

## *Employer in the spotlight*

### **Clear goal leads you to success**



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Life-long learning is critical in evaluating the performance of employees. How can one make the right choice when deciding what training or qualifications to take? Desmond Hui, audit senior from Anthony S L Chiang & Co, thinks it is important to set a career goal before making any decision to pursue continuous education. He talks about his colleague, Peter Lee, who has chosen the very popular and widely-recognized AAT qualification.

#### ***Give us background to your company. What is your role there?***

Our company offers a wide range of professional services which include auditing, taxation, accounting and secretarial services. Although we have a wide range of clients, the focus lies mainly on trading businesses in Hong Kong. I am an audit senior in the company, and my responsibility is to review audit reports and financial statements prepared by my team, which consists of Peter and two more members. Our firm employs about 20 colleagues within the three teams.

#### ***What are the particular qualities of Peter Lee that impress you?***

Peter is a highly efficient colleague who never submits his work beyond the deadline. He has a positive attitude at work – most clearly shown by the fact that he doesn't mind going the extra mile to complete his auditing tasks, even though this frequently requires him to work overtime.

#### ***Can you give examples of how he demonstrates his competence at work?***

As the only member in our team who possesses the AAT qualification, Peter distinguishes himself with his strong foundation of technical knowledge in accounting and auditing. He is always ready to apply his knowledge such as control measures on his projects. Another example is that when he calculates complicated tax returns for clients, he makes use of the taxation rules he has learnt and applies them into the actual scenarios, making adjustments according to local adaptations. His competency in applying his knowledge and explaining the facts to clients has earned him a lot of credit.

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

I believe that a professional qualification is important for any industry, especially accounting, because it serves as a benchmark to measure the skills and knowledge of an accounting personnel. Accounting personnel can join the profession through two main paths: the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants' Qualification



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Programme (QP) for university graduates, or the HKIAAT route for more junior-level personnel who want to acquire a practical skills-based qualification to enhance their competitiveness in the accountancy field. The AAT route is also a springboard for sub-degree holders to progress in the profession. Taking Peter as an example, he completed all eight papers in the AAT Examination in 2008, followed by all four papers in the Professional Bridging Examination in 2010. Now, at the end of 2011, he is taking the final examination of QP. What a feat!

***Do you think studying for the AAT Examination helps accounting personnel like Peter excel at work?***

The formula for success in accounting is theoretical knowhow plus practical experience. The AAT Examination is a platform for talent such as Peter to grasp all the knowledge and skills required in the profession. Through the practical mode of learning and daily application at work, Peter has learnt fast and has made the best out of the examination curriculum. I am convinced studying for these exams benefit all other accounting personnel the same way.

***What qualities do you think are important for accounting personnel?***

Accounting combines numeracy with people-oriented skills. For instance, in an auditing project, you need to have a sharp understanding of clients' business environment and financial statements – reading through all the complex figures and yet, still being able to communicate the correlations between the financial figures in a way comprehensible to the layman. Therefore, when it comes to quality expectations from accounting personnel, numerical and communications skills top the list.

***What in your opinion are the opportunities for Peter as he develops his career in the company and in the industry in general?***

Peter is still relatively junior in this industry and will need to accumulate more experience. But I believe his attainment of AAT, PBE and QP have helped him gear up for a wide range of career opportunities. After completing QP, he will have more choice in his career - whether he wants to stay in our firm, move to one of the Big Four accounting firms or to venture into the commercial sector.

***Do you have any advice for young people in connection with their studies and career planning?***

When people first graduate, they may not know where exactly they are heading. I would suggest young people ponder seriously over their career choice because every decision you make not only makes its mark on your resume, but also affects how far you can go in your career. Finance and accounting cover many areas: financial reporting, auditing, taxation, financial management, and so on. Seek advice from professionals in respective areas and eliminate what you dislike doing. You'll then find it much easier to reach a sound decision.

*Written by Aldric Chau*



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