

ICSA Member case studies



Charles Brown

Company Secretary, Experian plc

What are the main responsibilities of your job?

- Chairman/CEO support
- Board/committee support
- Statutory compliance and transaction work
- FSA compliance
- Corporate governance
- Shareholder meetings
- Shareholder services
- Experian plc Annual Report and Accounts
- Insurance
- Corporate Responsibility (CR).

What is a typical working day for you?

There is no such thing as a typical working day – that's what I love about the job! At the pinnacle of your career, you need to be available 24/7 if required...

What skills and qualities are required for your role?

Integrity, flexibility, pragmatism, practicality, communication skills and robustness.

Which elements of your role do you most enjoy?

The variety, the level of interaction and exposure at the most senior levels of the company and the unique role and insights you receive as company secretary and trusted adviser to the chairman, CEO and board.

Which elements of your role do you least enjoy?

Writing minutes!

How do you see your career developing?

My career ambition was to be the company secretary of a FTSE 100 company and I achieved this in both my current and previous roles. I see my career developing in terms of continuing to build on my experience and expertise in my current role and expanding on my responsibilities as company secretary, preferably with Experian (which I enjoy very much) or alternatively with another FTSE 100 company.

What is your educational/training background?

'A' levels – Law, Accounting and Economics – then the ICSA qualification via distance learning while working.

What other roles have you held prior to your current one?

Standard Chartered PLC – group company secretary
Allied Domecq plc – director, corporate secretariat/deputy company secretary
RMC Group p.l.c. – head of secretariat
English China Clays plc – various:
Special projects director, ECC International Inc. (2 yr US secondment to largest business unit)
Assistant company secretary
Company secretarial manager
Company secretarial assistant
Trainee chartered secretary



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How has your training helped you carry out your role?

I was lucky enough to receive a formal traineeship within a FTSE 100 Secretariat. This covered every possible aspect of the role of a company secretary and gave me a fantastic foundation on which to build.

What made you decide to become a Chartered Secretary?

To be honest, I saw an advertisement in my local paper for a trainee chartered secretary. Before that I did not know what a Chartered Secretary was and was all set to go to Birmingham University to study accounting. I am very glad I answered that advert and became a Chartered Secretary and not a Chartered Accountant!

What do you think are the particular benefits of becoming a Chartered Secretary?

Being a Chartered Secretary equipped me with a qualification that is specific to the role of company secretary. Clearly, it is possible to become a company secretary if you are a qualified lawyer or accountant, but in my opinion this qualification is the best one for the role because it was specifically designed with the role of company secretary in mind. In particular, it is a very practical, rather than theoretical, qualification, which matches the requirements of the job.

Would you recommend the ICSA qualification to others?

Yes.

What advice would you offer to a graduate?

Being a company secretary is a very unique role that can offer you significant exposure and reward (equivalent to senior lawyers and accountants) at the pinnacle of your career. Even as a trainee, I was regularly interacting with main board directors, an opportunity which was not available to any other trainees from other professions within the organisation. The best advice I would give would be to get a thorough grounding in your subject expertise at the early stages of your career and, if possible, be selective in your choice of employing companies – I have been fortunate enough to always work for global FTSE 100 companies and the experience I have received at those companies has always stood me in good stead for my next career move.

Is there any other information you consider relevant?

This is a profession that has offered me the opportunity of significant career progression at a relatively young age – even without a university degree (which in my case has never been a bar to success). ■