

KIERAN CUDDIHY

What is your job title?

Journalist, broadcaster and presenter of The Hard Shoulder on Newstalk 106-108fm

What route of education and qualification did you take to get to your now chosen career position?

I studied Law in UCC after my Leaving Certificate, qualifying in 2004. I then went on to Blackhall Place to train to be a solicitor. I qualified in Spring 2009. I then travelled to Canada for a year where I spent time working for a local radio station. When I returned to Ireland in 2010, I did a Masters in Journalism in DCU and began working in Newstalk in 2011.

I started out as researcher on The Breakfast Show before becoming a reporter. In 2017 I began to present my own current affairs show every Sunday morning. In 2018, I was chosen to replace one of the Breakfast presenters. In September 2020 I began presenting The Hard Shoulder.

Why did you choose this career?

I mainly chose it because after having a taste of it while working in Canada, I was fairly confident that I would enjoy it.

What is a typical work day like?

I get into the office at about 1pm everyday. Though in reality the day starts before that because you need to be aware of all the main stories from the newspapers each morning and how each story has been covered on Newstalk Breakfast, Morning Ireland, The Pat Kenny Show, Today with Claire Byrne, News at One and Lunchtime Live.

When I get into the office I have a meeting with the production team. The first thing we do is go back over the show from the previous day and decide what items worked well and what didn't.

We then go through possible items for each available time slot for the show ahead. There are between 10 and 12 slots to fill, depending on what day of the week it is.

After we collectively decide what to cover, how we want to cover it, what guests we want, etc, the production team then start to put it all together. While they are doing that, I am researching each item and preparing for interviews.

The show starts at 4pm and finishes at 7pm.

How long is your work day?

I am in the office for only about 6 hours but in some ways, you're never really off!

How much variety is there in your work?

There is huge variety in the types of topics we cover. News and current affairs provide the backbone of the show and that means I get to interview senior Ministers and other policy makers in different areas. We also do a lot of feature items in each show too so you could go from speaking to comedians to scientists to heartbreaking human interest stories.

What do you love about your job?

It's probably that variety that I love. It's very rare that you get to the end of a show and find that the last three hours were boring. Sometimes individual items might not work out, but usually it's an exciting process each day regardless.

What is the best career decision you have ever made?

To turn my back on a career as a solicitor and pursue journalism.

What is the worst career decision you have ever made?

I don't regret any career decision I've made. Some might not have appeared wise at the time but everyone's career story is a collection of incidents - good and bad - and without the bad, the story would only be half formed.

What do you read?

I am currently reading *The Shortest History of England* by James Hawes. It's great. He wrote a similar book about Germany a couple of years ago and I loved it.

I generally read fiction though. I love historical fiction like the *Wolfe Hall* series by Hillary Mantel. Every now and then you can't beat a good crime thriller though, something from Michael Connolly maybe.

What do you think are the secrets behind getting to where you have got to?

In journalism, the margins are tight and the working day can seem relentlessly fast paced at times. It means I've seen lots of people come along and get swept away before they've had a chance to impress.

To succeed you have to do three things. The first is you have to get the basics right. This is as true for a researcher as a presenter. If you can't get the basics right, other people will quickly get tired of picking up after you.

The second thing is to be noticed. Again this applies to the researcher as much as the presenter. You have to speak up, pitch ideas, offer criticism, express opinion. The worst thing that can happen is that someone disagrees with you.

The third thing is the most often overlooked. You have to get on with people. That doesn't mean going out of your way to avoid confrontation but it does mean always trying to be decent. Decent people who work hard will generally get on well in life!

Would you recommend your career choice to others?

I would recommend it but I'd also advise people to go into it with their eyes open. Media is a constantly shifting landscape so employment can be precarious. Outside of RTE, there are lots of poorly paid people in the media and a much smaller number of people making a good living. But if you can navigate your way through all of that, it can be a very rewarding career.