

Employer in the spotlight
Written by Isabella Lam



Name: Ken Loh
Title: Financial Controller
Company: Advance Thermo Control Ltd /
Advance Heat Products Ltd

Professional qualification – a boost to your career

Nowadays more and more people aim for higher education and professional qualifications in order to stay competitive in the marketplace – a phenomenon that can be found in the accounting profession. This month's featured employer, Ken Loh, uses AAT graduate Frankie Fung as an example to illustrate how important it is for accounting personnel to have a professional qualification and how continuous education can help young accountants keep their career moving.

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

Advance Thermo Control Ltd (ATC) was established in 1984. It manufactures a line of temperature control and regulating devices such as thermostats, integrating high-tech design from the United States with flexible and innovative manufacturing techniques from Hong Kong.

Advance Heat Products Ltd (AHP), which is where Frankie works, is a subsidiary of ATC that manufactures heat products including heaters, electric heating pads and seat heaters. Products manufactured by both companies are exported to the United States.

We have 36 employees in our Hong Kong office, four of whom work in the accounts department. There are more than 60 staff and 400 workers in our mainland factories.

What is your main role in the company?

As the financial controller, my main role is to manage the accounts for both ATC and AHP, to prepare the companies' financial budgets, to supervise the accounting staff and to oversee the operations of the accounts department.



What are your views on Frankie's work?

Frankie has helped a lot in improving the efficiency of the whole accounts department. He has performed really well in the past year. With his professional qualification and years of work experience, he is well equipped to take up his current role. Frankie is young, energetic and diligent. These qualities enable him to perform his duties.

Our company always encourages staff to pursue life long learning because we believe that professional knowledge facilitates career advancement. I know that Frankie plans to enrol on the new collaborative top-up degree programme jointly organized by the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs and The Open University of Hong Kong. I believe that this programme will further enhance his competency in the field.

In your opinion, what are Frankie's competitive advantages?

One of Frankie's competitive advantages is his strong communication skills. Based on the financial reports that he submits to me, I think the knowledge that he has acquired from the AAT examination Paper 2: Business Communication and Paper 7: Advanced Accounting is really useful to his work.

In addition, Frankie has to go to our mainland China office from time to time to communicate with our colleagues there. His proficiency in Putonghua and good communication skills enable him to work smoothly with our mainland colleagues.

What are the important qualities needed by a competent member of the accounting team? What skills and attributes do you expect your staff to have?

We usually look for candidates who have attained a professional qualification, such as AAT. We also expect our accounting staff to be responsible, efficient and hard-working. Moreover, it is important that they should pursue self-advancement through continuous education.

Do you think it is important for accounting personnel to attain a professional qualification?

Definitely. I think most employers value professional qualifications. The AAT qualification is an all-round qualification with wide recognition. It offers students the opportunity to enter the accounting profession and advance their careers. It is a good channel for sub-degree holders to learn about the accounting knowledge and skills that they need in their careers.

What kind of advice would you give students who are planning an accounting career?

Apart from life-long learning, I suggest that accounting students should acquire different business knowledge, such as economics. Accounting personnel should know the relationship between accounting data and underlying economic events. As such, I believe the new AAT examination syllabus, which covers an extended business context, will better equip students for the challenges ahead.