

ICSA Member case studies



Nigaar Abubaker-Esmael is the Company Secretary and Consultant for Axis Fiduciary Ltd (Axis) in Mauritius.

What is your current role?

I am the Company Secretary and Consultant for Axis Fiduciary Ltd (Axis), an offshore management company based in Mauritius. Axis is a specialist service provider with expertise in offshore companies, trusts and fund administration. I fulfil the role of Company Secretary for Axis, its sister companies and for companies under its administration. I also have a functional responsibility for company secretarial matters across the group.

As consultant, I am in charge of implementing systems, procedures and controls at Axis to ensure an efficient and controlled service delivery. I am also in charge of special/specific projects, such as managing the online presence of Axis on the web, implementation of the new workflow and management system at Axis.

Last but not least, I am in charge of all training and development of personnel within Axis whereby, along with other senior colleagues, we conduct training sessions for all staff on various issues, such as AML and company secretarial matters amongst others, on a weekly basis.

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

Prior to joining Axis, I was Head of Compliance and Company Secretary at Copex Management Services Ltd, an offshore management company with headquarters in Germany. I had the responsibility of acting as Secretary for the Company, as well as for the companies under its administration, and I was also in charge of the compliance function within the company.

Before that, I worked for Kross Border Trust Services Limited (KBTS), an offshoot of KPMG Mauritius, for 12 years. I started my career here as an Assistant in Company Administration and progressed to Assistant Manager and then to Company Secretary.

In addition to being the Company Secretary of KBTS, its sister companies and all the companies under its administration, I was also in charge of all special/specific projects for the company and was assisting the Manager and Managing Director on all issues relating to the company including but not limited to HR and staffing issues (appraisals, recruitment and selection), operational issues, training and to some extent marketing.

What is a typical working day for you?

My typical day is rarely the same from one day to the next. It can encompass anything from attending board meetings, responding to technical queries from staff on compliance/regulatory matters, working with the Head of Operations/ Compliance on systems and procedures, meetings with the Managing Director, conducting training sessions and working on various assignments.

The job also entails meeting with clients and organising board meetings as well as overseeing the preparation of board packs and advising client shareholders and directors on compliance and regulatory matters.

What is your educational/training background?

I have been a qualified Chartered Secretary since 2002 and am now an Associate Member of ICSA (ACIS). I immediately embarked on the Chartered Secretary career path after I completed secondary schooling.

What skills and qualities are required for your role?

To be a proficient Chartered Secretary, I believe the following aptitudes are required:

- You need to have sound technical skills and expertise in the subject matter and be familiar with all relevant legislation and regulations, all aspects of corporate governance and current best practice.
- A good understanding of the business and sector in which you are working, to enable the development and implementation of relevant procedures and systems.



ICSA Member case studies



Nigaar Abubaker-Esmael is the Company Secretary and Consultant for Axis Fiduciary Ltd (Axis) in Mauritius.

- Being diligent, meticulous and having an eye for detail.
- Being able to communicate precisely and with persuasion and be able to impart knowledge to others.
- Good time management – very helpful for the implementation of special projects and organisation of day-to-day work including delegation and follow-ups.
- Ability to communicate both at a technical level with subject matter experts and at an executive/board level to guide senior and experienced directors on matters of a regulatory nature.

Which elements of your role do you most enjoy?

- Satisfaction from imparting knowledge to the personnel of the company through various methods and seeing the results through enhancement in the quality of administration across the company.
- Satisfaction and a sense of achievement through seeing the systems I have implemented running well.
- Being involved directly in the business at senior level.

Which elements of your role do you least enjoy?

None so far!

How do you see your career developing?

At the moment, due to family reasons, I am working on a part-time basis but I do miss working on a full-time basis where I can do much more so I wouldn't rule out becoming much more involved in the business in a few years' time.

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

No need to have second thoughts in regards to choosing to study for ICSA's qualifying scheme as this decision changed my life completely. It offers so much scope in comparison to other career streams. At the beginning, it may appear to focus on routine and administration, but as you progress in your career, you will realise that it's much more than that and, as a company secretary, you can be involved in almost, if not all aspects of the business! So go for it!

How has your training helped you carry out your role?

As I joined the offshore sector when I left college, it definitely was the right training for my career as it could not have been more relevant. The exposure I received as a company secretary helped me understand the business and learn more about other specialist areas through interaction with other departments and divisions and my Associate status has enabled me to progress further in my career.

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

A professional qualification which also enables you to work with specialist areas in your sector enables you to have a holistic view of the business with significant scope for boardroom level involvement.

What made you decide to become a Chartered Secretary?

Advice from someone called Mr Ashraf Ramtoola, a specialist in the Global Business Sector, whom I was working with prior to joining KBTS. He informed me about ICSA and the career paths you can pursue as a Chartered Secretary and I am very thankful to him for having helped to carve my career.

Would you recommend the ICSA qualification to others?

Definitely. ■