

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR: ROB STRETCH

Author: Income Tax in South Africa (ITSA)

Getting to know Rob Stretch

Today we have the pleasure of interviewing Rob Stretch an accomplished and highly respected professional with specialised expertise in taxation. During a career history spanning more than thirty-five years, Rob has provided expertise and comprehensive advice to a variety of clients across the retail, mining, manufacturing and construction industries. He has presented numerous tax seminars for LexisNexis and together with David Clegg, has been updating Income Tax in South Africa for over 20 years.

Rob, what can you tell our readers about Income Tax in South Africa (ITSA)?

Well, the work is a 1750 page commentary on tax – covering income tax, capital gains tax and tax administration. It covers all the legal principles whilst incorporating a practical approach to tax solutions and tax planning. It is written to provide practical, easy-to-implement advice for tax specialists and corporate tax advisors.

The work is provided in a print (loose-leaf), online and mobile format. The work is updated twice a year to stay current with legislation and tax rates. Right now, I am waiting for the final tax bills so that I can start working on the December 2017 update.

That's great that the work also includes practical elements as it makes the work so much more valuable. However, updating this kind of publication also takes a lot of work. What inspired you to take do it?

What inspired me is that it was a challenge to start with, and also a way of ensuring one is up to date! Also, my firm, EY (Ernst and Young), where I was tax partner from 1986 - June 2016, was supportive of my efforts. Now that I have retired from EY it enables me to keep up to date with the changing legislation and cases which is important as I am consulting for my own account.

Can you tell the readers what was the most challenging aspect?

For me, the most challenging part is to ensure that where there is a change in legislation, one updates in all the relevant parts of the book. A single amendment may mean updating 4 or 5 different chapters – wherever there is reference to a particular section.

You mentioned that you were now consulting?

Yes, I am currently consulting to numerous privately owned companies and high net worth individuals. This is mainly in the areas of corporate restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, B-BEE structures and opinions. I am also providing specialised advice to a number of privately owned family companies which includes advice on bringing in family members to the business or planning an exit strategy.

Tax: Interview with the Author

If you are going to go to the trouble of writing a publication, especially a technical one, it is important that interested readers find you. Your book is published by LexisNexis. Can you tell us how you found your publisher?

I am lucky in that respect. This book had been published for years by LexisNexis, and already had a loyal following. I was already presenting tax seminars for LexisNexis and consulting to them when they approached me to update the work. That was some 20 years ago. Over that time there has been a complete rewrite of the book! Major changes in legislation, particularly the changes to residence based taxation and the introduction of capital gains tax, necessitated this.

What advice can you give to aspiring authors?

If I can give some advice to aspiring authors of technical books, make your work different. There are literally hundreds of works on tax. Yours must offer something new and provide added value, to make it stand out. One way to make it different is to write in plain language and make it easy for readers to find what they are looking for and to implement it.

Thanks Rob! That's great advice.

