



EDUCATION

THE PASSPORT TO SUCCESS

FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE INSURANCE INSTITUTE OF DUBLIN IN 2011–12, FRANK KAVANAGH WENT FROM BRANCH MANAGER OF HISCOX IN IRELAND TO LONDON UNDERWRITING MANAGER IN THEIR EUROPEAN HQ, IN LESS THAN A YEAR. HERE HE DISCUSSES WHAT IT'S LIKE WORKING IN A GLOBAL HUB AND THE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE OF CPD, AS WELL AS SHARING SOME ADVICE FOR THOSE LOOKING TO GAIN EXPERIENCE IN THE UK.



Name:
Frank Kavanagh

Position:
London Underwriting Manager

Qualifications:
Bachelor of Business Studies, Marketing from University of Limerick; Certified Insurance Practitioner (CIP) from The Insurance Institute of Ireland

Company:
Hiscox

Country:
UK

How did you get started in insurance Frank?

As part of my Bachelor of Business Studies degree in University of Limerick I had to do a 9 month work placement. I was placed in Coyle Hamilton Insurance Brokers – now Willis. At college I was concentrating on business and marketing and probably had the same perception of insurance as most people do. However, I really enjoyed the placement so when I finished university and got some travelling under my belt, I had the opportunity to go back to Coyle Hamilton and start my career.

Did you always want to travel, or were you made an offer you couldn't refuse?

I can't say I ever had a massive desire to live and work abroad although I had lived in Australia for a while when I finished university. Ultimately I really wanted to progress within Hiscox, the company I work for, and doing that meant coming to London. I got offered a really good job and knew I'd regret it if I didn't give it a try.

What impact do you feel your qualification(s) had on your relocation?

I think my qualifications gave me a very good basic grounding in insurance and certainly at this level they're a must have. However, personally I have always felt that continuous professional development is an equally important – and often overlooked – aspect of what we do. It's great because Hiscox as a company invest heavily in training and development and when I was based in Dublin

I found the IID breakfast lecture series extremely beneficial. It was also a great way to network and meet other people in the market.

What are the main professional differences between Ireland and London?

Obviously in London the alignment is with the CII. It's funny although I knew the London market was the main insurance market globally and I worked for a company which has a long London market tradition, I never really realised the scale and the scope of it until I moved here. Because of that you tend to have a lot more specialists than in the Irish market and of course working within any specialism means that a commitment to professionalism, education and continuous development are extremely important. Another difference I notice regularly is the level of old school face to face broking here, there's much more of it than in Ireland, and as an underwriter that's great.

And what about lifestyle – is London an enjoyable place to live and work?

Absolutely. In my opinion Dublin is one of the best cities in the world to live, I always really enjoy it when I come back, but London is completely different. For starters it's huge and has so much going on at any given time, it never stops going. There's also such a variety of people and cultures here. It really is the most multicultural city in the world. As Samuel Johnson once said, "when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life".

Have you any additional qualification goals in mind in the coming years?

Not currently, I'm focussing more on areas of continuous development that interest me at the moment. I think in the last 20 years there has been so much global change and technological advancement that as an industry we need to keep adapting and learning to protect our clients from the emerging risks they face.

I definitely will do further study again, but as everyone knows it is a massive commitment and so it needs to be for the right reasons.

What advice would you give to anyone starting out in insurance with ambitions to travel or those established in the industry looking for a change of scene?

There are so many opportunities in the insurance industry generally and particularly in London – not just in terms of securing a job, but also to build a successful career. It really is the global centre of insurance and the best thing about it is it's only an hour away. I also think you should never be afraid to take a chance. Most Irish companies will look on international experience positively, seeing experience of the London market as particularly valuable if you ever decide you want to move home.

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