

Employer in the spotlight

AATs are capable of working independently



Name: Katherine Leung
Title: Senior Accountant
Company: Utopian Computer Systems Limited

Katherine Leung, senior accountant in a computer accessories distribution, wholesale and retail business, talks about the competence of AAT graduates in the workplace and the top qualities she looks for when recruiting accounting personnel.

Give us some background about your company. What is your role in the company?

Utopian has a history of around 30 years, specializing in the distribution, wholesale and retail computer accessories. In addition to our four retail shops in Hong Kong, we also develop our own branded products.

As a senior accountant, I oversee all the company's financial issues including implementation and reviewing accounting procedures and policies, establishing accounting software and inventory control systems, managing the shops accounts and reporting to director. I am also involved in the annual audit to ensure the company's financial reporting aligns with the required standards.

What are the particular qualities of Jessica that impress you?

Independent, mature, responsible and a valuable team member are the words I would use to describe Jessica. Even when she first joined the company without much experience, she took the initiative to learn proactively and made efforts to solve problems independently without always being reliant on other colleagues' support. She is also detail-oriented and pays great deal of attention to ensure every figure on the report is correct since she realizes the importance of accuracy in accounting and appreciates how crucial this is for subsequent analysis.

How does Jessica assist you in the company?

Jessica provides important assistance by taking charge of the full set of accounts of the four retail shops. This is not an easy task and she needs to be very familiar with the operation of our shops, i.e. all products sold in our shops. She also needs to conduct monthly stock taking to control the inventory level, and to prepare sales reports to give management a full picture of the products' performance and effectiveness of our promotions. These are all important aspects of retail.

How would you comment on her competence in applying technical knowledge at work?

Among the accounting team, which consists of four other members, Jessica distinguishes herself not only with her positive work attitude but also her competence in applying knowledge from her studies to her work. For example, when Jessica manages the inventories of the retail shops, she always tries to observe the related accounting and auditing rules to ensure that every process is properly conducted according to industry standards.

What are your views on the AAT qualification?

AAT is an excellent platform for the younger generation to understand more about the accounting profession, which may be mistakenly thought of as dull and monotonous by some people. It enables students to obtain all-round knowledge of the profession in a pragmatic way and at the same time obtain a recognized professional qualification to help them embark on a career in accounting.

The CPA designation is the goal for many young people like Jessica to strive for. However, not everyone can afford tertiary education, which is an entry ticket to the Hong Kong Institute of CPA's Qualification Programme. AAT is therefore a perfect alternative and a career springboard for sub-degree holders such as Jessica to reach for their goals. Jessica is currently taking the Professional Bridging Examination and the company is fully behind her in this endeavour.

As a supervisor, what qualities do you expect from accounting personnel?

There are a few key attributes that I look for during recruitment. First and foremost, relevant experience is important because this determines the staff training cost. For applicants with less experience, academic and professional qualifications such as AAT are essential. Having these demonstrates their commitment and is proof that they have attained a certain level of professional knowledge. Other qualities such as integrity, eagerness to learn and a sense of responsibility are also important for accounting personnel, who are guardians of the business's financial system.

What in your opinion are the opportunities for Jessica as she develops her career in the industry?

Jessica has been doing a great job in her current role. To go further in her career, she can remain open to more diverse job opportunities and roles that the company is preparing for her. After gaining different job exposure, coupled with her input from continuous education, I believe that she will have a bright career in the company and the profession.

Do you have any advice for youngsters for their study and career planning?

I am passionate about the accounting profession because I love working with numbers and this gives me a great deal of satisfaction. I think younger accounting talents should also have a passion for the profession since this could motivate them to study and work hard in this challenging industry, and as a result help them achieve career success.