

## *Employer in the spotlight*

# Preparing for real-world challenges



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The professional world can be rather different from what you read from books. Andrew Chen from ANDA CPA Limited gives us his advice on preparing oneself for a career in accounting through professional qualification and personal development.

### *Could you give us a brief introduction to your company and your responsibilities?*

We are a CPA firm which provides a full-range of accounting services including auditing, taxation and corporate services. We have two offices comprising a total of about 50 staff. We serve clients in a variety of professions and industries including manufacturing, trading, securities and listed companies.

As an executive partner of the firm, I work primarily on the business development and oversee the talent development. This training involves keeping the staff up-to-date on the latest accounting standards and practices, as well as reminding them of common errors and ways of handling common issues.

### *What are some of Chan Ka Lok's qualities that impress you?*

Chan Ka Lok is a young, dynamic and visionary young man and has worked with us for one and a half years. He is a responsible employee who possesses the necessary competencies required to begin his professional accounting career and has an inherent ability to focus his learning. He has demonstrated the ability to integrate knowledge effectively in applying concepts and techniques to his daily work. Ka Lok is a quick learner, a focused and meticulous person who always completes his work accurately. Furthermore, he has a good grasp of fundamental accounting concepts and knowledge, as well as other important qualities such as being logical and organized in processing large amounts of raw data. These qualities are crucial not only in just completing the tasks but also in improving efficiency.

### *What are your views towards the AAT qualification?*

I believe the AAT Examination is indeed quite useful for students. In fact, I was also an AAT graduate myself when I first joined the profession. I think the qualification is a good stepping stone for students to articulate to qualify as a CPA.

It offers a chance and a very viable choice for those without a degree in accounting to start developing their careers in the profession. The AAT Examination and Professional Bridging Examination offer the fundamental and practical knowledge, which range from auditing to taxation and law, and are good starting points for beginners in accounting who are looking for a comprehensive coverage of knowledge and concepts.

***Do you think having a professional qualification such as the AAT helps accounting personnel excel at work?***

I think taking professional exams is an excellent chance to test yourself on how much you actually know. Public exams such as the AAT may be challenging for students, but once you have passed them, this is a good sign showing that you have a certain degree of understanding on a wide range of accounting knowledge and concepts. While a fresh graduate may not be able to achieve mastery in any particular area at the early stage of his career, it is important that they start from somewhere, and the AAT qualification can serve as that starting point.

***As an employer, what do you expect from prospective accounting personnel?***

In addition to professional academic background and knowledge, accounting personnel are also expected to be disciplined, well organized, logical and have a positive attitude together with a high level of integrity. They need to have strong ability in analyzing and solving problems as well as in continued learning. He or she must be able to work in fast-paced environments and have the ability to think fast and work in a variety of situations.

Academic background and solid technical knowledge are unavoidable requirements for anyone who wish to pursue a career in accounting. Apart from technical knowledge, I also pay attention to the candidate's logical thinking. I believe it is important that a prospective employee is capable of making reasonable and logical arguments that are in line with the knowledge and concepts he or she possesses. Another important area that candidates should pay attention to is their personal integrity and professional ethics, which is highly-valued by the profession.

***Do you have any advice for current students and prospective accounting personnel?***

Some students may find it difficult to determine whether they are suited to a career in accounting since they have had virtually no experience working in the profession. This is understandable. My view is that it does not hurt to give it a try if you are interested. Whether you eventually decide to go on with accounting or to pursue a career in the finance or other areas, the knowledge and mentality you acquire from accounting will be of a benefit for your future. Your accounting knowledge would provide you with good foundation not just for an accounting career, but also for your general business acumen.