

Q&A

Aaron Roup, FISA National Councillor and Secretary, chatted to Lucy Reyburn, FISA's media liaison.

Lucy: What exactly does your work at FISA involve?

Aaron: A bit of everything - but it often feels like a lot of everything! As a National Councillor, I participate in all Council's general work and make input into strategic decisions. As secretary to Council, I handle the day to day administrative functions. This includes dealing with approaches from new members, processing applications, renewals, invoicing and attending to various payments. Then of course, I am very involved with the CEO in organising the annual FISA conference and all the logistics related thereto.

I also act as FISA's communication hub, as any inflows to the website are directed to me. I therefore deal with queries from the public and the media, and possible complaints against members. I send out communications to members and also make sure that relevant information, such as court cases and industry related matters, are made available.

Lucy: It sounds busy! I see from your emails that you are sometimes in the office at 5 am.

Aaron: Yes, this is because in addition to my FISA work, I fulfil two roles at Nedbank. I am a trust practitioner in Nedbank Private Wealth, where I deal with practical and compliance issues relating to trusts, and act as a nominee trustee on some 400 trusts. Then I am also head of Health & Safety for the Nedbank Phase 2 building in Sandton which, when fully occupied, has 9 000 occupants! This is a responsible role and one that I truly value. I have Level 3 First Aid accreditation and various other Health & Safety courses under my belt. Given the nature of crises and emergencies, I often have to drop things and attend to issues, relating from fire drills to heart attacks and assisting with a birth which occurred in the office.

Lucy: How do you fit FISA into your schedule?

Aaron: I love my FISA work and have a deep commitment to it. It gives me direct insights into the industry and access to industry roleplayers. How many people have the Chief Master on speed dial? At the end of each day, I ask myself: "Have I prejudiced anyone in the course of my day?" If I have, then I know I have to juggle my priorities the next day.

Lucy: If you don't mind my saying, you seem to have been around for ever! How and when did you get involved with FISA?

Aaron: The short answer is that 17 years ago, in January 1998, I found myself organising the AGM of the Association of Trust Companies (ATC) as a leave replacement for an employee of one of the corporate members. The following year, I found myself retyping the original 29 page ATC constitution so that we had it in electronic format, and not highlighted in blue, green or red ink depending on which year changes to the constitution were made!

Somehow things went from there. In 2003, I was involved in the early discussions around how to transform the ATC into FISA, and when FISA was constituted in 2008, I was formally appointed as secretary. One of my colleagues maintains that the only way I will be allowed to leave FISA will be in a box!

Lucy: Tell us briefly about your career.

Aaron: I have the FPSA ® designation. I am a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries & Administrators (FCIS) and also a member of STEP. I further have a Master's degree in Corporate Governance from Wits University. I started my career with Syfrets Trust in Cape Town in 1987, and relocated to Johannesburg two years later.

Lucy: And outside of work?

Aaron: When I am not lifting our daughter to orchestra practice and various school extra - murals, I love watching sport on TV, and reading legal thrillers.

Lucy: Is there any special message you have for FISA members?

Aaron: Read your emails! No, but seriously, FISA is only as strong as its members! So if we are all on the same page and working towards promoting the industry, I believe that FISA will go very far as a professional body.