature, such opportunities give great depth to your CV as you learn about new industries, businesses, and systems while expanding your network and enhancing your relationships. Your network and connections are particularly important in these times.

BE CREATIVE WITH FRIENDS

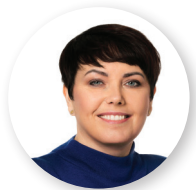
I would also encourage you to be creative with friends at this time, when some of you may have more time on your hands than usual. What could you do together that you would otherwise not get the opportunity to do normally? Be brave and go for it.

These are unusual times of momentous change, and with that comes new opportunities. If you get practical, focused, and seek out the opportunities, you will hopefully be able to begin a bright new chapter in your career. I wish you the best of luck.



While you may have more time on your hands, smart upskilling will help you bridge the gaps on your CV to what companies are looking for in their job descriptions.





Dr Annette Clancy is Assistant Professor of Management at UCD School of Art, History and Cultural Policy.

Coronavirus has changed how we work and how we live. The rapid change to online and remote working has challenged many of us as we juggle home, work, and caring responsibilities. This period has also helped to surface and refine new types of skills that will be essential in the 'new' world of work. Here, I reflect on just a few of them.

1 ADAPTABILITY

COVID-19 forced companies to adapt and change with unprecedented speed. Change is always on the agenda, but the pandemic accelerated it. To succeed in the future, workers will need to continually update their skills and be willing to adapt and be flexible. Job titles won't necessarily fully describe the breadth of roles. In job interviews, candidates will need to give clear examples of how they have put these skills to work because the traditional CV won't convey the nuance of someone's adaptability. The conventional cover letter will also need more thought and will need to be adapted to each employer's particular circumstance.

2 CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Businesses have always had to come up with new ways to deliver services, but COVID-19 highlighted just how important creativity and innovation are to survival. The Abbey Theatre, for example, unable to present work on stage, created 'Dear Ireland' and invited Irish writers to write a postcard to Ireland – it asked them to imagine what Ireland might need to talk about during this time. The Abbey Theatre commissioned 50 writers to write monologues for 50 actors, each of whom performed on camera in lockdown. These performances were then broadcast live on the Abbey's YouTube channel at the end of May ([they are still available to view on YouTube](#)).

The Abbey Theatre performs work on stage directly to an audience, so this type of pivot

was a gamble for the theatre. However, the quality of the idea, its passion for creating work for Irish artists, and the novelty of delivery carried this over the line. This type of creativity and innovation, commitment to care for employees, and desire to connect with customers will be a crucial skill in a post-coronavirus environment.



6 job skills to succeed in the new world OF WORK

SOFT SKILLS ARE ALREADY ESSENTIAL ASSETS, BUT EMPLOYERS WILL LOOK FOR PARTICULAR APTITUDES AS THE PANDEMIC SUBSIDES AND THE 'NEW NORMAL' TAKES HOLD.

BY DR ANNETTE CLANCY

3 MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS

Many of us have come to terms with Skype, Microsoft Teams and Zoom as part of our day-to-day routine during the pandemic. Some organisations such as Facebook and Twitter are now planning for permanent remote working. We are also likely to see remote working policies in many other non-technology firms in the future. The ability to manage remote teams effectively will be a critical skill in a post-coronavirus context, but this means more than managing a conversation with 12 people in a Zoom room! Research tells us, for example, that issues of trust are magnified when team members are remote (do you trust someone when you can't see them?) Research also tells us that the maximum number for a remote team is 100. Beyond this number, it is difficult for people to engage in a task. Managing relations with, and between, people who will never be in the same room is a sophisticated skill that will be much in demand as remote working increases.

6 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is that anxiety is very real and it has severe consequences. In the future, employers will look for people who can assess the circumstances around them while also paying close attention to the emotional



4 CRITICAL THINKING

COVID-19 spread rapidly throughout the world and due to the shortage of research and reliable information, fake news and unreliable data spread with comparable speed. Business leaders, politicians, and governments wanted to shift blame and avoid scrutiny. The capacity to parse information to determine what is accurate and reliable will be a valuable skill. Businesses need to know that objective and credible data inform their decisions. The capacity to critically analyse data to establish an informed opinion will, therefore, be valuable in the post-coronavirus world.

5 TRUST-BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP

There have been stark differences in the type of leadership exhibited by those charged with guiding us through the COVID-19 pandemic. The unsuccessful leaders are those who tried to offer certainty by making false claims and offering false hope. The most successful leaders have built trust, admitted what

they don't know, and managed anxiety. Leaders do not always know the answer, but they recognise that followers are afraid in times of uncertainty. They also know that part of their role is to hold and contain uncertainty. In the future, this type of trust-building and containing skill will be more important than the 'strong man' version of leadership we have seen fail during this pandemic.

impact of decisions. Skills such as reflection and, more importantly, reflexivity will be critical. How well do you know yourself emotionally? How well do you know your impact on other people? What changes can you make to your management style as a result of knowing the answers to these questions? These are

not intellectual questions that call for snappy answers at an interview; they are emotional questions that require an ongoing process, such as coaching, to answer.

These six skills are not a definitive list, but they offer a baseline from which others can develop.



In conversation with...

Jonathan Rockett

JONATHAN ROCKETT, CFO AT DING, LOOKS BACK ON HIS CAREER PROGRESSION FROM HIS EARLY DAYS AT PWC TO HIS CURRENT ROLE IN A FAST-GROWING COMPANY.

WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE AS CFO AT DING ENTAIL?

Finance is one area of the business that has full visibility from left to right across Ding's different business lines, and also top to bottom in terms of operational infrastructure to support those business lines.

In general, the CFO role can be quite broad and can look entirely different in different company contexts. My role is varied, but the core aspects involve reporting to the board on current and projected performance or KPIs; tax and treasury projects associated with geographic expansion; financial planning in terms of the short-term and long-term requirements of the company; and strategic decisions on the next phase of the company's growth, as we are at a pivotal stage in our scale-up.

Finance touches all teams and projects in Ding. We are embedded in the commercial and operational running of business lines, where the global pricing function manages the pricing negotiations for new deals and amends pricing based on FX trends associated with the various currencies we deal in.

TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR CAREER SUCCESS?

Attitude and a variety of experiences. I have always been driven and committed to succeeding in this industry, which has played a decisive role in getting me to where I am today.

In terms of experience, I had the privilege of working in a variety of roles in several companies. The different skills I gained along the way have been instrumental in laying the foundations for my current position.

At PwC Assurance, I refined my accuracy and attention to detail in working through technical accounting standards. In PwC Transaction Services, I gained exposure to project delivery under extremely tight deadlines and upskilled in the application of a commercial lens of analysis in the presentation of numbers. This ability to leverage data to deduce and communicate the real KPIs and value drivers across various industries has been invaluable, and I continue to build on this expertise to this day. At Paddy Power, I learned the importance of process and system automation to enhance team output in cross-functional departments.

These experiences shaped

the way I work and gave me the skills I needed to succeed in this industry. Ding went through an intense M&A period with three acquisitions, for instance, and my experience in transaction services was central to the successful completion of each deal from a finance perspective.

DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER PLANNING PROCESS.

People advise you to look at your career in stages of three to five years. Whether by design or accident, I followed that process relatively closely.

University was phase one, and my ambitions were to complete my bachelor's degree in business and economics at Trinity College Dublin, followed by a masters degree in accountancy from UCD Smurfit Business School. I then wanted to work in a Big Four accountancy firm and gain my ACA qualification. During my first year in PwC, I also decided to pursue my tax exams. That decision has been particularly beneficial in my current role in a global operation as it has allowed me to understand potential tax implications.

The second phase began after I completed my three-year training contract. I knew that assurance wasn't



my long-term target, so I applied for – and secured – a Transaction Services position in PwC. It was more commercial in nature, and built on the skills I developed during the previous four years.

After interacting with company leaders on due diligence projects and getting a grasp on the business drivers of their growth and success, it didn't take me long to realise that I wanted to work in industry long-term. The most important consideration for me was the company and the strategic direction it was moving in, and this marked the beginning of phase three. Paddy Power was in high-growth mode and offered me the perfect opportunity to deploy the competencies I had developed at PwC. It also exposed me to a more multifunctional team and operational environment. The

ability to work cross-functionally is a critical competency that becomes increasingly important as you progress through your career.

Most recently, phase four began when I was contacted about a role in Ding. I was immediately interested as the market opportunity was – and remains – huge. The role of Head of Finance, which I was first appointed to, was expansive, encompassing full profit and loss visibility as well as tax, treasury and financial operations teams. It allowed me to play a material role in the company story, and being a part of a fast-growing company in scale-up mode was very attractive to me.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN HIRING OR PROMOTING TALENT?

One of the key characteristics I look for when hiring is the

desire and drive to improve and make a change. At Ding, our evolution and growth means that there are plenty of opportunities to grow and expand within roles if you have the ambition to do so.

I always look to assess if new employees can evolve and take on new responsibilities as the company grows and expands. The phrase "surround yourself with good people" is underrated and is something that resonated with me in recent years. It underscores a team and a company's ability to be successful.

WHAT IS THE BEST CAREER ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED?

The best piece of advice I received is 'never take a job, or stay in a job, you no longer learn from'. This has led me to ensure that every new job, new year and new quarter presents a challenge that allows for my continual development and improvement.

IF YOU WERE TO CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOUR CAREER CHOICES, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

While I look back with fond memories of the different stages of my career, you only truly learn from the mistakes you make. So embrace the mistakes, learn from them, and continually aim to improve.

Overall, there is nothing I would change about the career path I chose. I feel incredibly lucky that, in every role and company I have worked in, I have continued to expand my skillset and learn from individuals operating at the top of their fields. All of these have brought me to Ding, which is an exciting place to be.





Áine Killilea
is Director of
**Áine Image &
Communications** and
Founding Director
of **Evolve PR**.



10 WAYS to elevate your personal brand

BRING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND TO LIFE
BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER AN INTERVIEW
WITH THESE TEN TIPS FROM **ÁINE KILLILEA**.

1 BE CLEAR WITH YOUR KEY MESSAGES

Your cover letter should state clearly the position you are applying for, and make a compelling case as to why you are the best candidate for the role. These are the most vital objectives of any cover letter and while they should take priority, you also want your potential employer to connect with you as a person. Refrain from using industry business jargon – you may end up diluting your value and confusing the reader, which would make any form of human connection virtually impossible.

2 SHOW UP AS YOUR BEST, AUTHENTIC SELF

We always want to put our best foot forward at an interview. "Be yourself" might be a cliché, but it's a cliché because it's excellent advice. If you shine a spotlight on your best attributes in an interview, in the knowledge that every word you're saying is valid, it makes it easier to get into a confident stride. If you're

trying to oversell yourself, there's a high chance you'll end up even more nervous and could contradict yourself during the interview.

3 REFINE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Your elevator pitch is a quick snapshot of your background and experience. It should be 30 seconds in length and inform your prospective interviewer who you are, what you do, and what you want to do. Communicate your elevator pitch by giving it a story structure; this makes it more interesting, both to tell and to listen to. And when you have finalised your elevator pitch, refine it to reflect the

requirements of the particular role for which you are applying.

To update and create consistent content across all of your communications, adapt and use your elevator pitch as the introduction on your CV, your cover letter, and your LinkedIn 'about' section. And include keywords from your elevator pitch in your LinkedIn headline to help prospective recruiters and employers find you among the masses.

If delivered compellingly, your elevator pitch will help you build business relationships throughout your career. It can also help you connect more meaningfully with colleagues on day one of your new role.

4 ALIGN YOUR VALUES

Research the values of the company you wish to join. Consider which of your own values truly align with the company's values, and include them in your CV, cover letter, elevator pitch, and in how you answer interview questions. This will help your prospective employer more easily envision you slotting in with the company's ethos and culture.

5 COMMUNICATE YOUR CORE MESSAGES

Identify the core messages of your professional personal brand and incorporate them in your communication with the interview panel. Doing so will reinforce critical messages and ensure that you won't have that rueful "I never told them I could..." feeling after the interview.

6 PREPARE STORIES

Stories connect us to people. The job description highlights the characteristics of the role you're applying for, so prepare a variety of stories which demonstrate each of these characteristics. Give each story a beginning, middle and end. And keep them brief – this will make the remembering and telling of each story much easier.

STYLE ADVICE

Considered style choices for your interview can amplify a professional approach. Reflect your personal brand through your outfit and accessories (if you wish to be seen as someone vibrant or innovative, for example, incorporate striking colour). Keep grooming simple – looking presentable and fresh will always go in your favour. While

7 LISTEN!

In the rush to communicate your suitability for the role, it can be easy to forget to listen or to mishear what is being asked of you. Listen to what is being said, and take a breath before answering the question. Doing so will reinforce your value as a measured and discerning candidate.

8 DRESS AS IF YOU ALREADY BELONG THERE

Leverage your personal style by indicating through the use of colour that you fit in with the company. If possible, incorporate a colour used in the organisation's branding in your interview clothing (if the organisation's branding features purple, for example, wear a purple tie or handbag). This gesture creates a visual cue that you already belong in the organisation.

9 MANAGE YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Social media is a fantastic way to showcase your skills, interests and network. A recent study by the Society For Human Resource Management found that 84% of employers recruit via social media, and 43% of employers screen job candidates through social

networks and search engines. The same study found that 36% of companies have disqualified job candidates after doing an online search or viewing an applicant's social media! With this in mind, Google yourself and ensure that prospective employers will find only favourable information when they do the same. Also, review your social media accounts – including those you don't currently use, but have in the past – to ensure nothing could go against you in the eyes of a prospective employer.

Use your elevator pitch as your starting point and when posting online, reflect your values and highlight clearly what you have to offer to the companies you wish to be employed by.

10 REFLECT YOUR PERSONAL BRAND IN VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Online interviews can also present you with opportunities to highlight your personal brand to companies before you even speak. Pay attention to your clothing, background and lighting as this will emphasise your attention to detail, which is a skill consistently sought by employers.



easy to overlook, it's essential to get the basics right. Ensure that your outfit fits you well, and all pieces are clean. Also, check that each item is in great condition in advance (that black and dark colours have not faded and fabrics are not bobbled, for example). Ultimately ensure you feel you are dressed appropriately for the occasion.





Julia Rowan is Founder of Performance Matters.

First of all, let's consider why you might network: it's because networks offer opportunities at every stage in your career. Early in your career, they help you stay abreast of professional developments, acquire clients, find help, and know what's current. Networks can also help you find a job or move to another employer. (As an aside, estimates about the number of jobs that are never publicly advertised differ – but they are all much, much higher than you might expect. At a very conservative estimate, at least 50% of jobs are filled without their availability being publicly advertised. And how are these unadvertised jobs filled? Through networks, of course!)

As your career develops, your network may be useful in helping you move to a new role, find clients (or, indeed, recruits for your team), and identify experts or consultants. Working as a coach, I constantly see the value that developing good relationships and networks can bring.



How to network in a virtual world

JULIA ROWAN SHARES HER SIX SIMPLE STEPS FOR A DIGITAL NETWORKING STRATEGY THAT WILL HELP YOU CONNECT WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE, BUILD YOUR NETWORK, AND RAISE YOUR PROFILE WITH MINIMUM FUSS.

SHATTER THE STEREOTYPE

What's your idea of a great networker? A shiny, smiley person working the room? A cheerful word for everyone and a handful of business cards – given and received? Finding precisely the right moment to land and engage – and then move on to the next group before they get stuck? Or is it a more thoughtful and generous person who sincerely engages with a small number of people; one who is interested in who they are, what they need, and how they can help?

Whatever the stereotype says, they are much more

likely to be in the second category because networking is a long-term, 'fees up-front' activity – credits first, then debits. And while the current pandemic prevents us from meeting in crowded rooms, social media is a great leveller. It favours younger people who tend to be more tech-savvy.

YOUR SIMPLE STRATEGY

Your online presence tells a story about you, and your story must be coherent (or, even better, compelling). Like anything worth doing, having a strategy is essential – but don't let the word put you off.

'Strategy' is just a fancy word for planning which, in turn, is a fancy word for thinking. Here are some pointers:

1 The starting point is to work out what you want.

It's back to the useful, if clichéd, question: where do you want to be in three years? But it's a cliché for a reason – because it's a great question. Do you want to work in practice? In industry? In financial services? In tax? In M&A? In Ireland? And if so, where? Or abroad? Talking about goals can seem scary, but working out what you want (which can sometimes be done by working out what you don't want) is a great way to focus your attention on what is important to you. You will probably be very clear about some of what you want, and there will also be little whispers that are worth listening to. Some people have been asked by their employer to build their network, so consider how to make that a win for all three sides – you, your employer, and your contacts.

2 Next, reflect on what you can offer. What knowledge, skills, interests, and experiences do

you bring to the table? It's unlikely to be a significant amount of accountancy experience and contacts if you are in the early stages of your career. You will nevertheless have up-to-date accountancy skills, not to mention other skills picked up in part-time jobs. Know your strengths: perhaps you are flexible, a problem-solver, good at defusing tension, or are comfortable with ambiguity. Early career professionals are often full of energy, enthusiasm, curiosity, and new ways of looking at things.

3 Be realistic and reasonable with yourself.

A small network of the right people is much more valuable than 2,000 followers or connections. There is little harm in playing the numbers game, but not much benefit either.

4 Get your head straight. Are you conscious of your internal story?

We all have internal stories and we are often not even aware of them, but they drive the permission we give ourselves – to be active on social media, to apply for a job or a promotion, to take a risk. "I don't have much to offer" and "I am the greatest" are not useful internal stories. A good internal story combines realism and optimism.

5 Get active on LinkedIn.

It's an essential digital networking platform and the first stop for recruiters. Create a compelling profile with a good photo. When you invite people to connect, always write a personalised message. Be honest and explain why you would like to connect. For example, "I am interested in moving into financial services and would find it helpful to see what senior people in that sector are posting about" or "I saw your post about IFRS 17, which is an area I'm really interested in". Update your profile regularly and post short, chunky takeaways from CPD events.

6 Follow company pages, relevant groups, and hashtags.

Consistency is critical; liking or commenting once or twice a day will give you far more reach than a weekly or monthly 'blast'. (Lots of specialists post excellent information on YouTube and other platforms about how to work the algorithms and make the best use of such sites).

After qualification, building your network is probably the most important thing you will do in developing your career. As your career evolves, so too should your network. Good networks take time and energy to create and sustain, but they repay the investment in spades.



Talking about goals can seem scary, but working out what you want (which can sometimes be done by working out what you don't want) is a great way to focus your attention on what is important to you.





In conversation with... Emma Noonan

EMMA NOONAN, CHAIR AT CASSI, SHARES
HER TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS AND THE KEY
TO HER EARLY CAREER SUCCESS.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR JOB?

There are many aspects of my job that I enjoy, particularly the learning opportunities, challenges, and variety in the tasks I am assigned. However, what I truly love about my job, and what I really value is the people. This is the real

differentiator between each firm, and I have been fortunate to work with strong and supportive teams during my time in KPMG. When you are faced with a problem at work, it's great to be able to turn to a colleague and reach a solution together rather than struggle

alone. The teams I have worked with have supported me, challenged me, and taught me everything I have learned so far in my career. So really, I have them to thank for the love I have for my job.

WHAT'S THE BEST CAREER DECISION YOU'VE EVER MADE?

Deciding to study with Chartered Accountants Ireland to become a qualified Chartered Accountant was the best career decision I have ever made. When I was in college, I was on the fence as to what I wanted to do and I found the idea of studying for another three and a half years very daunting. However, my decision was final when I did an internship with Risk Consulting at KPMG, where I saw the direct benefit becoming a Chartered Accountant had on working life in terms of both career development and career potential. I am now in the midst of my contract and I am delighted with the choice I made.

HOW DO YOU ORGANISE YOUR TIME?

That is a great question, and I welcome all suggestions! Scheduling everything I must do for the week ahead (both professionally and personally) in my diary works best for me. It has become a habit at this stage, and I always have my diary with me – it's a great way to get an overview of my weekly plans at a glance. Every week, I write down what I need to achieve so that by 5.30pm on Friday, I will feel as though I have had a productive week. This is something I learned from Pat Divilly and it is a really useful exercise when I feel

like I'm not getting enough done. Every day, I align my daily to-do list to my weekly objectives and prioritise each item. To achieve this, I write down realistic and specific to-dos. The more specific I am with my to-dos, the easier I find it to meet my weekly objectives and, as a result, feel more productive. For me, it's essential to distinguish between my short-term and long-term goals. I can't achieve everything I want in one day, so I try to bear this in mind as I set my daily tasks to meet my weekly objectives.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE KEY TO YOUR CAREER SUCCESS TO DATE?

I have had some small wins in my career so far including passing my CAP1 exams, being elected as CASSI Education Officer, and being elected as the Chair of CASSI this year. My goal at the moment is to build a varied skillset, which will benefit my career in the future. To me, this means taking every learning opportunity I can get my hands on and pushing myself out of my comfort zone.

WHAT IS THE BEST CAREER ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED?

That's a tough one! I've received advice from several mentors and my team in KPMG. However, the one that stands out is: seek to learn. Throughout my career, and with thanks to my firm, I have been exposed to a number of learning opportunities. These range from working with high-profile clients to learning key technical skills such as SQL, POWERBI and Excel. Educational opportunities are extremely important to me and in terms of my career, I



It was interesting to see how smoothly we shifted to online platforms and this has been key to increasing the frequency of communication in recent weeks. That said, I look forward to getting back to the office to see my colleagues, as it's hard to beat a face-to-face interaction.

endeavour to continuously upskill – sure, that's exactly what the training contract is for!

IF YOU WERE TO CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Ironically, it would be to have more time. As I settle into my new role as CASSI Chair while working and studying full-time, I find myself struggling to have some downtime. This boils down to time management and what I am currently prioritising. So for now, I'd change how long it takes me to re-order my priorities!

WHAT LESSONS DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF, AND YOUR WORK, DURING THE PANDEMIC?

I have learned several lessons from both a personal and professional standpoint during COVID-19. However, my two key learning points are: communication and work-life balance.

The fundamental role of face-to-face interaction in my daily job became very clear to me as we shifted to working from home, full-time. I learned the importance of open and continued communications,

be it client-related or simply a discussion with a team member. In such uncertain times, an email or weekly catch-up really makes a difference when it comes to clarifying the company's direction of travel for the months ahead.

It was interesting to see how smoothly we shifted to online platforms and this has been key to increasing the frequency of communication in recent weeks. That said, I look forward to getting back to the office to see my colleagues, as it's hard to beat a face-to-face interaction. But for the time being, the likes of Microsoft Teams is an excellent substitute.

As a result of COVID-19, I also found myself out of the routine to which I was very much accustomed. It came as a bit of a shock when I realised that working from home wasn't going to be a short-term thing and I struggled with the uncertainty I was facing. From this, I learned the importance of building and maintaining a work routine as well as factoring in down-time to catch-up virtually with friends and family. It took some time to get used to my kitchen/office hybrid, but I've settled in nicely to my new routine.





Teresa Stapleton
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Coach at Stapleton
Coaching.

5 steps to remote working success

AS OFFICES BEGIN TO RE-OPEN, SOME PROFESSIONALS ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO RETAIN AN ELEMENT OF REMOTE WORKING. IN THIS ARTICLE, **TERESA STAPLETON** SHARES HER TOP TIPS TO PERSUADE YOUR EMPLOYER AND MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR NEW ARRANGEMENT.

The COVID-19 lockdown has allowed many people to work remotely for the first time, and explore if they want to do this long-term. While remote working doesn't suit every business or every role, the lockdown has forced many companies to radically change working practices, opening up the possibility of working remotely for more people in the future.

Having worked from home part-time for many years and managed teams in different countries, my experience has been overwhelmingly positive. The time and money saved by not commuting and the flexibility to adjust working hours around other life commitments are significant benefits. Offering flexible working arrangements is also a great way to attract, retain and motivate employees.

One of the fundamental principles of flexible working arrangements is that they will only be successful if it is mutually beneficial for the business and the employee. If you think remote working is the right solution for you, here are some tips to set you up for success.

1 KNOW THE TERMS

Companies offering remote working should have a policy document outlining the terms and conditions to ensure consistency and avoid disputes. This typically describes the aims of the policy, eligibility criteria, the application process, how decisions are made, the appeals process, trial periods, and notice timelines for altering working arrangements to support changing business needs.

Remote working applications typically involve the completion of a thorough risk assessment to review potential health and safety issues. The remote working policy should describe how the risk assessment will be completed, who is responsible for providing and maintaining furniture and equipment, and outline any other relevant factors (such as core working hours, insurance, expenses, confidentiality, security, and data privacy).



2 STRUCTURE YOUR DAY

It takes time to get used to working remotely and find ways to stay productive. It's essential to have a schedule and to stick to it. Having a designated quiet space where you can concentrate is also critical, as is good online connectivity with high-speed broadband, video conferencing, and access to company apps and data. Anticipate technology issues and have a back-up plan. For example, have mobile numbers ready so you can stay connected and keep working while offline.

Discuss your remote working plans with family or housemates to minimise disruption and get their buy-in. Avoid getting into the habit of constantly checking emails or taking calls outside designated working hours, so you don't get sucked into long workdays with no time for family, friends or anything else. To avoid cabin fever, take breaks regularly and go outside for walks or exercise to clear your mind, relax and recharge.

3 SET BOUNDARIES

Many people say they work harder and get more done when working at home. This is sometimes a result of extending the working day, by using the time saved not commuting to get more done. Some find it easier to concentrate at home, with fewer interruptions than the office. Others work through lunch and don't take many breaks by choice to finish early and free-up time for childcare or other activities. It's common for remote workers to say that they feel a need to work longer and respond immediately to calls and emails over extended hours to demonstrate their commitment to doing a good job. This 'always on' mentality can be draining and may lead to anxiety, stress and even burn-out in extreme cases. It's a good idea to set boundaries in terms of your availability and share the details with colleagues to manage expectations around reasonable response times.

4 DEMONSTRATE RESULTS

Managers will only support remote working if they believe employee performance will be as good, or better, than if the employee was office-based. Having clear objectives and targets is key to any performance management process, but it is even more important for people working remotely when their contribution is less visible. Agreeing up-front the results that are expected and understanding how performance will be assessed are essential for remote workers to ensure that they are fairly treated in performance appraisals and rewards decisions.

The most common concerns raised by remote workers during coaching discussions are losing out when it comes to rewards and career progression. Office-based colleagues have a natural advantage as they can interact face-to-face with management, enabling them to build stronger working relationships and raise awareness of their impact, aspirations, and potential. To avoid being left behind, make your impact visible to your manager and others involved in assessing your performance. This typically involves more structured reporting, regular update calls with your direct manager, frequently connecting with stakeholders, and looking for other creative ways to raise your profile.



5 ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK

The main concerns raised by managers of remote teams are that teamwork will decline and employee engagement will drop, ultimately reducing performance levels and business results. It takes sustained, conscious effort by everyone to prevent this from happening. Implementing a communications programme at the individual, team, and organisational level is essential to keep people connected, collaborating and engaged. There is, of course, a risk that some employees will become disengaged, and some may miss social interaction with colleagues. Companies new to remote working should raise awareness of the benefits and pitfalls of remote working and explore ideas to make it successful for all concerned.



Become unstuck with the ten-yard trick

IN TIMES OF CRISIS, IT IS COMMON TO FEEL STUCK – EVEN DEFEATED. BUT ONE SIMPLE TRICK CAN HELP YOU MOVE FORWARD AND, IF EMBRACED FULLY, REACH NEW HEIGHTS **WRITES NEIL O'BRIEN.**



Neil O'Brien is
Founder of Time2Fly.

Resilience is described as the ability to recover quickly from setbacks or disappointments, or the ability of a substance to spring back into shape. While this is true, it can be a little misleading and doesn't communicate the full range of resilience.

I have coached individuals and teams in business and sport for almost 30 years. At some point in our work together, I ask each client about previous setbacks and disappointments, and what they did to recover. On the face of it,

they all did the same thing – but some went further and used their setback to reach greater heights. This article is about them: what they did, and what we can learn from them. But first, some background...

SURVIVAL RESILIENCE

It is human nature to get your act together in response to a crisis. It is part of the human condition, pre-programmed from prehistoric times.

Setbacks effectively trigger a survival instinct, and we have come to describe this response

as 'coping'. So, in response to the current global pandemic, we all initially went straight into coping mode, which is precisely the right thing to do.

In response to our sense of loss of how things should be, we set up new daily routines and new habits that require constant tweaking and adjusting. We are also hyper-vigilant because we feel like we are in continual danger. Because of this siege mentality, it is possible to be exhausted each day without actually having achieved anything. Welcome to the coping zone and survival resilience. This is the first level of resilience, but it is important not to get stuck here.

How do you move on? The answer comes from my coaching clients, mentioned above.

STRATEGIC RESILIENCE

I have asked people who suffered health setbacks, business setbacks, and career disappointments what they did to recover. They all said the same thing – they went back to basics. They acknowledged that their confidence was gone, and their self-belief had evaporated, but they also wanted to move on (from coping) so they knew they had to do something.

The best investment, then, is brilliant basics – they did the basics of good health,

good business, and career development so well and so consistently that they started to feel better. Then, when their mood changed, they began to think better. They then got their shape and discipline back, and their confidence and self-belief flooded back too. Neglect the basics and you will have a setback to deal with; they admitted this also.

Strategic resilience is a daily commitment to brilliant basics – basics that are important to you. However, there is one other form of resilience that most people underestimate.

SUCCESS RESILIENCE

Having established that resilience is about never neglecting the basics, there is another chapter in the story. If we leave setback and disappointment for the moment and go to the opposite end of the spectrum, to effortless success and achievement, it turns out that brilliant basics are what separate the world's best from everyone else. The most outstanding performers in any field are the best because they have achieved mastery through a daily commitment to brilliant basics. They make it look easy. They don't have some magic ingredient that no one else has; they just never neglect the basics. As a result, they get better and better at

them, and they don't stop at strategic resilience – they keep pushing on.

A professional marathon runner told me that in almost every race, he 'hits the wall' at around the 16-mile mark. He has a mental and physical crisis. Part of him says: "I can't go on, I'm gonna quit". He has learned to pick something 10 yards ahead, and the deal is that he will run to that point and then quit. And then he does it again, and again, and again until he starts to feel better. Amid a full body and brain crisis, the ability to do that is advanced sports psychology. This is an example of something really basic, a ten-yard race, that becomes genius. The crisis eventually passes and he gets his shape back in the form of great posture, breathing, and stride length. And sometimes, he even wins the race.

YOUR TEN YARDS

I believe that the core basics of good accounting, of great sales, of top customer service, of excellent health, of top-class golf haven't changed much. The question is: who is doing them better than everyone else? People will want to know their secret but when they find out what it is, they might even be disappointed because it's so simple.

There may be times in life or in work when you don't feel like you can go on. If, in that moment, you can just cover your equivalent of ten yards, you will be doing genius work and effort. There will be days when we will champion gold medals, awards, and stretch targets. There will also be times when we should champion someone who has enough grit and toughness to keep covering ten yards, even when they feel like they can't go any further.



There may be times in life or in work where you don't feel like you can go on. If, in that moment, you can just cover your equivalent of ten yards, you will be doing genius work and effort.



Five platforms to help you upskill

FOR SOME, STAYING ON TOP OF THE DAY-TO-DAY WORKLOAD IS ACHIEVEMENT ENOUGH AS WE CONTINUE TO WORK REMOTELY. BUT IF YOU HAVE THE TIME, ENERGY AND INKLING, THERE'S PLENTY OF RESOURCES – FREE AND PAID – TO HELP YOU DEVELOP YOUR SKILLSET IN YOUR OWN TIME.



MASTERCLASS

MasterClass has caught people's imagination in recent years with its stellar line-up of lecturers. You can learn about self-expression and authenticity with Ru Paul, for example, or the art of negotiation with Chris Voss. Courses are presented in video lecture format and while the cost is significant (€199 for an annual membership), there's plenty in there to help you build your soft skills and perhaps get to grips with a new hobby (skateboarding with Tony Hawk, anyone?). [CLICK HERE](#)



THE GREAT COURSES PLUS

The Great Courses Plus is another on-demand video service focused on lifelong learning. The site uses award-winning lecturers to present lecture series on everything from economics and finance to professional and personal growth. However, it is a subscription service – €17.99 monthly or €159.99 annually. [CLICK HERE](#)



FUTURELEARN

FutureLearn offers a diverse selection of courses from leading universities and cultural institutions. Part-owned by The Open University, the platform offers everything from short courses to online degrees. Learners can also upgrade from their basic (free) subscription to receive a printed and digital Certificate of Achievement or Statement of Participation where eligible. [CLICK HERE](#)



COURSERA

Coursera offers a 3,900 courses up to masters degree level in partnership with leading universities and companies such as Stanford and Google. According to the website, 87% of people learning for professional development reported career benefits such as a promotion, raise or starting a new career. That may not be at the forefront of your mind just now, but it's another reminder that upskilling often has tangible results. [CLICK HERE](#)



INSTITUTE WEBINARS

When the lockdown began in March 2020, Chartered Accountants Ireland moved quickly to support its students and members. Its new webinar series has proved particularly popular, with members signing up for a range of expert-led sessions on everything from authentic leadership to voluntary liquidation procedures. Past webinars can also be streamed on demand. [CLICK HERE](#)



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Glass ceilings
Are there to be broken.

