

Wood Group tax chief would scrap business tax

Chris Chatfield of Wood Group tells Georgiana Head of his radical plans for the UK tax system if he was chancellor of the exchequer

Georgiana Head interviews the great and good of the tax world and asks all those things you have ever wanted to know.

Carl Chatfield is group head of treasury and taxation at Wood Group an international energy services group and is based in Aberdeen in Scotland. He previously worked in-house for Exel. He is an associate of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales and a chartered tax adviser. He qualified and trained with Andersen after earning a natural sciences degree from Cambridge University.

What was your first job?

My very first job was washing cars on Saturday mornings for a Lada garage in St Helens in Lancashire in north-west England. It was a pretty strenuous five hours in the morning but it paid very well, £10, which at the time was a lot for five hours. When I was a student I also had a summer job doing research for Pilkington. As I remember, it was on the rate of flow of bubbles through molten glass.

If you weren't in your current job what would you like to be?

I'm probably not qualified to do anything other than what I currently do! However, if I had the natural ability it would have been a toss-up between a professional footballer and a successful restaurateur.

What achievement are you most proud of?

I'm very proud of my staff retention record. Over eight years I built the tax team at Exel/Ocean to 13 people and never lost anyone out of my team.

What's the best advice that anyone has ever given you?

When I graduated I spent a couple of years on a management training programme with BOC, but unsure of where this was leading I went to a university careers service for some advice. The adviser was excellent and she suggested that I apply to the then big-eight. I applied to five of them and got offers from all and haven't looked back since. In my early days in industry someone advised me to not get too bogged down in detail and look at the whole commercial picture and this has always stayed with me.

What's the best thing about your job?

It has got a good mix of responsibility and autonomy and I enjoy the challenges and variety on both a geographical and technical level. Location is pretty key too; Aberdeen is a really lovely place to raise a family.

What is your favourite place in the world?

Probably Saundersfoot in Pembrokeshire which is where my wife and I first went on holiday or St Lucia where we got married.

If you had the opportunity to meet someone from any era, who would it be?

Bill Shankly; he was the one of the most enigmatic football managers of all time and as I am Liverpool born and a big Reds fan he is a hero of mine. My favourite quote of his is when he finally admitted 'This city has two great teams - Liverpool and Liverpool reserves' (apologies to any Everton fans).

And what question would you ask them?

I would ask why during the Newcastle/ Liverpool cup final at Wembley in 1974, he sat on the bench rocking his hands from side to side. It's a pretty iconic image and I don't know what his actions were trying to achieve.

If you were the chancellor what one change would you make to the tax regime?

I would abolish corporation tax in the UK and fund the shortfall through National Insurance contributions and VAT, the aim being to attract significant commercial investment into the UK.