

ICSA Member case studies



Eamon Roche

Company Secretary, UniPhar Retail Services Limited

What is your current role?

I currently work as Company Secretary for UniPhar Retail Services Limited, a newly incorporated subsidiary of UniPhar Public Limited Company. It is a retail service provider which provides retail and shared services including finance, HR and corporate compliance to the IPOS network of pharmacies.

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

I was employed by William Fry Solicitors as a Legal Executive – Assistant Company Secretary from August 2008 to August 2010 at which time I left to begin my current role.

What are the main responsibilities of your job?

My main responsibilities as Company Secretary include:

- named Company Secretary for a portfolio of circa 350 companies and the provision of company secretarial services to each company;
- providing advice on annual statutory compliance obligations and subsequent preparation and the filing of all post-incorporation documentation and financial statements in the Companies Registration Office accurately and in a timely fashion;
- preparing a variety of minutes and resolutions;
- attending and minute taking board meetings, AGMs and EGMs;
- maintaining statutory registers and minute books.

The varied responsibilities mentioned above are a far cry from a quote from Lord Esher MR, in *Barnett, Hoares & Co. v South London Tramways Co.* (1887) in which he said: 'A secretary is a mere servant.'

What is a typical working day for you?

Every day varies in my job but usually begins at 8.15am and ends round 5.15 pm (which is open to flexibility). It consists of liaising with auditors regarding the status of outstanding financial statements, advising on their queries regarding the preparation of same, conducting AGMs and EGMs, monitoring filing deadlines and enforcement measures, making the relevant filings in the CRO, attending board meetings and dealing with the day-to-day issues raised by the boards.

What is your educational/training background?

I am currently enrolled on the part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Management and Corporate Governance course, a collaborative Masters programme between the University of Ulster and ICSA, in order to achieve Chartered status. I have also successfully completed BA (Hons) in Business Management with Law at Waterford Institute of Technology. This course specialises in the fields of business management, finance and law and served as a good grounding into the role and requirements of a company and its officers whilst offering a holistic view of a company.

What skills and qualities are required for your role?

The necessary skills/qualities required must consist of the following:

- ability to organise and prioritise work with a minimum of supervision;
- scrupulous time management skills and ability to meet deadlines;
- a high level of accuracy and attention to detail;
- ability to understand and explain complex legal and financial matters;
- ability to work on multiple tasks at one time and manage unforeseen urgencies as and when they arise;
- good communication skills; and
- influence skills.



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Which elements of your role do you most enjoy?

Result-focused: achieving deadlines thus minimising the exposure of late filing penalties and enforcement action on the company and its officers. Problem solving: solving issues of the company in an accurate and timely fashion for the benefit of the company as a whole. As Secretary to a large number of companies, I also enjoy liaising with the directors, NEDs and shareholders of varied backgrounds and dispositions. I am currently involved in a significant innovative restructuring project of the entire network of pharmacies which will subsequently create a new corporate structure. Furthermore, I like the fact that every day is varied and diverse.

Which elements of your role do you least enjoy?

Dealing with unknown issues (for example when they relate to years past) that land on my desk. Also, people's perception of the role and their lack of understanding of the importance of the company secretary.

How do you see your career developing?

Within a short period of time (just shy of three years), I have gained wide-ranging experiences having worked in both practice and industry. In my current role, I have created an in-house company secretarial department which involved merging the secretarial work previously performed by two firms and have been appointed to over 350 boards as named Company Secretary. On successful completion of the Masters course and with my past work experience, I will be eligible to apply for ACIS status which has been a personal goal of mine. I hope to expand and develop on my company secretarial experiences in the years ahead.

What advice would you offer to a graduate or a current student studying the scheme?

The main piece of advice I would give to graduates or a current student studying the scheme would be to get relevant work experience as soon as possible. Don't be afraid to apply for jobs seeking more experience than you may have, as they may consider you for the role bearing in mind that the salary will drop to reflect your experience and, to repeat myself again, it is crucial that you can multitask and work to very strict deadlines.

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

The main benefit of becoming a Chartered Secretary is that the professional qualification is internationally recognised and it enables you to work in both public and private companies worldwide. In addition, a Chartered Secretary works parallel with the CEO, chairman and board of directors which exposes you to senior executives and their in-depth knowledge. Furthermore, the importance of the Chartered Secretary qualification is further evident through the mandatory CPD.

What made you decide to become a Chartered Secretary?

The main factors which made me consider and finally decide to become a Chartered Secretary include the following:

- It is a professional qualification recognised world-wide.
- The role of a Chartered Secretary is a dynamic one and is evident in the following sectors:
 - risk management;
 - insurance/reinsurance;
 - investment/funding; and
 - compliance,

thus, offering a broad range of areas of employment to choose from.

Would you recommend the ICSA qualification to others?

I would recommend the ICSA qualification to anyone with an interest in compliance, administration and corporate governance which has become the 'buzz word' over the last few years as a result of the collapse of our banking system and will remain topical in the years ahead.