

Profile

Tafana is a Senior Product Manager at Dext Software Limited UK.

Tafana has completed ATT, CTA and was awarded DITT in October 2023

Qualifications

ATT
CTA
DITT

Tafana Caesar



Interview

Tell us about your current role, career so far and how did you first start working in tax?

In my second year of university, I completed a summer internship in Tax with Ernst & Young. The following year (2012), I joined their graduate scheme as an Assistant Tax Advisor specialising in Corporation Tax. I completed the ATT qualification in 2013 and after a few years, I worked on an internal tax technology project which involved Robotic Process Automation and tax sensitisation using AI and Big Data. At the time, I did not know these terms by name or what they meant, however I understood the world of tax was slowly moving away from manual input and analysis which took up a large part of my role. After this first taste of technology and how it could transform the repetitive elements of my role, I transitioned my career and have operated on the apex of tax and technology ever since. I have worked as a Business Analyst, Product Owner and Tax Technology specialist within tax technology teams at EY and KPMG, before joining Sage as a Product Manager on their tax compliance products. I currently work at Dext as a Senior Product Manager on their Dext Prepare/Solo products. Dext uses OCR and Machine Learning at its core to help accountants and taxpayers to maintain accurate financial records and get their tax right.

What area of tax do you work in and how did the tax technology qualification help you in your day-to-day job?

I currently work within the Personal Tax space as a Product Manager for software which feeds into the self-assessment process.

The qualification has helped me to map out tax processes and is agnostic enough that my learnings can be applied globally; where my aspirations lie.

The material explains concepts simply which in turn allows me to communicate the reasons for my decisions to non-tax technology professionals. This is key to the success of my role.

What motivated you to undertake this qualification?

When this qualification was announced I was excited as I previously had to merge my tax and technology experience via trial and error. Being the first official certification for Tax Technology from a professional body, I jumped at the chance to complete the qualification and requested approval to have my Dext learning budget allocated to the fees.

What are your observations on the syllabus, learning experience, assessment questions and touchpoint communications?

The syllabus is extensive and there are external resources provided for additional reading which solidifies learning. The course itself is broken down into bite-size subsections and really lends itself to flexibility. I was able to complete or listen to the lecture on my lunch hour or while working out. The assessment questions really test your application of the topics covered, as well as basic knowledge.

What stood out in terms of learning and skills you have developed as a result of studying the DITT?

The course reminded me to broaden my skills outside of my current sphere of experience. For example, whilst I considered the tax implications of emerging technologies, sometimes it is easy to forget how they can assist in the optimising the tax process itself. The practical application examples brought the subject to life and provided me with ideas on how I can use enhance my existing role. I really enjoyed the global examples, as tax technology is equally as relevant in other jurisdictions.

How did you manage studying and working at the same time?

I thrive on structure so I set a learning goal that I could achieve. I listened to lectures on my lunch hour or whilst taking care of personal priorities. Dext also allows employees to block out 3 hours fortnightly for self-led learning as part of our personal development plan. I allocated these Learning Hours to completion of the DITT qualification.

Do you have any guidance on how best to approach the learning material?

I recommend reviewing the learning outcome and questions at the end of each module before reading through the material for each sub-module. Keeping this in mind while reading the material helps to focus the mind and hone in on the key takeaways required to pass the assessments.

Thinking of practical applications within your existing role can also help solidify learnings.

Which module did you enjoy the most and what were the most relevant to your current role?

I enjoyed the Emerging Technologies module the most. I had not previously considered how blockchain can be used in tax technology and the examples by tax authorities around the world were enlightening. 2 The most relevant to my current role was the Module 7: Essential Elements of Technology Management for Tax. Whilst I have experience in the area, I was able to learn about frameworks for understanding and optimising tax processes which are directly applicable in my existing role.

How do you think this programme will benefit the profession?

It will empower tax and technology professionals to undertake tax technology projects with the confidence that they can make decisions with context and based on data. There are still a relatively small amount of professionals who operate in the tax technology space and hopefully this will encourage more tax professionals to transition into the field.

Would you recommend this programme to others?

Yes, the course is on demand and can be fit around work and personal commitments within the 2 year allowable time. The learning material and resource list is also downloadable so can be kept for future reference.





What kept you motivated throughout the programme?

The certificate at the end and the spa day I promised myself kept me motivated to stick to my learning schedule and complete the programme. In addition, keeping a running list of practical applications in my existing role encouraged me to keep going with the more technical topics.

Any words of wisdom to future candidates thinking of studying the DITT?

Set a learning target before you undertake the course, based on how you learn best. In addition, having something to look forward to on completion of each milestone or at the end of the qualification also helps. Finally, practice what you've learnt. Find ways to implement what you have learnt in your work or personal life. The field is fast-moving and you also need to keep up to date with recent developments.