

*Versatile AAT***Way to achieve success for multi-taskers**

**Name:** Shirley So  
**Title:** Accounts Clerk  
**Company:** Hui Lau Shan Food Manufacturing Ltd.

Persistence is often a key element to success in study and at work. For Shirley So, an accounts clerk, a mother and a QP student seeking to become a Certified Public Accountant, taking a cautious and patient approach has been all-important as she has juggled and multi-tasked her way to one milestone after another.

Having worked as an accounts clerk at Hui Lau Shan Food Manufacturing Ltd. for eight years now, Shirley's day-to-day responsibilities include preparing full sets of accounts for up to ten branches of the dessert brand, managing payroll accounts for employees, and preparing profit and loss statements and balance sheets for the management on a monthly basis.

Before joining Hui Lau Shan, Shirley had worked as a customer service officer at a property management company for a few years. "At that time I had little idea of what I wanted for my career," Shirley said. "Luckily, I developed an interest in accounting and then decided to beef up my skills and knowledge in the field." Shirley worked hard to complete an Advanced Diploma in Accounting Studies with the Hong Kong School of Commerce in 2011.

Following these successes, Shirley's supervisor encouraged her to better equip herself by taking professional examinations such as the Accredited Accounting Technician (AAT) Examination and Professional Bridging Examination (PBE), which would be the right springboards to prepare Shirley for the next level of challenges and opportunities. "I believe I made the right choice for my accounting career by signing up for the AAT Examination and later the PBE," she explained. These decisions have now proven instrumental in Shirley's career development, as she has gradually taken on more responsibilities and excelled in her roles.

"It could get very busy for us as we approached the reporting deadlines," said Shirley. "But both the AAT Examination and PBE were worth pursuing, so I decided to bite the bullet." Shirley did most of her study preparation at night after work, while making sure a portion of time was reserved for her beloved son, who is attending kindergarten.

By 2012, Shirley had completed her AAT Examination with exemptions on four of the papers and then moved on to the PBE the same year. She managed to complete the four papers of the PBE in two years' time and was named as the top student for Paper III "PBE Auditing and Information

Systems", which is quite an achievement for someone who had been juggling between work, study and parenting.

Shirley stresses that the rewards she has enjoyed from studying the AAT Examination and PBE have far exceeded her expectations. "Since completing the examinations, there have been many instances where I have come to find that what I learned from the AAT Examination and PBE is highly relevant to what I have to deal with in my work. The knowledge I have gained through my studies enables me to handle tasks more efficiently as I understand the rationale behind each task and what my employer expects from the financial statements."

"The auditing knowledge I acquired from preparing for the PBE is another example that I would like to share," Shirley said, adding that with a thorough understanding of the auditing process and requirements, she now finds it much easier to work with auditors and to prepare documents that suit their requirements.

Looking ahead, Shirley sees herself continuing in the accounting industry and has set her sights on completing the Qualification Programme (QP) in three years' time. Judging by the success that Shirley has already demonstrated in her career, we can safely assume that she will achieve all of her goals.

### **Shirley's tips for students**

- ✧ **Be determined but not overly ambitious:** It's never easy to multi-task, therefore it's important to set realistic goals. Shirley's winning strategy has been to play it conservatively and sit one paper at a time. That could be a useful reference for those of you who are studying part-time.
- ✧ **Allocate time to address weak areas:** As the saying goes, it's important to understand your strengths and weaknesses in preparing for examinations. So, be careful with allocating your time for revision for the different papers to ensure that you are spending more time on your weak points.
- ✧ **Manage your time:** Once you have made a schedule, continue to assess your time usage objectively and stick to your revision plans. Spread your revision time evenly over the time until the test so that you are able to avoid the pains of facing bottlenecks during crunch periods.

### **Shirley So's study and career path**

2004 – 2007	Customer Service Officer at property management company
2009 – 2011	Advance Diploma in Accounting Studies from Hong Kong School of Commerce
2011 – 2012	Completed AAT Examination with exemption from four papers
2012 – 2014	Completed Professional Bridging Examination (Top Student in Paper III "PBE Auditing and Information Systems" in the June 2013 session)
2007 – present	Accounts Clerk at Hui Lau Shan Food Manufacturing Ltd.
Present	HKICPA's Qualification Programme student