

# West Midlands future leaders

## Member spotlight - Ben Powell MSci ACA



Ben Powell, Partner/Head of Corporate at [Ballards LLP](#) in Worcestershire and President of ICAEW Birmingham and West Midlands.

### Year joined ICAEW

2011 trainee, 2014 member.

### How did you begin your career?

I did the 3 sciences at A-Level and got a first class Masters degree from Bristol Uni in Chemistry. I always wanted to be a scientist, but realised at Uni that it wasn't necessarily a great career path – short term contracts dependant on funding, jobs were few and far between and there was nothing local to me in sunny Kidderminster. I picked accountancy for all the wrong reasons – a stable job, well paid, could work local to home. I actually remember thinking that it would probably be boring but at least it was a way to make a living! I didn't have any idea what an accountant actually did until I turned up on day 1, but actually it turned out to be great and I never looked back!

### What does a typical day look like for you?

My wife and kids always say 'do you ever actually do any work' in reference to the amount of time I spend meeting clients, speaking on Teams, speaking on the phone etc. – I love the technical part of the job, but I also love the communication side and building relationships with people.

## What made you stay within practice as opposed to making an industry move?

The reason I stayed in practice was the varied businesses and people I get to work with. I also experienced very fast career progression, so never really felt the need to look outside of practice.

## How did you build your network?

Getting involved in the ICAEW was brilliant for this – I was chair of the Worcestershire Group of Chartered Accountants for 2 years and this really lifted my profile in the local area! LinkedIn is also great, add everyone you ever meet! Also pick and chose who you want/need to network with and then put the effort in. As an accountant in practice we need connections with lawyers, banks, etc., so work out the big players in your area and get to know them.

## What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Absorb the news. Listen to something like Radio 4's Today and PM programmes. I was told this in my early 20s by the then Managing Partner at [Ballards LLP](#) and I remember thinking how dull that sounded and I was reluctant to turn over Radio 1. However, I tried it out and I still listen to these news programs whenever I am in the car now, and it is virtually a daily occurrence that something on the news ends up being a topic of conversation in a client meeting, and you can always contribute with something meaningful! It is still quite hard to tune in though when the sun is out and the windows are down in the car – Radio 4 doesn't quite do it then!

## Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

It is interesting that you work towards becoming a partner as your ultimate goal, and then when you become a partner you realise that is certainly not the end of the story! In 10 years I see myself still at [Ballards LLP](#), but I see [Ballards LLP](#) as more than double it's current size but without losing it's ethos of sustainable growth, delivering a suite of business services beyond accountancy.

## What has been your biggest challenge in your career?

Studying for the ACA with a new born baby and the CTA with a second baby was a challenge!

## How has the ICAEW supported you or helped you over your career?

I cannot overstate how great my involvement in the district society and branch has been in my career. It really put my name out there in the professional community and gained me respect.

We finish the interview, and you step outside the office and find a lottery ticket that ends up winning £10 million. What would you do?

Vegas!

If you could have dinner with anyone one person 1 on 1 alive or dead who would it be?

To be honest I've never really been one to idolise celebrities and I don't really have any heroes. I'd have to say my Mum who is no longer with us.

**Quickfire:**

**Netflix/TV recommendation:** Guilty pleasure is Gogglebox, but so hard to find time to watch it without the kids lurking!

**Holiday Destination:** Short haul Spain, love the sunshine, Long haul would be USA, they just seem to do hospitality right.