Meet Hayden Asper

There's much more to Jirsch Sutherland's Hayden Asper than his love of numbers.

Ask Newcastle-based Senior Manager Hayden Asper what makes him tick and he'll quickly respond with "black coffee and curiosity". When prodded to name his greatest strengths, however, he gives the question a little more thought. Curiosity is again on the list, along with "empathy, communication and an open mind".

"Ask my fiancée and friends, and they'll say that one of my strengths is that I'm blunt!" laughs Asper, who joined Jirsch Sutherland almost eight years ago.



Hayden on a hike

This direct approach helps Asper to build trust and find better solutions for his clients as it motivates him to delve deeper and explore all possible options for each situation. As an accountant, Asper has a strong understanding of the challenges businesses and individuals face, and his jargon-free style helps clients understand the sometimes-difficult concepts around turnaround and insolvency solutions.

"Some of the best feedback I have received from directors and creditors about myself and Jirsch Sutherland is that we don't dance around the facts, we just lay them out," he says.

Asper attributes his ability to problem-solve to lessons learned on the hiking trips he regularly takes. "Completing challenging hikes strengthens my self-esteem and the exercise makes me feel great physically," he says. "My first-ever hike was tough as I had zero conditioning so my body ached, I got huge blisters and packed the wrong food. But I realised I was able to push myself much further than I thought. I also learnt the importance of good planning and preparation, which are vital skills in my role at Jirsch Sutherland. Without a solid plan and the right tools, you can spend a lot of time floundering, wasting time and missing opportunities."

Having grown up in Newcastle, Asper is familiar with many of the Hunter's best hiking spots,

dog parks and scenic beaches (Redhead is his favourite). In his final year at school, he was awarded an accounting traineeship at Evolution Business and Personal Advisers, staying at the Warners Bay firm for almost three years while studying for a Bachelor of Commerce Degree at the University of Newcastle.

A move to insolvency



Hayden plays a vital role in organising the Bean Counters Ball

Despite enjoying accountancy, it didn't take Asper long to realise his future lay in insolvency. "My skills have always been more geared to analytics and report writing, which suits insolvency," he says.

After working in insolvency for a few years, Hayden joined Jirsch Sutherland in 2014. Since then, he has since obtained an Advanced Certificate in Insolvency and become a Chartered Accountant and a member of the Australian Restructuring Insolvency and Turnaround Association (ARITA). Based in the firm's Newcastle office, Asper consults with individuals and SMEs across a wide range of sectors including mining, construction, retail, manufacturing, hospitality and property – the latter providing him with some of his most interesting experiences.

"We often deal with the realisation of property in disputes or as an asset, and in addition to some 'colourful' individuals (tenants and owners) and agents vying for listings, I've encountered some weird circumstances like snakes, green pools, council issues, and crazy auctions."

Helping local youth



Hayden on a hike

Asper is a strong believer in everyone having the same opportunities, and promised himself that once he finished his studies, he'd give back to the community – a promise he kept. In 2016, within a month of finishing his final CA ANZ module, he joined the Advocacy Law Alliance (ALA) as Treasurer. "The ALA provides advocation to people with disabilities across NSW and runs two community legal centres in Taree and Port Macquarie, which assist people who may struggle financially to obtain basic legal representation, advice or advocacy," he says.

Four years later, he became Chairperson for the Hunter Region Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ) Committee, a role that sees him help organise the Bean Counters Ball, an initiative that supports youth and education in the Hunter region.

"Some people win the genetic lottery and others are born into very challenging circumstances," he says. "I'm very lucky to have had the opportunities I have had, and want to help create a society that gives those opportunities to others less fortunate."

Meanwhile, Asper continues to focus on helping individuals and companies recover from the effects of the recent lockdowns to become more resilient, and thrive, whatever the future brings. And he'll need plenty of black coffee along the way, as he's also busy planning his April wedding with his fiancée, which he concedes is keeping him "pretty busy".