

*Employer in the spotlight***Succeed through dedication and perseverance**

Name: Alex So
Title: Sole Proprietor
Company: Alex So & Co.

Alex So, employer of Andy Chan from Alex So & Co., shares with aspiring professionals what it means to be in the accounting profession and what it takes for one to succeed in the profession.

Could you give us a brief introduction to your company and your responsibilities in the company?

Our firm can be categorized as a small to medium-sized practitioner, consisting of around 10 people. We have been conducting business for over 10 years, engaging in traditional areas such as general accounting and auditing. We have also expanded to other areas such as IPO and project finance work, which have become popular in recent years. Our client base consists mostly of manufacturers, as well as those such as property holding companies, plus several international corporations. Nearly half of our clients are based in Hong Kong, while China accounts for one third, and the remaining are in foreign countries.

My main responsibilities in the firm are to serve as the final decision maker, signing audit reports and other outgoing documents on the firm's behalf. In addition, as our firm is not a big firm, I am also hands-on with aspects such as sales and marketing.

What are some of Andy Chan's qualities that impress you?

I remember there were a number of candidates interviewing for Andy's current position at that time. What struck me most about Andy was his great resolve. As opposed to other candidates who might have higher and more advanced qualifications, Andy had just finished his own Diploma in Accountancy at that time. However, Andy showed that he had planned out his career path well. More importantly, he showed confidence in himself being able to follow through the AAT articulation and eventually qualify as a Certified Public Accountant. His dedication and his willingness to start from the bottom and work his way up truly impressed me, and that was why I decided then to give him an opportunity to prove himself.

Through on-the-job training as well as guidance provided by his seniors, I am delighted to say that Andy has been performing very well in his job and shows great potential.

What are your views on the AAT qualification? Do you think professional qualifications such as the AAT help accounting personnel excel at work?

I think professional qualifications like AAT are not only essential but also very helpful for accounting personnel, especially in the early stages of their careers. The AAT exams in particular are a very good alternative route for students who did not obtain a university degree in accounting. This is because the syllabus of the AAT is tailor-made for those starting out in the accounting profession. Going through these exams gives budding professionals the necessary tools they need for starting out and obtaining their first employment in the profession.

In a more practical sense, these exams allow accounting personnel to familiarize themselves with the basic knowledge they would require at work, so that we as employers would not have to go through the basic concepts with them again. Naturally, when it comes to more advanced procedures and standards in the real world, employees still require guidance from more senior colleagues. However, the exams still give them a good basis of understanding for one to learn more advanced knowledge.

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

I believe as someone who has decided to enter into a profession that deals substantially with numbers, accuracy is a very important quality for any accounting student. Another important quality I look for in prospective employees is an analytical mind. The ability to analyze data and information is a valuable asset because the commercial world is getting more and more complicated and advanced. It is simply no longer possible to deal with everything in accounting with only straightforward arithmetic. Good public exam results are also indispensable because they form the very initial impression of you as a candidate in a prospective employer's mind.

One quality I have to stress is integrity. While this may not be easily assessed in a short interview, it is nevertheless in my opinion one of the most crucial traits in all aspiring accounting professionals. Accounting professionals must always be honest in their professional undertakings, and must follow the rules and the law strictly.

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

Accounting personnel have to be hardworking. They must also be able to exert good self-control by practising good time management in balancing work and studies. Persevere, and you will be able to reap the fruits of your own hard work one day.