

WHERE I AM TODAY

Q&A

MARK NICOLSON CA

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WHEN DID YOU QUALIFY AS A CA AND WHO DID YOU TRAIN WITH?

I qualified in 2001 with Ernst & Young.

BRIEF CAREER HISTORY

After spending around 18 months in audit, I transferred to E&Y's M&A lead advisory team in 2000 and then joined KPMG Corporate Finance in 2004. I spent just over seven years in corporate finance, focusing principally on buy-out transactions. I joined SL Capital Partners in 2007. SL Capital is a partnership that operates within Standard Life Investments, our majority partner.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB INVOLVE?

SL Capital is one of the largest investors in the European private equity market with c€9bn of assets raised from over 160 clients in more than 25 countries. We manage over 20 funds and invest in private equity funds, acquire secondary fund positions and invest directly in companies. I work across all of these areas and sit on SL Capital's investment committee as well as several other committees within the business. We have a perpetual fundraising model and so I am also involved in our fundraising activities. From an investment perspective, I lead our coverage of the UK, Germanic Europe and energy markets. I also sit on the advisory boards of several of the leading private equity managers in Europe.

WHO DO YOU REPORT TO?

We operate as a relatively flat partnership with two managing partners.

WHAT APPEALED ABOUT THIS CAREER PATH?

I wanted to be an investor and work within the private equity market. I believe in the value private equity can create, and to be in a role that allows me to have a pan-European perspective on the market, select and work with the best managers in Europe and invest alongside them is challenging and rewarding.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Working with some of the sharpest minds



in the investment world... and seeing the results.

...AND THE WORST?

A bit of a cliché but not enough hours in the day. Prioritising what we work on and time management are critical in order to be effective.

PROUDEST MOMENT SO FAR?

First, being told that I was being made a partner in 2012. Also, finding out this year that I'd been selected as one of the Dow Jones 40 under 40 Rising Stars in European Private Equity for 2015.

HOW'S YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE?

Long hours and extensive travel are part of the job. I try to keep weekends clear to spend with my family.

HOW HAS YOUR CA TRAINING HELPED YOU TO PREPARE FOR THIS ROLE – IF IT HAS?

My CA training provided me with an invaluable grounding in how companies operate and report their financial performance. This embedded understanding assists in the evaluation of a business or a portfolio and its relative attractiveness as an investment opportunity. The CA is a widely respected business qualification and being a CA has distinct advantages in my role.

WHAT SINGLE PIECE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FOR A CA LOOKING TO PURSUE THIS CAREER ROUTE?

Corporate finance is a tried and tested route into the world of private equity. Try to gain as much M&A/PE experience as early as you can in order to build the skills and knowledge necessary to be an attractive recruit for a PE investment house.

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