

Employer in the spotlight

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Stay Competitive with a Professional Qualification

As clouds gather from the financial turmoil, employers worldwide face the toughest question: how many staff they can keep. Susie Kwong, Consulting Manager of a business solution provider, discusses how an employee can stay competitive with a professional qualification during turbulent times like now.

Tell us about your company and its business nature.

Poly-Asia is an IT solution provider specializing in enterprise resource planning (ERP) and accounting solutions. As a strategic partner with Microsoft, we implement a wide scope of Microsoft applications, from accounting systems and customer relationship management systems to ERP infrastructure. It is our role to collect user requirements from customers and customize the system to fit different companies' needs.

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

As the Consulting Manager for the company, I have to oversee all the projects and to make sure quality services are delivered to customers. I also monitor the performance of our call centre support team. At a macroscopic level, our accounting knowledge plays an important part in the quality of our consultancy service since everything from an application for inventory control to sales orders or purchase orders – all the logistics work flows – eventually integrate with the accounting system.

How did you first hear about the HKIAAT? What is the general view on the HKIAAT and the AAT qualification?

I heard about the HKIAAT from one of my colleagues, Thomas Ng. He is an Associate Application Consultant responsible for providing accounting and IT related consultancy services to our customers. He has just passed the AAT exams. Generally speaking, I believe AAT is an all rounded qualification that equips trainees with a wide array of disciplines as well as practical skill sets for the workplace.



Do you think the AAT examination helped Thomas acquire the essential skills for his current work?

Certainly. Thomas performs extraordinarily well in accounting-related projects. The comprehensive training he received from the AAT exams has enabled him to grasp an overall understanding of various areas of accounting. He can use technical accounting terms and concepts to communicate with customers effectively. Together with his strong IT background, he can help them to focus how the system should be designed for maximized effectiveness. I believe these are the key factors behind his impressive competency in gaining trust from customers.

What differences do you see between those who have an AAT qualification and those who do not?

There is a clear difference. Some of our new joiners have a purely IT background. We usually have to provide them with basic business and accounting training before they can understand the business flow and our customers' operation logistics. As Thomas obtained this knowledge through the AAT qualification, not only is he proficient in the language of accounting, which helps when communicating with customers, but he also has good business presentation skills. He has strong professional written communication skills, which are highly valued in our people-oriented industry.

What kind of recruitment requirements do you have? What skills and attributes do you expect your subordinates to have?

In an IT firm, we look for two main types of people: technicians and consultants. We may not expect our technicians, who are mainly stationed at the company premises for in-house programming tasks, to be very presentable. But we do look for consultants, like Thomas, to be presentable and well-versed with business knowledge. I am convinced that his AAT qualification together with his IT Bachelor degree, have brought him extra value through his contribution to the company. Good presentation skills are another asset. Our consultants represent the company, meeting customers face-to-face, and therefore, their image greatly influences our reputation and sales revenue.

Will you recommend your staff study for the AAT qualification? Why?

I am supportive of our staff pursuing AAT qualification to continuously learn and strive for a professional recognition. The main concern for part-time study is time management. However, Thomas managed his time well when taking AAT exams by wisely prioritizing his tasks and spending his leisure time on his studies. After all, it goes without saying that lifelong learning is the sole way for employees to stay competitive, especially during unfavorable economic conditions.