Blog

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**FIGURING IT OUT: DEBBIE TALKS LIFE BEYOND THE NUMBERS**

**When you work with an accountancy practice, the focus is often on paperwork and deadlines. At Walker & Sutcliffe, we also spend a lot of time talking about our team! They are the driving force behind the practice, so we wanted to give you some insight into the people behind the books.**

Debbie Ledgard is our Practice Finance Manager, here we catch up with her to discuss her childhood passion for figures and how after three decades in accountancy, she is looking at a life beyond the numbers.

She comments: “I have no idea where my love for numbers comes from. Mathematics was a subject I really enjoyed at school, so I guess that my passion came from there. I attended a girls' grammar school in the Wirral, and it was made clear to me that you didn’t leave without going on to further education.

“I did my work experience with a big firm of actuaries in Liverpool, and they put me with a chartered accountant for a week. I loved all the accounts side, dealing with people and the numbers. It was perfect for me.

“I completed my A Levels and went on to Huddersfield Polytechnic. I did a foundation course in accounts for a year, but then I wanted to earn some money. So, I went back home and contacted Hays Accountancy Recruitment and let them know I wanted a job in Liverpool, Manchester or Leeds.

“I got an interview in Huddersfield!”

Despite passing the offices of Bell Moorby every day on the bus on the way to college, Debbie had never noticed the firm of accountants that would offer her a full-time role as an Accounts Junior.

She comments: “I had to start right at the bottom. That didn’t bother me as I was willing to work hard and learn from those around me. What I didn’t know at the time was that the Office Manager would become my sister-in-law!

“I started in September 1990. They were a start-up and the partners and team were all very young. I was doing Certified Accountancy. Six months into my role and Nick joined the practice. He was more senior and we worked together for a while and then he became a Manager at the Halifax office.”

In the next few years, a lot was happening for Debbie. Her father sadly passed away, Nick was doing his finals, and they were buying their first house together and getting married!

She comments: “Looking back, 1994 was quite a year! Despite so many life-changing experiences, as far as my career was concerned, I was working on all the things that I really enjoy. I was qualified by experience and could do accounts prep, VAT returns, payroll and tax returns.

“In 1997, I left the practice to start up on my own. At the same time, Nick was also looking for a new challenge and he started as a Manager at Walker and Sutcliffe. In fact, we handed our notice in on the same day!”

Debbie supported smaller businesses, sole traders and partnerships, and still has many of the same clients she started with more than 25 years ago. In addition, she still works alongside the team at Walker & Sutcliffe.

She continues: “Walker & Sutcliffe has changed so much since I first started working at the practice in 2000. Initially, I was drafted in as the bookkeeper had retired. At that time the firm was very traditional and much of our work was done by hand.

“Nick was always focused on having the latest technology in place and finding ways for the team to be more efficient. When he became a Partner, he made it happen. It has certainly paid off and the business is unrecognizable to what it was all those years ago.

“Accountancy used to be about books and ledgers, now it’s endless hours in front of a computer and the latest digital systems and programs. It’s all changed.”

Although her love for numbers has never left, Debbie has found other passions over the years and is now figuring out what will be the next chapter in her story.

She comments: “I have been training to be a Naturopathic Nutritional Therapist. So, I’m looking at people’s diets and lifestyles to find out what is triggering health concerns and making recommendations on how they can put it right without medical intervention.

“It’s always fascinated me how some people get better, and other people don’t. I wanted to explore the causes and reasons why that’s the case. I got a prospectus for a course many years ago but didn’t feel that I had the time to do anything about it.

“When the pandemic came along, it was all the encouragement I needed to enroll on a three-year course and to look for the answers to the many questions I have. While the NHS is under so much pressure, I couldn’t help but think there had to be other ways of treating people.

“As my background isn’t medical, when I started in May 2020, I had to do a year of biomedicine. In October, I will qualify having passed all assessments, clinics and exams. I can’t wait as this opens up a whole new chapter for me.”

Although Debbie will be starting a new business, that doesn’t mean that her time at Walker & Sutcliffe will come to an end.

She comments: “Starting a new business, which is completely different, is really exciting and it gives me the chance to try something new. However, I will still be a regular face at Walker & Sutcliffe. We always say the practice is like a family and it really is. I can’t imagine my life without it.”

As the wife of a Practice Partner, we take the opportunity to ask Debbie what it is like to live and to work with your husband and what advice she would give to others considering doing the same.

She comments: “In terms of advice, don’t do it!

“In all honesty, it can be hard and there is no cutoff. Nick has been known to wake me up at night to ask me if a payment has come through or been made. Sometimes it drives me to distraction, but it’s all we’ve ever known.

“The best approach is to be patient, take deep breaths and have your own interests outside of the business. Having different hobbies keeps us occupied and gives us the time that we need alone. Well, that and a good catch-up and lunch with my girlfriends!”

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