



As a local CPA firm that has long been keen to offer internship opportunities to AAT students, C K Yau & Partners CPA Ltd. has provided many great chances for AAT students to grow with the team. K T Tam, the practising director of C K Yau & Partners CPA Ltd and W H Lam & Partners CPA Ltd, talks about how different intakes of AAT students have formed the base of the team, and the benefits that employing these students brings to the company and the industry in general.

By Aldric Chau

Employer in the spotlight – K T Tam

Driving the industry forward

History of success

Back in the 1980s, when HKIAAT was still called the Hong Kong Association of Accounting Technicians, Tam first noted this professional body offering recognition to mid-level accounting personnel. At that time, C K Yau & Partners was growing. Today it is a CPA firm employing around 50 colleagues with businesses in both Hong Kong and in the mainland. Service offerings have been expanded to include auditing, taxation and business consultancy as market demand diversifies.

Proven to be different

Tam welcomes students who are studying accounting to visit the company or work part-time there during the summer break on a regular basis. “We value the efforts of the passionate and diligent students who form part of our team and encourage them to attain a professional qualification like AAT,” says Tam. He explains that AAT students who have worked for the company always prove themselves to be capable in many ways.

While AAT examinations are more popular among sub-degree holders and people starting out their accounting studies, AAT qualification holders work impressively well in showing employers that they are different. According to Tam, “AAT graduates tend to be more diligent in absorbing new knowledge when compared with their

counterparts.” He thinks that AAT students tend to be more spontaneous in acquiring knowledge because they have a stronger commitment to the accounting field and devote extra time and effort to preparing for the examinations. “The self-motivated AAT students concentrate more on practical application rather than textbook knowledge,” Tam says.

“We need people equipped with practical skills and that’s why we particularly welcome AAT graduates who want to join us. AATs pick up the jobs in the early stage of on-the-job training faster and more easily. In mid-sized CPA firms like ours, pragmatic staff like an AAT student plays an important role.”

AAT graduate Stephen, who does an incredible job at the company, gives Tam further confidence in the AAT workforce. Stephen first joined the company three years ago as an auditing assistant. “After Stephen passed the AAT examinations, he has become something of an expert in technical auditing standards,” Tam comments. He believes that studying for the AAT examinations, the auditing paper in particular, teaches students the essential knowledge they need to handle auditing tasks and answer clients’ inquiries. Tam has subsequently assigned more complicated auditing jobs to Stephen to enrich his experience.

It’s not enough for an auditor to have strong technical knowledge, however; they need to meet clients regularly. Tam appreciates the way Stephen has gained confidence from his dealings with clients, and is impressed with his mature communications skills in explaining accounting concepts to people who do not share his specialized knowledge. “The way in which AAT students are tested to communicate accounting theories in examinations works well in grooming people with both technical and soft skills, such as Stephen,” says Tam.

Since the firm has started to have a regular intake of AAT students, Tam has become more familiar with AAT examination syllabus and opportunities the qualification offers. He believes that the AAT qualification coverage is all encompassing, introducing students to different aspects of the profession while exposing them to specialized areas such as auditing. Tam explains that this is very important because colleagues with the AAT qualification have to monitor a lot of backend auditing procedures. Some of them even play a supportive role assisting accountants in managing auditing projects.

Tam is an employer who places a high value on dialogue with his team. They arrange regular meetings whether through on-job training and briefings, or the annual performance review session. This employer is convinced that interaction and understanding are the key elements in forging a bond with his team. And it is during this feedback collection process that AATs can learn most from how their performance is evaluated.

Stay connected with market

Tam encourages AAT students to keep up their good work and live up to their employers’ expectations. One way of achieving this is to stay vigilant to changes in the industry. Accounting standards and industrial norms often change; this was particularly the case after Hong Kong accounting standards converged with international ones in 2005. Tam recommends that AAT students keep their knowledge up to date by attending seminars and reading journals to gather the latest market intelligence.

“Stephen is growing fast with his willingness to learn, well-developed people skills and accounting knowledge from AAT qualification. I am looking forward to employing more valuable AAT graduates like Stephen in the future.” **T/D**