

Employer in the spotlight

Make yourself as the right choice during interviews



Name: Ivan Yeung
Title: Financial Director
Company: Alibaba.com Hong Kong Limited

For most job seekers, one of the most vital issues in job-hunting has to be figuring out what employers are looking for in their prospective employees. Ivan Yeung, Finance Director of Alibaba.com Hong Kong Limited, sheds some light on what employers are looking for in job interviews.

Give us a brief introduction to your company.

Alibaba.com is a listed company in Hong Kong primarily focusing on e-commerce. We provide an online trading platform that is extensive, reliable and efficient, for sellers and buyers from China, Hong Kong and all over the world. In addition, we provide related services such as business management software, internet infrastructure and export related services to both buyers and sellers through this platform.

In today's fast-paced commercial world, clients usually demand instant, round-the-clock access in order to respond to market conditions and development as they see fit. Our e-commerce platform, therefore, provides precisely what physical platforms such as trade shows cannot deliver: access anytime, anywhere.

How many staff are there in the finance department? What qualities does Eric Cheung have that make him stand out from his peers?

Our finance department has 19 team members in Hong Kong. Although the department is divided into three teams – namely financial reporting, financial planning and analysis, and treasury and accounts payable – staff from each team is given a chance to be exposed to the different responsibilities of other teams through job rotations on a regular basis. Eric is in the treasury and accounts payable team and his main duty is to manage the company's financial information system.

Eric is a very proactive person and takes the initiative to ask, to learn and to find out about anything he does not know. This is a particularly important quality for an employee in Eric's position as he is the person-in-charge for financial information system. It is, therefore, crucial that he himself has the motivation to look for efficient and effective solutions to the problems he encounters.

What are your comments on Eric's competence in applying technical knowledge at work?

I have a high regard for Eric's enthusiasm towards his goal of becoming a qualified accountant. As his experience has accumulated and his knowledge has deepened due to his studies for the AAT Examination, Eric has shown an improvement in grasping accounting concepts. He has proved himself capable of handling work in different teams within the department. Experience gained from job rotations has also helped Eric develop his financial reporting skills and made him better understand the operations and the underlying mechanism of the financial information system.

What are your views on the AAT qualification? As an employer, what do you expect from prospective accounting personnel?

In my opinion, the AAT Examination syllabus is tailor-made for Hong Kong's unique business environment and it fits well for the needs of our day-to-day accounting operations. Many employers see attaining a professional qualification as a minimum requirement – a benchmark at the beginning of the selection process. The AAT qualification provides a viable way for mid-level accounting personnel such as Eric who are looking to advance to the next level in their career.

Besides, I am also keen to know whether a candidate is ready to dedicate himself to a career. As a career requires time and painstaking effort, I need to be assured that the employee is ready to make that commitment. I always believe that employer should put the right people in the right place. Hiring people with a positive attitude and a strong interest in the company's well-being is very important.

What in your opinion are the future opportunities for Eric?

Eric certainly has a lot of development opportunities in our company. He has also been assigned the important task of maintaining the financial information system. He is the only full time staff member who works on the financial information system in Hong Kong, and we rely on him to maintain smooth operations over the entire system.

Do you have any advice for current students and prospective accounting personnel?

I think it is really essential for students and accounting personnel alike to have a good attitude. Do not shy away from hard work or extra responsibilities. As beginners, you should treasure each and every opportunity to learn and grow; by doing so you will surely reap your rewards in the future.