

ICSA Member case studies



Francois Greeff

Managing Director of a small registered charity

What are the main responsibilities of your job?

Overload is built into the job because we have no paid staff, just volunteers. My responsibilities are compliance, accounting, to motivate people who get no salary, to recruit, train and supervise volunteers, to do fundraising (sales, I suppose), keep the website up-to-date, to do research, and to get our services delivered – in other words to remove barriers to entry that cause disabled people to be socially excluded. Being a Chartered Secretary helps with removing barriers to entry, because my training keeps me focused on systems rather than isolated examples.

What is a typical working day for you?

Good4you promotes the idea of work from home with flexitime for disabled people. I am a disabled person, and we practice what we preach. I am usually at my desk before five, and I work through until about 8pm. Most of my day is spent writing letters or communicating by phone, to organise events and to co-ordinate teams of isolated people to add a shoulder to the wheel in a team whose other members they seldom see.

What skills and qualities are required for your role?

Compliance. Knowledge about disability – law, ethics, practice and prejudice. Communication. The national lottery gave Good4you a grant to present free workshops to decision makers and their staff, so that they can learn how everyone can benefit from government initiatives to help businesses that help disabled people. An example is 'buy one get one free' – if you employ a suitable disabled person the government will give you another employee, as assistant to the disabled person, free.

Which elements of your role do you most enjoy?

Achievement! I love changing beliefs, perceptions and systems. Most people think that I spend my life trying to achieve the impossible, and that is why succeeding gives me a really big thrill.

Which elements of your role do you least enjoy?

Changing beliefs is very difficult, because people are often too lazy to learn the true facts about disability.

How do you see your career developing?

Mergers and acquisitions. When our charity joins with others, everybody will win. I am about to embark on a research degree, a doctorate about performance measurement in non-profit organisations.

What is your educational/training background?

ACIS, with a masters degree in corporate governance. My special interest lies in the non-financial aspects of (charity) governance.

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

My first job, three decades ago, was the post of assistant company secretary, a job that included a great deal of cost accounting, which was done to three decimal places of a cent. I loved it! Later I moved into entrepreneurship and ran my own business for most of my adult life. I suppose I enjoy having responsibility and reaping the rewards of hard work.

How has your training helped you carry out your role?

Being a Chartered Secretary helps me to recognise and focus on systems and how they work toward the social exclusion of disabled people. Consequently, I am better equipped to effect changes to systems, rather than trying to help disabled individuals to slip through the cracks in a system that prejudices them. →

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What made you decide to become a Chartered Secretary?

I walked into college and asked what courses they had. They handed me a booklet that fell open in the middle, where the staples come through. I saw ICSA, a globally recognised qualification with accounting, law and business administration, so I signed up without looking further. I've never regretted it.

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

Versatility. Becoming a Chartered Secretary requires one to master several interdisciplinary skills. Chartered Secretaries are flexible and skilled problem solvers, with special skills in avoiding problems.

Would you recommend the ICSA qualification to others?

Wholeheartedly and avidly.

What advice would you offer to a graduate?

An ICSA graduate? Do a masters degree in disability studies. One in six people is a disabled person. There are 11 million disabled people in Britain, with a total spending power of 80 billion pounds. Only 8 per cent of disabled people are in a wheelchair. ■