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Alumnus Profile: Joe Adams

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Joe Adams (BUS '77, MBA '79)

Residence Carol Stream, Ill.

Occupation Managing partner and CEO of McGladrey LLP, the fifth largest assurance, tax and consulting firm in the United States and the largest focused on middle market businesses and the entrepreneurs who run them. Accounting Today recognized Adams as one of its “Top 100 Most Influential People in Accounting” in 2013.

Education Adams attended St. Joseph’s High School in Westchester, Ill., before becoming a DePaul Double Demon. “My brother attended DePaul, and he was the primary influence on my choice to attend DePaul and to pursue an undergraduate degree in accounting. I also wanted to stay close to home to be able to work and earn the money to pay for my education.”

Vital stats “I am fortunate to have spent my entire career at McGladrey, beginning as an entry-level auditor and advancing to partner in 1987. Since then, I have held a variety of leadership roles at McGladrey that have led to my current position.” Adams and Cheryl, his wife of 36 years, have five grown children and five grandchildren.

What I like best about my job “I like the short- and long-term challenges that consume my day. Overseeing a complex business provides me with an opportunity to be involved in a variety of areas, from strategy and vision to financial and operational results. I also enjoy working closely with the outstanding people who work for McGladrey or are clients and friends of our great firm.”

The biggest challenge I face in my job “Working to stay ahead of our competition and positioning our firm as uniquely better and the first-choice advisor to middle market leaders. This means constantly working to attract and develop diverse talent and providing them with a working environment that is second to none so they will, in turn, provide our clients with an experience that is second to none.”

My DePaul experience “DePaul gave me a solid educational foundation not only in accounting and business, but also in nontechnical skills that have served me well throughout my career. The relationships I built at DePaul have aided me in my business and personal goals, and I am especially grateful to the DePaul career placement office for helping me get my job at McGladrey in the first place.”



Adams’ advice for new alumni:

“Don’t be afraid to get out of your comfort zone or make a mistake; just be sure to learn from it.”

“Stay relevant. Learn something new every day, and impart your knowledge to and coach others.”

“Listen respectfully and challenge others about what can be better; then do your part to make it better.”

“Change is constant and accelerating—accept it and use it to your advantage.”

“The relationships you build at DePaul and the ones you build after you graduate can make all the difference. I had no idea where my career would take me, but with the help of some extraordinary mentors, I have been involved in some amazing things.”