

## Getting ahead: my story so far



Catherine Duffy,  
general manager  
Northern Trust  
Picture: Press 22

# Always say 'yes' to new opportunities

Each week, we profile one of Ireland's foremost corporate leaders, tracing their career to date and exploring the lessons they have learned along the way. This week, we meet Northern Trust's Catherine Duffy

**A**s general manager of Northern Trust in Limerick, Catherine Duffy will oversee the recruitment of 300 people in the next three years. Duffy moved from Northern Trust's Dublin office in 2006, when the company established a second Irish base in Plassey. Headquartered in Chicago, the financial services firm has 600 Irish staff. It specialises in investment management, asset and fund administration, banking and fiduciary services.

Duffy joined Northern Trust in 2000, when it acquired her then employer Ulster Bank Investment Services (UBIM). She is this year's president of Limerick Chamber of Commerce.

**Are you where you expected to be in your career?**  
As life changes, so do goals. Starting out, my goal was to earn enough for nights out, new clothes, a car and holidays with the girls. After secondary school, I completed a secretarial course followed by a certificate in personnel practice and a diploma in European law.

I started as a junior officer in UBIM and grasped every opportunity I got. In 2005, I could not have foreseen that a decade later I would be working in

Limerick and living in Ballina, Co Tipperary. Goals are important, but so is openness to change.

**What was the best career advice you got along the way?**

I come from a family of ten children and my parents Patricia and Gerard were leaders and managers. They taught us all to "give it a go". You may not always succeed, but the most you can be in your career - as in life generally - is fair, honest and open to new experiences.

**Based on your own experience, what are your top career tips?**

Say "yes" to new opportunities as they arise. Some will work out and some won't, but each will offer a unique learning experience.

You may uncover something you enjoy, something you are good at, or something you can expand your skills in. Sharing these experiences and remaining focused on continuing to learn will position you well both in life and in your career. Put yourself in others' shoes.

Try to understand the challenges, goals, and the aspirations of those you interact with every day. The importance of listening - really truly listening - cannot be underestimated.

**How would you define your work**

**style, and how has this evolved over the years?**

Work is about people and an integral part of my role is to know our employees - what they enjoy doing, where they require support and what motivates them. It's crucial to enjoy what you do. My father taught me that work wasn't just nine to five. A career is about far more, and should be enjoyable and rewarding.

**In terms of managing teams and individuals, what are your insights?**

Take the time to understand people's motivations. Some may be motivated by reward and recognition, others by status or title. In working for a global organisation, I have had the opportunity to work with many diverse groups of people. As a leader, knowing when to intervene and when to listen are important skills. I am constantly learning from others.

**What about communication and negotiating the typical ups and**



**“ Try to understand the challenges, goals, and the aspirations of those you interact with every day**

**downs of working life?**

The importance of communication is never more obvious than when it goes wrong. I recently helped my husband Eugene to move cattle with our four children.

A breakdown in communication meant the animals ended up everywhere except where they were supposed to be. In such situations, an assertive approach can be necessary, but it's still vital to listen and understand. Aside from written and verbal communication, non-verbal communication is always important.

What goes unsaid is often what really needs to be acknowledged. For me, the ability to recognise and act upon this kind of communication has come with age, my experience as a mother and learning to listen to my gut.

**Has networking played an important part in your career?**

Networking is a two-way street, and networking to effect change is only half the story. The other half involves listening and giving something back. It's important to be yourself at all times, and to view networking as an opportunity to meet people, learn about new or better ways of doing things and share knowledge.

I continue to avail of opportunities to engage with other business people and our community.

**If you had to choose another career tomorrow, what would it be and why?**

I genuinely couldn't imagine doing anything else, but if I had to, I might give the pharmaceutical sector a shot. I love reading about medical advances, research and new medicines coming onto the market.

## Smart business: getting email

By Jayne Lee

Last week, my colleague was emailing a Chinese client. She had already been advised to address him as "Mr X", which she did.

However, "Mr X" replied and when signing off, used his first name. Was this a cue that she could then reply using his first name or should my colleague have stuck to the more formal "Mr X"?

She took her cue from the client and proceeded with his first name - when in doubt, taking your cue from others is probably the safest way to go.

The main lesson here is that different cultures have different social norms and this extends to email. So, the next time you email a client or even a colleague from a different country, a quick Google search can be very helpful in establishing protocol.

There are many cultural norms - too many to list here - but the important thing is to be aware of this fact and do your research.

According to Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence, Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, there is a "negativity bias" attached to neutral emails, meaning that even if email content is neutral, recipients assume that it is negative.

Think about your message and the recipient's reaction before hitting send.

Our top email writing awareness tips are:

**1. Know your audience and their culture**  
If you don't know, then don't assume. Google before you write. Take your cue from them and adapt your style accordingly.

**2. Keep your correspondence brief, to the point and use punctuation**  
This might sound obvious, but if you want your message to be read - and understood - make it clear and concise. Use short sentences



Jayne Lee: if you wouldn't feel comfortable saying something in public, then don't put it in an email

and/or bullet points, if appropriate.

**3. Don't use text speak in an email**

It looks unprofessional and there is no need for it, use spell check and don't use caps lock. IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING!

**4. Don't ever put anything negative in writing**

Even if it's just between you and a trusted confidant, don't commit negative comments to email. We've all seen the fallout from the cyber attack on Sony and the emails, which were never meant to be seen, published for all to read. If you wouldn't feel comfortable saying it in public, don't put it in an email.

**5. Do use some form of address when writing an email**

**“ If you don't know, then don't assume**

Rather than just launching into what you want, take the time to write "Hi X" or "Dear Y". It only takes two seconds, but looks more professional, respectful and generally friendlier. The same goes for signing off. Use "Best regards", "Kind regards" or even "Have a nice weekend", followed by your name.

**6. Emoticons**

The appropriate use of emoticons is a controversial topic. A good rule of thumb is not to use them until you have established a rapport. If you do decide to use them, do so sparingly and appropriately - for example, to lighten the tone of an email. If in doubt, leave it out.

**Bonus tip:**

Ask yourself whether email is actually the best way of communicating your message.

Sometimes a phone call or a face-to-face meeting could be more appropriate in terms of clarity and relationship building. The next time you start to write an email, ask yourself if picking up the phone might be more efficient and welcome. You can always follow up with a brief email summarising your main points if you really do want something in writing.

Jayne Lee is a corporate psychologist with Davitt Corporate Partners

## Employment matters

# Managing conflict in the workplace

Having effective mechanisms in place to deal with staff disputes reduces the risk of external legal claims, writes Michael Lee

**M**anaging conflict at work is a continual challenge for employers. While conflict is a normal part of work, the challenge lies in effective resolution. Conflict at work can take many forms. It may be that two employees simply don't get on, or that an employee has a grievance against their line manager.

Regardless of the cause, it is vital to have effective mechanisms in place, so that it can be managed appropriately and prevent conflict leading to external legal claims.

Effective measures for resolving conflict at work include:

**1. Training and equipping managers with the necessary skills and confidence**

Successive studies carried out by the Chartered Institute

of Personnel and Development (CIPD) on workplace conflict, have emphasised the importance of line managers having the knowledge, skills and confidence to be able to intervene at an early stage and prevent disputes from escalating or becoming more formal in nature.

In instances where conflict does occur between individuals, a line manager can seek to have a quiet word with the employee concerned. Simply by listening and giving an employee the time and space to express their feelings and concerns can often help to resolve concerns.

If further investigation is necessary, taking the time to talk to colleagues and gathering any relevant information may assist in resolving the conflict and determining what it is hoped to achieve.

In instances where conflict is not resolved, or an employee makes an official griev-

ance or allegation to a line manager, then the conflict has moved to a more formal stage.

If this happens, it is crucial that the line manager fall back on internal procedures for dealing with grievances or allegations, which may include the procedures for managing allegations of bullying and harassment.

In these cases, where possible, the parties should in the first instance engage with each other locally.

Issues can often be cleared up quickly through informal face-to-face discussion. Mediation can, for example, often be used as an effective method of resolving conflict within the workplace.

**2. Having clear discipline, grievance and dispute procedures for dealing with conflict**  
The main guide for employers in relation to disciplinary procedures is the code of practice published by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) on grievance and disciplinary procedures. While not legally binding, it is the benchmark used by the LRC, Labour Court, and rights commissioners, when

reviewing cases. While this code accepts that procedures and policies will vary from organisation to organisation, it does insist that they all comply with the following basic principles of natural justice:



Michael Lee

- That employee grievances are fairly examined and processed.
- That details of any allegations or complaints are put to the employee concerned.
- That the employee concerned is given the opportunity to respond fully to any such allegations or complaints.
- That the employee concerned is given the oppor-

tunity to avail of the right to be represented during the procedure.

■ That the employee concerned has the right to a fair and impartial determination of the issues concerned, taking into account any representations made by, or on behalf of, the employee and any other relevant or appropriate evidence, factors or circumstances.

Arrangements for handling discipline and grievance issues vary considerably from employment to employment. These depend on a wide variety of factors, including:

- the terms of contracts of employment,
- locally agreed procedures,
- industry agreements, and
- whether trade unions are recognised for bargaining purposes. The principles and procedures of this code of practice should apply unless alternative agreed procedures exist in the workplace, which conform to its general provisions for dealing with grievance and disciplinary issues.

Michael Lee is director of HR consulting with Adare Human Resource Management, adarehrm.ie

## Movers & Shakers



**FEATURED APPOINTMENT:** Michael Gaynor is joining the board of directors of Toyota Ireland. Gaynor is the company's director of marketing. He joined Toyota Ireland 15 years ago and has since worked in marketing and customer relationship management roles. Steve Tormey, chief executive of Toyota Ireland, said Gaynor had proven his value to the company, building up superb commercial acumen and insight into the Irish motoring market.



**FEATURED APPOINTMENT:** Róisín Brennan is joining Musgrave Group plc as a non-executive director. Brennan was chief executive of IBI Corporate Finance for 21 years until 2011. She is chairman of UTV Ireland and director of UTV Media plc. She has been on the board of DCC plc since 2005. She is also a board member of Coillte and is a former board member of the Irish Takeover Panel.



■ Property firm HWBC has appointed a new managing director. Tony Waters has been the company's director of investment for the past 10 years. Prior to that, he was a partner with Palmer McCormack for 13 years.



■ Iain Sayer is also joining HWBC in the role of divisional director and head of asset management. Sayer was formerly director of Strand Real Estate for one year. He also spent 21 months as President Investment Management's head of property.



■ Stephen Rust has been appointed chief executive of Engage Consultants' new Irish operation. The Irish arm has been set up in partnership with Visualise and i4P Consulting, a consultancy Rust founded in December 2013. Before that, he was Eircom's head of customer insight.