

Eye on doing it my way

Rory McClurg

Rory McClurg is Head of Retail Network Support in Ulster Bank Retail Markets. A career banker, with Ulster Bank for 22 years, he is also Chair of the Northern Chapter and board member of the MBA Association of Ireland, the representative body for graduates holding the degree of Masters in Business Administration (MBA).

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How did you get started in business?

I joined Ulster Bank in 1986 - Commarket Branch - and worked across many departments and locations before returning to branch banking in 2002 as Branch Manager in Belfast City Office, then Lombard Street. Two years later, I moved into Retail Markets - mostly in the Belfast headquarters but with weekly travel to our offices in Georges Quay in Dublin.

I decided to do an MBA mid career. I'd already completed a Business degree and the MBA was a further opportunity to develop business skills. I opted for the University of Ulster's MBA programme - mainly because it was comprehensive and conveniently designed for full time managers. The advantage of studying part-time was putting the theory straight into practice in the workplace.

There's a great camaraderie that develops in the MBA classroom, - so 5 fellow graduates and I set up the Northern Ireland Chapter of the MBA Association of Ireland back in 2002 - with the idea of extending the networking and ideas exchange beyond the MBA. We have had some great events since, including the MEP European Economic Forum, Paul Fitzsimons, then Head of Communications at Ryanair and Sir George Quigley.

Who/what has been the biggest influence on your career?

In Ulster Bank, there's no doubt that our parent, RBS, has had a tremendous influence on the way that we do business and, personally, on my career. Having the support of a global organisation gives both the confidence and attitude to make things happen - and that dynamic has had a huge effect on the bank's culture.

Doing an MBA had a significant influence - it gave me a different perspective on the business world outside of banking, as well as the opportunity to mix with people from different career paths.

Who do you most admire in the business world?

Bill Gates - the ultimate example, perhaps, of a successful transition from a technical background to being a great business leader. You can't fail

to admire his philanthropy - I like his attitude that the importance of money is what you do with it to make the world a better place.

Through the MBA Association's conferences and Guest Speaker events, I've encountered many very impressive CEOs, entrepreneurs and leaders, from Padraig O'Ceidigh, founder of Aer Arann to Sir Anthony O'Reilly of Independent News and Media; Denis O'Brien and Sir George Quigley. I am always surprised by the modesty and the generosity of some of these high achievers.

What are your guiding principles in business?

Integrity - what you see is what you get. Delivery - achieving what I set out to do. Valuing my team and taking a positive and energetic approach to any problem.

Describe a typical working day?

The first duties of the day are breakfast cereal distribution, teeth cleaning supervision and schoolbag packing co-ordination. That's the kids! After that I leave for the office.

I initially meet with my Business Support Manager to see what the day holds. Then it's meetings with my management team on anything from operational risk, management information, communications and support for our Regulated Sales teams. All of the teams are also represented in Dublin so I travel there weekly. My day is always varied and can also be driven by other people and their deadlines - so it's important to build time into the day to think and stay on top of my own agenda. And to tame the email overload - that's a constant challenge.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced - business or otherwise?

Taking on a new role, which I've done recently, is always a big challenge - getting up to speed with the content and detail of the role, there are new people to manage and engage with. Sometimes you don't have the luxury of a honeymoon period.

The 2006 Ulster Bank integration into our new parent RBS was probably the biggest challenge to date - but ultimately a very rewarding experience.

What's your greatest achievement to date?

Professionally, it's been about seeing people develop and progress in their careers - it is rewarding to have a hand in helping that process. Personally, it has to be family - I've been married to Anne for 15 years and we have 2 great children - Andrew and Olivia.

What motivates you?

Getting the job done to a very high standard - and I've been lucky to work with and manage some great teams which helps a lot. That, plus the opportunity to make a tangible difference.

How do you indulge yourself away from work?

Outside family time at the weekends, I play an occasional game of golf. And the MBA Association board meets regularly at weekends, and hosts a lot of events outside business hours.

What do you drive and why?

An Audi A4 Avant - great performance, great to drive and enough room for the children's bikes and my golf clubs.

Favourite book/TV/Film

At the moment I'm hooked on Prison Break - the plot is ludicrous but it is escapist TV at its best. I'm also a huge fan of Top Gear which is the funniest programme on TV and I really like the Jason Bourne films. As for books, I like biographies. I've just finished Richard Hammond's book which is really inspirational and puts life into perspective.

What advice would you pass on to a son or daughter.

Be yourself. Listen and learn and, most importantly, enjoy your life.

Eye

On March 12th, the MBA Association hosts 'The Leading Edge: Insights from sport and business: How the Best develop and sustain High Performance, led by Genesis Ireland, at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown. To attend, visit www.mbaainews.com