

# ICSA Member case studies

## Robert Ramsdale

Consultant, Shipleys LLP

### What is your current role?

Advising and assisting a wide and diverse range of clients on corporate compliance issues.

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

Most of my career has been spent offering technical services in a client environment, and managing those services, working primarily in financial services and accounting. Nevertheless, I did spend six years working in the HR department of a large organisation managing their occupational safety and health function.

### What are the main responsibilities of your job?

My primary role has always centred on client advice. Consequently, the responsibility is very much aligned to ensuring the advice and assistance is appropriate for the client's situation.

### What is a typical working day for you?

It is probably fair to say that I am still waiting for a 'typical' working day! Much of my work revolves around resolving client problems – so a fair proportion of the day is taken up with e-mail correspondence, discussions and research.

### What skills and qualities are required for your role?

Patience and resourcefulness come top of the list. As with all jobs, there are some very frustrating aspects to the work, but being able to rationalise the issues at hand and come up with a workable solution, turn a difficult day into a rewarding day.

### Which elements of your role do you most enjoy?

The variety of people encountered from all walks of life brings a considerable amount of interest to the job. There is also a substantial amount of job satisfaction to be gained from the completion of complex tasks, particularly in relation to corporate restructuring, mergers and acquisition.

### Which elements of your role do you least enjoy?

Meetings are pretty much part and parcel of the job and, fortunately, the role of secretary allows a considerable amount of control on how the meetings are run. There are, however, times when a meeting becomes interminable. This is when patience becomes a paramount!

### How do you see your career developing?

Undertaking more training and development assignments. Corporate compliance and governance are constantly evolving and the last few years have proved particularly interesting with the substantial changes in legislation. Participating in the delivery of training on these changes, and what they mean from a practical viewpoint, is particularly appealing.

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

It is extremely important to develop a range of skills which will give you confidence to deal with whatever is thrown at you in your career. Being wholly committed to the organisation that you are working for and developing a 'can do' attitude to your work will enable you to generate the trust and respect of others. It will also help you acquire the skills you need in later life.

### Is there any other information you consider relevant?

The ICSA qualification is one of the few qualifications that allow you to expand your career, in virtually any direction you wish. This leaves plenty of opportunity to develop additional interests and credentials as your career progresses. In my case, I developed a particular interest in the management of health and productivity of large private sector employers. This led to the study of occupational health in some considerable depth and eventually, an MSc in Occupational Safety and Health. Unlike some other qualifications, ICSA does not prescribe a particular career path which is difficult to change with one's own interests and circumstances. →

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### How has your training helped you carry out your role?

The broad knowledge gained during studying for the examinations provides a resource that you can draw on throughout your career. It is rather like loading powerful software on to your PC. You end up using it pretty much every day without even thinking about it.

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

It provides the knowledge to take on the role of company secretary in virtually any walk of life. All organisations large and small need some form of corporate governance and administration. Obtaining the qualification indicates that you have obtained a level of competence in this field and sets you apart from those who don't.

### What made you decide to become a Chartered Secretary?

Two things: First, I didn't want to become typecast in any specific role such as an accountant, lawyer, engineer, etc. The variety of the work attracted me to the role. Second, the prospect of dealing with the 'top end' of an organisation of any description also appealed to me.

### Would you recommend the ICSA qualification to others?

Yes, of course. I think if you are focused on undertaking one specific role, in the back office of an organisation, then ICSA is not what you should be looking for. But if you are looking for a job that entails a wide variety of skills and disciplines, then ICSA is definitely going to rank highly as a career option. ■