



Q & A with Steven Mason, IP at Inquesta

1. What type of accountant are you?

I am a Licensed Insolvency Practitioner (IP) Regulated by the ICAEW

2. Can you tell me a bit about the services that you offer?

Insolvency Practitioners are licenced and authorised to act in relation to insolvent individuals, partnerships or companies. We are instructed and appointed in difficult and trying circumstances for those parties. In respect of a company, for example, our main task may be to rescue a business. If that is not possible, we aim to sell the assets of the company, collect in any money due, agree creditor claims and distribute monies collected to creditors, having paid all costs. The main duty of the IP is to look after the interests of the creditors.

3. When we have chatted in the past we've talked about Entrepreneur's relief and how good it is for serial entrepreneurs. Can you tell us what ER is so someone who has never heard of it?

Entrepreneurs Relief (ER) is now referred to as Business Asset Disposal Relief. In brief, it is relevant where a company director has reserves in their company is looking to liquidate and pay less Capital Gains Tax when they sell or close the business. It means they will pay tax at 10% on all gains on qualifying assets. Achieved through a vehicle called a Members Voluntary Liquidation, it is used when assets have a value of over £25,000 to achieve a better personal tax position for the Shareholders who receive a distribution of the company assets.

To qualify for the relief, the shareholder must have owned the business for at least 2 years. They must also dispose of the assets within 3 years of ceasing to trade to qualify. Whilst we don't ourselves advise on whether ER is applicable, we carry out the liquidation procedure, which allows them to obtain the ER.

4. Can you tell us more about your book?

My book was very much a lockdown project. Early in the 2020 pandemic, like everyone, I was anxious about the future. I was seeking inspiration to help cope during the crisis and began to examine the lives of some of the great personalities from history. After considerable research, I discovered that many of these individuals had overcome significant adversity on their path to success.

After sharing these stories with others, I was inspired to write this book. *The Adversity Formula: Inspirational Lessons from History* reviews the lives of thirty remarkable characters from history to see how they dealt with adversity. The book goes on to provide a formula that readers can themselves apply to their own lives. Selected mainly from the 20th Century, the fifteen men and fifteen women, include scientists, entrepreneurs, humanitarians, politicians, entertainers, sports stars and war heroes.

After 11 months of research, writing and editing, I have a published book, which can be found [here](#)



5. Who are your typical clients and what problems do you solve for them and how can they find out more about you?

I would struggle to describe a typical client, because our work is so varied. I have dealt with everything from a one man band to bigger companies with large numbers of employees and assets, but at the moment we are seeing a lot of queries from smaller businesses in the type of sector you can imagine as struggling as a result of the pandemic- travel, hospitality, recruitment and entertainment.

Over the years, I have dealt with all manner of industries, from retailers, construction companies, sports clubs' publishers, and even accountants, doctors and lawyers who have encountered financial problems. Many small businesses are obviously concerned about the impact that the withdrawal of government measures such as furloughing, together with the need to begin repayment of bounce back loans may have on their company's future viability.

6. How could you help the small business clients of a sole practitioner like me?

If a company is experiencing cash flow problems, we can help advise them as to the best solutions, based on their own predicament. The earlier people approach us, the better the outcome normally is. If the company cannot survive, we advise on the relevant options for closure and provide guidance on procedural matters in relation to insolvency. For many people, it is a new and difficult experience, so our aim is always to "hand hold" and make sure the process is as simple and pain free as possible. We can't always save a business but we can help Directors see that there is a way out of their problems and give them some hope for the future.