

Employer in the spotlight

Written by Aldric Chau



Name: Irene Chin

Title: Director of Finance

Company: Shama Management Limited

An advocate for the pursuit of professional qualification, Ms. Chin gives her thoughts on what the AAT qualification has to offer in grooming industry talents and provides her advice on how to stand out from the competition.

Tell us about the company you work for and the nature of its business.

Shama Management Limited is a property management service company based in Hong Kong. Our core business is managing serviced apartments owned by our clients as well as those owned by the company itself. With a decade's experience in property management, we have a wide network and business base not only in Hong Kong but also in Shanghai and Beijing. In the near future, we are expecting greater business growth in Dalian, Bangalore and other regions.

What is your position in the company? What are your main roles?

As the Director of Finance, I am responsible for the group's financial operations. Although there are finance managers for different teams in the mainland, their immediate supervisors have to report to me on all financial reports, protocols and decisions. One of my key areas of responsibility is to monitor all the month-end closing reports they submit and to regularly review all financial workflows to make sure our money flows smoothly.

When did you first hear about the HKIAAT? What are your views on the AAT qualification?

I first heard about the HKIAAT more than ten years ago when I was returning to Hong Kong. I was looking at the professional accounting qualifications available in the market. AAT qualification and LCCI came to my sight at that time. I found that AAT qualification was a brilliant option for sub-degree holders to join the accounting profession step-by-step. I believe the main success factor behind is that it covers much wider areas than other offerings, so that employers can expect more from AAT graduates in terms of their technical know-how, business acumen and other soft skills.



How many staff at your company have the AAT qualification? What are their roles?

Our accounting team is composed of eight colleagues; two of them have the AAT qualification. They are Accounting Officers and are responsible for performing a full set of accounting tasks, from handling of account receivables and payables to regular month-end data processing. In a business organization like ours they play a critical supportive role, serving as a strong backbone for our team's daily financial operations.

What are your thoughts on the AAT exam syllabus?

The syllabus is very comprehensive. It covers a wide spectrum of topics an accounting personnel, junior or senior, should know as the first step to perform well in the accounting profession. To cite some examples, I think that the financial accounting subject is the most useful one of all. Students grasp the basic concepts of costing, debit and credit accounting rules, and so on from the subject. Basic as it may seem, it builds up a strong foundation for all accounting personnel by equipping them with the technical language used in this profession. Whenever we mention accounting terms to colleagues with AAT qualification, they understand what we are getting across. If you are working with people without this knowledge, they will just blindly follow what they are told and will never be able to master the skills they need at work, which will inevitably limit their potential for success.

Another technical area being covered in the AAT qualification, taxation is also very practical indeed. One of our department's duties is to handle the tax provision. Our colleagues need to know the proper methodology and procedures for handling taxes as well as all the related compliance issues. The AAT qualification offers a good understanding in this area, which is more than the requirement in handling the basic coordination tasks.

Do you see any difference between those who have an AAT qualification and those who do not?

There is a clear difference between colleagues with and without a professional qualification. Although a qualification is never the single benchmark for judging an employee's ability and value, colleagues with a qualification tend to stand out and will be given more opportunities to take up more complicated projects and supervisory roles in leading a team or sub-team.

Will you recommend your staff obtain the AAT qualification? Why?

I would recommend the AAT qualification to anyone who is interested in making the first step in pursuing career in accountancy profession. It is also a decent choice for people who are not so sure about what stream they would like to develop in accounting. With the various subjects covered in AAT qualification, students are given a pretty good introduction to the world of accounting and business. They can then have a feel on various spectrums before specializing in their area of interest.