

## Featured Employer: Mr. Jackey Cheung

*Elbert Lee*



Jackey Cheung is the financial controller of an office leasing and dining club. He talked to T/Dialogue about the important role that accounting technicians play in his business, and why he recommends that his staff study for the AAT examinations.

### **Tell us something about the company you work for.**

The company I work for is mainly involved in the restaurant business although it also has stakes in real estate. It is not a big company by normal standards: I would say it is a medium-sized company with about 200 employees. However, the restaurant services we provide are of a very exclusive kind and we have been operating in Hong Kong for over a century.

### **What is your position in your company? Describe your role and work there.**

I am the financial controller. I oversee the accounting department, which is headed by the chief accountant. Under us are cost-controllers, the purchasing department and the IT department. Of course, I do not only work with accounts staff, although I am in charge of that department. I get involved in the management side of business as part of a team which plans for the future direction of our business.

### **You currently employ accounting technicians who are graduates of the HKIAAT. In what capacity are they employed?**

They are there chiefly to help work out the accounts – accounts receivable and payable. But I must say their work goes far beyond these basic duties. As an example, they help me put together the annual report. Although our company is not a listed company, we are quite meticulous about the preparation of our annual report and we try to adhere to listed company rules. Our accounting technicians help a lot with this. I work closely with them, and what they do is definitely beyond the capability of ordinary accounting clerks.

### **Do you think the accounting technicians play an important role in a company?**

Yes, they are very important. As I have said, not only do our accounting technicians help out in the regular accounting work – they also closely follow the different events that are connected to account entries, from issuing bills to internal checking and auditing. Our company's accounting technicians are usually employed at a higher level so that they play more of a supervisory role in our accounting operations.

### **What attributes do you think a quality accounting technician should possess?**

Good accounting work does not stop with getting the accounts right. The accounts department is the one department that has to work with all other departments in a company. Because of this, communication skills and relations with other departments are quintessential. In accounting, knowing how to liaise with other departments, to find the answer to questions such as why electricity costs have risen, can be as important as getting the accounting right. Good accounting technicians are always good communicators.

### **What kind of recruitment requirements do you have for accounting technicians?**

Like I said, interpersonal skills are very important. Of course, you need the proper academic qualifications too. But they are only the bare minimum. One or two years' work experience will definitely help.

### **When did you first hear about the HKIAAT?**

I first heard of the HKIAAT when I started my second job in 1996. Some of the staff I worked with were AAT graduates. I noticed they were trained in a more all-round manner than our other counterparts. From then on, I started to recommend that my colleagues took AAT training. Nowadays, the HKIAAT is very well-recognized by people working in my field. When someone wants to hire personnel at the supervisory level, they often now look for staff with AAT qualifications.

### **Are any AAT graduates working for you currently? What made you hire them?**

I have employed a total of four AAT graduates. Whether we would hire an AAT graduate depends on budgetary constraints and the level of work at which we need help. Generally speaking, if we need someone who has to do supervisory work, I would go for an AAT. It really depends. In the market, the average AAT graduate salary would be somewhere between those who are LCC-qualified and those who are CPA-qualified.

### **What are your general views on the HKIAAT and its graduates? Do you see any difference between accounting technicians who have an AAT qualification and those who do not?**

I am quite satisfied with the work performance of the AAT graduates. Some of them have superseded my expectations. In general, AAT graduates benefit from a broader training compared with those who are not AAT trained. In fact, in one case a senior accounting staff member with another accounting qualification failed to see the importance of internal auditing, while, to my surprise, a junior colleague of him with AAT training thought otherwise. It also seems to me that those who are AAT trained are more open to new ways of doing things.

**What are your views on the HKIAAT syllabus? Do you find it practical and does it match Hong Kong's market and your business needs?**

I think the edge of the AAT syllabus is its scope. The commercial training exceeds what is usually required of technicians in their present accounting positions. They can do well in any auditing job. The breadth of the syllabus means they are equipped to meet a wide range of professional requirements, from book-keeping to accounting and auditing, and in fact I think they are ready to work in almost any commercial area. The syllabus is special in the sense that it prepares them for multiple career-paths.

**Will you continue to encourage employees to acquire the HKIAAT qualification?**

Certainly! As a matter of fact only last year, I encouraged one of my staff members to go for AAT training. AAT is a professional qualification. If you are a Form 5 graduate or even someone with sub-degree training, it is unlikely that your current academic qualifications will get you anywhere in the professional field. However, an AAT qualification shows that your training in certain fields such as IT and accounting has reached a recognized high standard. This is very important for your future career development.