



Tony Nicholl

The GMcG evolution

GMcG Managing Partner Tony Nicholl explains how the accountancy firm has brought all its offices under the one brand name

The last time this reporter saw GMcG Managing Partner Tony Nicholl he was resplendent in his chain of office in the sumptuous surroundings of Belfast City Hall about to have dinner next to Tony Blair's former spin doctor, Alastair Campbell.

In his role as President of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland – hence the chain – the Institute's annual dinner was held in Tony's native city, where the man once described as the second most powerful in the UK was guest speaker.

Today, the chain is gone and the surroundings are the pleasant but much more workmanlike city centre offices of GMcG Belfast, a new name for the firm's long established Goldblatt McGuigan practice. The brand

evolution extends to GMcG's regional offices of Robinson & Co in Portadown and Hanna Thompson in Lisburn, renamed as GMcG Portadown and GMcG Lisburn.

Taking on the CAI presidency isn't something Tony signed up to lightly given the time commitment it involved on top of his day job at the firm, but being given the chance to give something back to the profession was an opportunity he felt was a must.

However, it was only because of the continued support of the GMcG team that he was able to take up the role, support he's indebted to.

"I can't emphasis enough how supportive the partners and staff have been while I've been President. It's a mark of their

dedication and effort that I was even able to contemplate the role in the first place and I can't thank them enough."

So, free of the chain, what is on Tony's to-do list?

Quite a lot, by all accounts, with a strong focus on driving the next stage in the onward journey for the GMcG Group.

That involves developing and growing all three of the firm's practices under the GMcG name. A move that marks the final amalgamation of the three firms.

Goldblatt McGuigan bought Robinson & Co in 2006 followed by Hanna Thompson in 2009, and while all aspects of the businesses were quickly integrated with

the parent company, both have operated under their original names until now.

This final phase in the GMcG rebrand is an important and positive development, defined by a marketplace where trading conditions and the needs of clients continue to evolve.

"It was important that both offices retained their own identity in the initial stages of the mergers, but the time is now right to rebrand. A common approach to how we offer our services ensures GMcG's full range of services and expertise are accessible to all clients and across all industry sectors," Tony said.

Resource is already shared across all three locations with personnel regularly sharing their expertise with the other offices.

The offices are situated so as to give GMcG a good geographical spread across Northern Ireland, a reach which is furthered as a result of the firm's membership of TIAG, a global alliance of independent accounting firms.

TIAG helps immensely where our SME clients are seeking to expand into new

markets, providing a network of trusted accounting partners in overseas jurisdictions.

"We have contacts, both legal and accounting, through the association which enable us to source solutions for clients and provide them links should they seek to have somebody on the ground in a foreign country."

The international reach is a big plus point which attracts inward investment clients to GMcG, and enables the practice to service clients in multiple jurisdictions.

"Although reputation is one of the reasons clients engage with us and remain with us, we also pride ourselves on having a partner base which is readily available to clients," he said. "We have no hesitation in providing mobile and home phone numbers to clients, which although used infrequently, clients appreciate. In the modern world people expect you to be available 24/7, but we've been doing that for years."

As well as making sure clients are well looked after, Tony has a strong focus on encouraging new talent into the firm and

into the accountancy profession, whether through the traditional graduate route or by the expanding accounting technician route.

This is a point of particular significance as all three GMcG offices continue to recruit and grow, including the notable appointments of two new Associate Partners in May, Stephen Houston at GMcG Lisburn and Gill Johnston at GMcG Portadown.

Not only is Tony a big fan of the profession but he's also a big fan of the firm, as his CV shows. Having completed his training with Ernst and Whinney (now E&Y) in Dublin, he returned to Belfast in 1984 to join GMcG. Thirty two years with the firm is quite a length of service which in itself speaks volumes.

And, while others might be jaded after such a long time, Tony exudes the kind of enthusiasm for his role which you would normally find with new recruits, albeit the more measured manner you would expect of a forensic accountant.

"I've always enjoyed working here and I'm really looking forward to an exciting future for GMcG." ■



GMcG Partner Team – Back: Partners Michael Gibson, Susan Dunlop, Tony Nicholl, Gabriel Greene, Jackie Smith and Lyn Hagan. Front: Associate Partners Stephen Houston and Gill Johnston.