



Employer in the Spotlight

Jennifer Cheong

Be an all-round accounting specialist

Accounting manager at a Japanese corporation, Jennifer Cheong tells us how the proactive performance of AAT graduate Lawrence Leung has impressed her. She also shares her views on the changing role of the present-day accounting professional – from a single-aspect specialist to a multi-faceted expert.

by Foster Yim

Jennifer Cheong joined ITOCHU Textile Prominent (Asia) Ltd. (IPA) as the accounting manager in 2006. IPA was established in 1983, and focuses on trading and production control of textiles and garments. It trades worldwide, with its biggest markets are still those in the United States, Europe and Japan. “There are ten departments with a total 150 staff, with 14 in our accounting department,” says Jennifer. “Most of the accounting staff are responsible for multi-faceted support to other departments, ranging from simple accounting data entry to complex sales report and payment advice concerning international shipments. My roles are to oversee the whole accounting operation and credit function.”

Applying knowledge to work

The culture, as well as the accounting practice, of a Japanese company can be quite different from a local Hong Kong firm. One salient feature is the fine and exact division of labour related to each task. As a result, one may need to make similar reports but with a different nuance to various parties, to provide immediate feedback to all person-in-charge who are directly responsible for the result.

“AAT graduate Lawrence Leung helps me a lot in preparing and analyzing various kinds of sales reports. He has worked with me since I joined the company five years ago. He was tasked with some data entry and simple reporting duties when he was an accounts clerk. Later, I learn that he embarked on the AAT route in 2008. I then started to give him the chance to undertake more advanced tasks,” says Jennifer.

Also as a member of Hong Kong Institute of CPAs, Jennifer had heard about the AAT qualification and is impressed with its practical and wide coverage. She believes the qualification can help staff members to excel with sound and well-round accounting knowledge.

Knowledge application is as important as the textbook knowledge. Jennifer has witnessed this with Lawrence. “Lawrence’s work keeps on exceeding our expectations. Whenever a new task is assigned, he will take heed of every single bit of advice, trying his best to understand and to digest it. His acquired knowledge has laid a solid foundation for him to pick up new tasks more quickly and easily. He always adds value to the existing practice with insightful ideas. I think he constantly uses his best endeavour to apply what he has learnt through AAT training. That’s also the reason for his promotion to senior accounts clerk in 2010. Opportunities are there for someone who is well prepared,” Jennifer continues.

Lawrence’s progress is most obvious in aspects related to taxation, business law and IT. “He is now more sensitive to any tax concern when preparing payments. From the reports he modifies and designs, I can tell his concepts are deeply rooted. From a management’s point of view, this is to be commended because it will in turn save our time with good standard and delivery.”

Attitude matters

Now Lawrence is in charge of the “trip payment system”. This newly implemented system is part of the computerization scheme of IPA. Even during the design and implementation, Lawrence provided much constructive feedback, most notably in its practical applicability to the management, contributing much to its present success.



“We highly treasure employees who are passionate about their jobs and professional in how they execute their tasks. The former is a matter of attitude, which differs from person to person yet can be slightly moulded by work culture and learning environment; with good attitude, one tends to be more professional if equipped with proper knowledge. That’s how AAT kicked in and helped Lawrence, preparing him to graduate from a mere accounting personnel to his present supervisory role. He is now leading a team with two subordinates,” Jennifer says.

Be an all-round specialist

Jennifer believes the world and the accounting landscape have changed. “In the past, being familiar with accounting standards and know-how were all you needed to know in order to succeed in the profession. But now, on top of these accounting hard core skills, one also needs to have a variety of soft and peripheral skills, such as those related to communication and presentation, or even commercial law. Accounting professionals nowadays not only have to prepare financial reports or the like, but to utilize the knowledge learnt to support and facilitate other units, such as operation and marketing functions. All-round specialists are to be expected; this renders us indispensable,” she says.

To conclude, Jennifer suggests one should consider a professional qualification that has comprehensive coverage of professional accounting knowledge; recognizes the business reality and situation of Hong Kong; and that can be undertaken at one’s own pace. Then, you are half-way to reaching your goal. **T/D**