



# choices

BWS new office opens in

## Belfast - city of opportunity



Also in this issue

The truth about CVs

A day in the life of...

Dear David

# Belfast - city of opportunity

Ringed by high hills, sea loughs and a river valley, Belfast has been described by some writers as a Hibernian Rio. It must have been a beautiful sight to the first Celt settlers who touched down 9000 years ago and controlled Ulster for 1000 years before the advent of the Vikings and later the colonisation by the English. Beal Feirste has seen some activity through the centuries.

The only Irish city to experience the Industrial Revolution, Belfast initially became known for its rope making, linen and ship building and quickly became established as one of Europe's greatest manufacturing regions. Indeed between 1916 – 1918 Belfast was the capital of Industrial Europe.

In more recent times due to Ulster's historic problems, investment levels have tended to be poor and this has led to the highest levels of unemployment and lowest GDP figures in the UK. However since the 1997 cease-fire and 1998 Good Friday agreement, millions of pounds have been invested in the Northern Irish economy by global organisations, and Northern Ireland and Belfast entered the millennium with a full vigour.

A thriving city with high employment, massive investment and tourism, Belfast was recently voted number 10 of the best retail cities in the UK. The landscape is ever changing as developers undertake numerous building projects which will ultimately support the growth of Ulster's economy. The people behind the development schemes are showing they have confidence in the future. One such example being the Odyssey Complex – one of the largest buildings ever created in Ireland, North and South bringing together a unique mix of entertainment, education and retail.

As confidence in the future gathers momentum there has been a shift from the traditional industries such as textiles and heavy manufacturing to the hi tech/software/communication sectors and farming, food processing and grocery retailing. The "seven sisters" of the supermarket trade are here and this sector accounts for at least 100,000 jobs.

The performance of Northern Ireland's top 100 companies' profits have risen by over 5% while turnover increased by 9% (the figures also indicate an increase of 2.3% in employment figures) and Belfast is an exciting prospect for both employers and employees.

As a sparsely populated area, with 37 people per square mile, space is available for offices at competitive rates, and housing costs are lower than most other UK regions. Participation in further and higher education is high with 79% of youngsters continuing their schooling past the age of 16 and around 30% of NI pupils who stayed on after the age of 16 gained 2 or more A levels, the highest level in the UK.

Probably some of the reasons behind the steady flow of inward investment (at least £792 million comes from the Republic of Ireland) and certainly some key reasons behind the expansion of BrightWater Selection into Belfast.

In fact we are already making our mark within the recruitment industry in Northern Ireland. Our refreshing outlook has impressed both recruiters and jobseekers.

On a lighter note – the inward investment is being complemented by inner city regeneration and there are many bars, restaurants and cafes across the city making for a busy cosmopolitan nightlife. There are also superb opportunities for leisure including fishing, horse riding, hiking and golf. So after a hard day at work there are many ways to relax for accountants and recruiters alike!

**Athene Gordon - Belfast Office**



# Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland Practice Comparison Survey 2001

## Participate and win a trip for two to New York!

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland is running its practice comparison survey for members in practice across the 32 counties. The Institute's 1,200 firms will receive a four-page questionnaire by post around now.

The survey is carried out annually by the Practice Advisory Service within the Institute and is an invaluable reference source for members in practice. This type of information, specifically tailored for the Irish market, is not readily available elsewhere. The results, when published in late September 2001, will provide data on the following topics, among others:

- Typical profile of partners in practice.
- Average hours worked and charged to clients.

- Charge out rates for partners and all other grades of professional staff.
- Percentage of income derived from audit, accountancy, tax and other areas.
- Salaries paid to professional staff and support staff.
- The average amount of credit given to clients.
- The average time taken to convert work in progress.
- The average price of professional indemnity insurance.
- Numbers of professional staff per partner.

The results are presented in a format that gives comparisons within the greater Dublin and Belfast areas and then by each of the four provinces, outside Dublin and Belfast.

BrightWater Selection are sponsors of this year's survey, included is a draw

for all participants with a chance to win a trip to New York for two. Only one entry per firm is permitted. The lucky winner will be announced during the presentation of the survey results in late September.

If any firm would like to participate and needs a fresh copy of the questionnaire, please call Brigann Mullaney at the Practice Advisory Service at the Institute of Chartered Accountants on + 00 – 353 - 1 – 6377 211.

The closing date for the survey is Friday 3 August 2001. So get those forms in as soon as possible! Big Apple here we come!!



## BrightWater Selection ...a Company on the Move

*"If you're not going forwards, you are going backwards" quotes David Bloch, Managing Director, BrightWater Selection. This view is very much synonymous with the whole ethos of the company.*

Year 2000 was a great year for BWS. We moved to prestigious new offices in one of Dublin's major business districts – Merrion Square. The beautifully renovated building was not without teething problems but from 1st March 2000 it was business as usual.

Expansion and growth is BWS policy and during the year 2000, we recruited many new members of staff to maximise our already excellent reputation and profile in the areas of accountancy and taxation.

Our own recruitment policy is fairly stringent and we are proud to employ some of the industry's best

recruitment consultants. As for 2001 we are using the same formula: growth, expansion and development. This year saw the expansion of our Banking Division.

In April 2001, we opened our Sales & Marketing Division to complement our established Financial Services, Accounting, Taxation and Human Resources areas.

In May 2001 we opened our new office in Belfast, with a full complement of staff recruited from our Dublin office plus experienced consultants from Belfast.

What next? We'll keep that to ourselves for now, but we'll keep you posted of developments in the next issue...

Wendy Hodgson

# Lies, Damn Lies and Curriculum Vitae!

A quarter of all CVs contain lies - whether it's from candidates pretending they have higher Leaving Cert grades to claiming their proficiency in MS Word makes them an "IT Expert".

The current Labour Market requires employers to "tune in" to the problem of fabrication of CV details. Some candidates will bank on companies not taking time out to validate references or verify experience due to candidate shortage in the market place. However, such shortages should lead to us being more selective not less when it comes to recruitment simply because the pool of prospective employees is just not as good.

According to the CIPD, the most commonly encountered CV fabrications are:

- Altering the periods spent at individual jobs or grouping a number of roles together under one generic title to counter the impression of "Job Hopping".
- Claiming to have worked for companies that have since gone bust.
- Exaggerating the number of grades or qualifications.
- Classifying dismissals as planned career moves.

As most managers or executives recruit for new people when they are under pressure, long-term perspectives and concrete job analysis go out the window. It's more usually a case of finding the body to throw at the problem.

Experienced Recruiters and Personnel Managers will often take

steps outside the basic interview process, which will not only help locate the most suitable candidate but also address the issue of retention. One such step is Psychometric Testing.

This reflects the belief that to hire the right people you must have an understanding of what is required for success in each of your company's positions. Consequently to motivate and retain these key assets you must know the strengths, weaknesses, motivations and potential of every individual in your organisation.

Psychometric Testing can help you to uncover and effectively manage this vital information, so that you can make more effective decisions when hiring, deploying, managing and retaining staff.

To those employers who may now feel that their recruitment and selection process leaves a lot to be desired, perhaps guidance from Stephen R. Covey's "Steps to Strategic Recruiting" may help ward off sleepless nights:

1. Create a long-term strategic plan for your organisation.

2. Have strategic criteria for each job.
3. Take an in-depth look at alternatives. (Recruitment Experts/ Psychometric Testing).
4. Have an open discussion with the candidate.
5. After hiring, have a trial period of three to six months.

Good Luck!

HR Team



# A day in the life of... a trainee accountant



**Fiona Guckian, Trainee Accountant at OSK Accountants and Business Consultants.**

**The Company:**

Having studied Accountancy & Finance in DCU, I started training with OSK Accountants & Business Consultants in September. I heard of OSK through my career guidance and had attended a presentation given by OSK. OSK recruit trainees from DCU and have a good relationship with the college.

**The Role:**

I'm working through second year of my three and a half year contract with OSK and I feel I've gained lots of

experience in many different areas such as audit work, accounts preparation and tax compliance work. Every week, we hold an activity-scheduling meeting where we are allocated with jobs for the coming week. I can request to work on specific jobs if I want to gain knowledge of clients in certain industries. I've been attending client meetings from my first year with OSK, which, I think, has really helped to build my confidence.

**The Studying:**

Having successfully completed

Module 1, I'm now studying Module 2 of the Professional 3 ACA Examinations. This year lectures are mainly every Saturday with a few week night sessions. I think that it's important to keep up to date with notes and assignments. This makes it easier for me when I go on study leave, which is around four weeks before the exams start. It's hard to adjust to working full time while studying but I found myself a routine very quickly. Most of the audit work I do is office based so I don't miss my lectures through being away on client sites.

**The Social Life:**

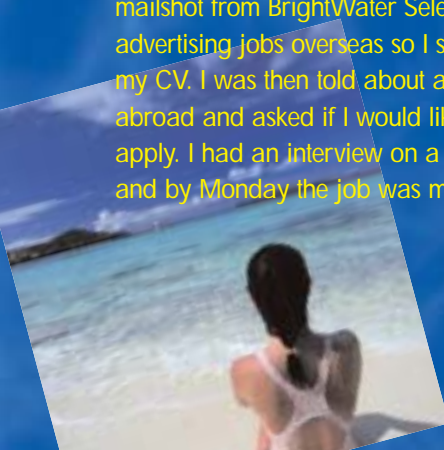
Apart from working and studying there's always time for socialising! I like to socialise both with my work and personal friends. I've made good friends at OSK and there is a good, friendly atmosphere. I also love to play camogie which means training twice a week and a match every second weekend – no problem to me!!

**The Future:**

As for the future - who knows! At the moment I'm just concentrating on the next couple of years to successfully pass all my exams and gain as broad a range of experience as possible while training with OSK.

## Felicia Long – placed by BWS in the Cayman Islands

In late September 2000, I received a mailshot from BrightWater Selection advertising jobs overseas so I sent off my CV. I was then told about a job abroad and asked if I would like to apply. I had an interview on a Friday and by Monday the job was mine.



I flew out to the Caymans in early December after organising my visa. It seems like a different world – even in winter the temperature is mid 80's & everywhere seems close to the beach. The staff are mainly Caymanian and Canadian with a few Irish. The key to settling in here is getting involved in island life. Sport is a big thing here – there's even a local GAA club!

The Cayman Islands are ideally situated; Miami is only an hour away while a hen weekend was organised to New Orleans!! – definitely something you wouldn't do at home! it was difficult at first leaving family & friends but some have already visited me and more are due. I am glad I decided to come here!

**Eileen Moloney**

# Institute of Certified Public Accountants

The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland is the second largest Irish professional accountancy body and its qualification, which allows its members to call themselves Certified Public Accountants and to use the designatory letters CPA or FCPA, is recognised around the world as a prestigious business qualification

The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland is one of Ireland's four main accountancy bodies and enjoys statutory recognition as a body of auditors. The CPA qualification allows the professional accountant to pursue a successful career at the highest level in business today. Sixty per cent of the current CPA membership are working in industry or commerce, including financial services, financial and management accounting, taxation, information technology and the public sector. The remaining forty per cent of membership can be found operating in practice.

The CPA Institute has enhanced the international recognition of its qualification through reciprocal membership arrangements with other key professional bodies. Members of the CPA Institute are located in twenty two countries world wide and the CPA designation is the most commonly used among accountants.

## Entry Requirements & Exemptions

In order to register with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants, applicants must meet one of the following requirements:

Holder of Leaving Certificate having passed six subjects; three of which are Grade C or higher on higher level papers and Grade D or higher in the remaining three subjects on higher or ordinary level papers. Two of the six subjects must be English and Mathematics.

Holder of recognised Degree, Diploma, Certificate or Professional Qualification: These applicants may be entitled to exemptions from some of the papers in Formation 1, Formation 2, Professional 1 and Professional 2. Exemptions should be confirmed in writing from the Institute prior to registration.

The CPA Institute operates an "Open Door" policy, which ensures the institute and students are in tandem. Offering regular advice to students, classroom visits to monitor students satisfaction with their centre of education, regular publications and continuous access to department staff are all benefits that the CPA Institute prides themselves on in their service to students.



## Read them and ...Smile! Lilly Walsh

**Taken from real CVs and covering letters.**  
(not BWS candidates!)

"I have lurnt Word Perfect 6.0 computer and spreadsheet programs".

"Received a plague for Salesperson of the Year".

"Reason for leaving last job: - maturity leave".

"Failed bar exams with relatively high grades".

"I am loyal to my employer at all costs.....Please feel free to respond to my resume on my office voice mail".

"Personal interests: donating blood.....Fourteen gallons so far".

"Instrumental in ruining entire operations for a Midwest chain store".

**These are actual lines from military performance appraisals**

"Gates are down, the lights are flashing, but the train isn't coming".

"He's so dense, light bends around him".

"If he were any more stupid, he'd have to be watered twice a week".

"Wheel is turning, but the hamster is dead."

"This soldier will spend the rest of his service career pushing doors marked pull!"



# BrightWater Events

BrightWater Selection is proud to be working with the Professional bodies. In the last 12 months we have worked in conjunction with many of the Accountancy and Taxation professional bodies together with the CIPD (Human Resources). Although these are primarily work events, they typically have a very strong social content. This is only a small sample of the events we sponsored. All of our events along with some photos are noted on our web site at [www.brightwater.ie](http://www.brightwater.ie).

## DCASS football tournament 2000 Men's Winners – BDO



## Ladies Winners – PWC



This is a long-standing annual calendar event for DCASS and is over subscribed every year with practice teams from all around Dublin keen for the annual battle on the football pitch. BrightWater held a draw in the pub on finals night and the winner of the trip to New York could hardly contain herself. Here's to this year's competition.

## CIMA Annual Dinner 2000



Tom ( President CIMA Leinster) & Nuala O'Connor letting it rip in the Shelbourne Hotel.

## ACCA Christmas Lunch 2000



Above: Michael O'Reilly, Paula McGrath & Mike Murphy. A key event on the ACCA calendar – great fun was had by all, Mike Murphy regaled us all with 'Live Mike' clips that didn't quite make it to the screen. Additionally, this year's charity speaker from The Friends of St Luke also collected the fantastic amount of just under £5,000.

## ACCA Ulster Society Annual 2001



Above: Wendy Hodgson, Joanne Small & Adrian Logan. Belfast Castle was a spectacular location for this event. It was a great opportunity to meet people that our Belfast Office deal with on a daily basis. Our Belfast office is now up and running.



# Dear David



Thank you for the phenomenal response to the last issue of Dear David. I was surprised and a little embarrassed by the fantastic reception it got. Below are just a few of the most frequently asked questions I have been asked since the last edition. I tried to respond personally to all of the direct enquiries that I received.

**Q. At my recent salary review I received only a small pay rise. What am I worth?**

The first thing to do is to look at a recent BrightWater Selection Salary Survey, but the truth is that only you and your company can fully evaluate your value. Usually, when you move jobs you will receive about a 10% pay rise. This rise is not always a real rise on the basis that you will not be getting the pay review that you were due for in your current company, the bonuses that you had been accumulating via goodwill at your current firm, and the fact that your CV will be showing a change of employment. If your firm do not believe that you are worth more money then the first thing to do is to ask them why not. There could be many reasons, sometimes you are receiving a statutory pay rise review that has been decided at Head Office elsewhere, sometimes it is because the company simply cannot afford a greater rise, or it could be that your work is not of the standard that warrants a greater increase. You will need to look at the reasons given and decide whether they are valid and whether it is worth arguing for a greater rise or indeed moving jobs. Never be afraid to ask questions, generally you will be respected for your forthrightness. Also, it is important that you understand how you are viewed by the company and whether you are being treated fairly.

**Q. I have been counter-offered by my company and I am not sure what to do?**

Almost always the answer is to leave! When you have made the decision to leave in the first place it is very rarely because of one issue. When people come to BrightWater Selection they tell us they are looking to leave because of salary or the sector or the role or the location or other more personal issues. Basically, the individual is unhappy. When your firm counter-offer you

they are buying themselves time – and will generally start looking for a replacement immediately because their trust in you has gone. The statistics also suggest that 67% of people who resign and then stay at their own firm are looking for a new job within 6 months, and 92% are looking within 12 months. The exceptions to the above rule are usually only when your job is changed completely, for example you are relocated to another division or office within the Group.

**Q. How will my CV look if I temp for a while?**

It has become much more acceptable to be seen to temp in Ireland. Some employers will still view it that you are not able to sustain a permanent commitment to something, but more and more will view it that you have gained broad experience and are flexible. Other advantages are that you will have a chance to look at many different companies, roles and industries and are therefore able to make an informed decision about your next job. Gone are the days when everybody in Ireland needed the security of a permanent job. Also, gone are the days when companies required a “perfect CV”. People are now much more prepared to look at your CV in a positive light, viewing the advantages of temporary work over the disadvantages. No problem.

**Q. Why do BrightWater Selection seem to have so much more of a professional approach to recruitment than all the others?**

This is a question I have been asked many many times over the last 3 years and I believe there are a few reasons for this. BrightWater Selection staff are all graduates/ many professionally trained (we have 4 fully qualified Accountants working for us, 1 ex-Auditor, 1 ex-Financial Controller, and many other experienced and qualified staff in their related fields). Our staff are treated in a professional manner and are expected to see themselves as professional business people rather than simply salesmen. The environment and the career objectives of the company are consistent with a professional and proud firm. The staff are therefore able and taught that that is the way to treat people. We would have it no other way!

Send your questions to David at our Dublin office