

Feature Interview: Jimmy Lau

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A few years ago, start-up programmer Jimmy Lau decided to take a different turn in his career and move into accountancy. HKIAAT was the door to a whole new world for him. Jimmy, an HKIAAT student, talks to T/Dialogue about his experience of taking the HKIAAT examinations and his career prospects.

Then and now

Jimmy was a programmer at an IT company, where his main duties revolved around computer applications. As the IT market changes in the blink of an eye, specialists have to constantly adjust themselves swiftly in response to rapidly-changing business scenarios. Jimmy knew this kind of volatile environment wasn't for him, while a career in the very systematic accountancy world sounded much more appealing.

With the company's support and encouragement, Jimmy started to study for a more promising career which better mirrored his interests. "I have always been sensitive to numbers," Jimmy claims. He enrolled on accounting programmes until he took up a job in which he had to be stationed in mainland China. Later, he picked up the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry International Qualifications (LCCI) courses. He then turned to the HKIAAT examinations as he found the syllabus to be practical and to be a good base for developing his ability in making assumptions and judgments based on a set of given numbers.

After taking a series of HKIAAT examinations to obtain his accounting qualifications, Jimmy is currently working as an accountant in a manufacturing company which exports toy products to the US market. Being an accountant isn't all about reading numbers and figures. Jimmy uses his financial reporting expertise, analyzing the data in hand, to come up with financial forecast reports. With all necessary information, he can confidently present his analysis to the finance manager and communicate with the sales manager to prepare the operating budget, financial position forecast, monitor cash flows, promptly record all transactions and safeguard the company's resources.

Just as Rome was not built in one day, this professional confidence was hard won. Before obtaining his professional qualifications from the HKIAAT, Jimmy went through periods during which he felt lost and confused, just like many others. He had also been caught in the middle of one of those been-there-done-that situations where he blindly followed



instructions executed by his supervisors without understanding the reasons why. After sitting the HKIAAT examinations, Jimmy now understands the mechanism behind the figures presented to him. He sees more than just plain numbers. Many times he finds himself capable of answering questions before being asked, or getting tasks done before they were assigned because now he possesses the accounting know-how. His supervisors are supportive and they encourage his further studies and as a better qualified staff member he will have more opportunities for advancement inside the company.

Speaking from experience

Jimmy has the following thoughts and insights on the Accounting Technician Examination (ATE). "The ATE is difficult at first. Once you have overcome the main hurdles, it gets easier." As challenging as it sounds, Jimmy believes the ATE is of appropriate difficulty. "If the examination wasn't of a certain standard, how could the HKIAAT maintain the quality of its members?"

To prepare for the ATE and Professional Bridging Examination (PBE), Jimmy's key to success is concentration. "Do not underestimate the examinations as they demand high concentration. Do not spend the first half an hour of a study session getting all warmed up then wander off to play video games or go on a date. Time management is important," Jimmy suggests. He thinks that many HKIAAT students tend to recite facts without understanding them. "Take business law as an example. Understanding is more effective when you remember; remembering is more effective when you understand. Students need to be made aware of the interaction between memory and understanding. Practice makes perfect. Revise, read some past papers, and read the questions carefully because they aren't always straightforward. Even though the questions may change, application of theories stays the same." Jimmy also suggests students take the initiative in finding responsive classmates and starting study groups. "Sometimes making it work by putting a collaborative effort together can be an effective study technique."

Not only did the HKIAAT provide a clear and fast route for Jimmy to achieve his career goal, it has also given him confidence needed to operate in today's highly competitive market. Upon completing the PBE, Jimmy hopes to get qualified and do part-time teaching for HKIAAT courses. We applaud his enthusiasm and wish him all the best in all his future endeavours.