

Employer in the spotlight

Written by Aldric Chau



Name: Kent Lai

Title: Financial Controller

Company: GP Electronics (HK) Limited

Setting an industry benchmark

In the sea of job applicants, it can often be difficult for employers to find the right talent for their company. Kent Lai, Financial Controller of GP Electronics (HK) Limited, is convinced that AAT qualification sets a benchmark which helps him select potential employees as well as helping his colleagues brush up on their accounting skills.

Tell us about your company and its business nature.

GP Electronics is a subsidiary of a listed company in Hong Kong, Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Limited. Our core business is the manufacture and trading of electronic products, with all manufacturing units based in mainland China and other units in Hong Kong.

What are your main roles in the company?

As the financial controller, I am responsible for checking all the financial and accounting statements and methods adopted in the company. This requires me to oversee the financial status of both the mainland and the Hong Kong branches, to ensure the company's smooth operations.

Do you think accounting technicians play a vital role in a company?

They definitely play a vital role. At GP Electronics we have 23 staff in the accounting department with 18 staff in Hong Kong and five in Shenzhen. Two colleagues are on the way to attaining the AAT qualification. One of them has already succeeded. We find that the AAT syllabus and studies provides a systematic way of equipping them with the technical know-how essential for their daily accounting tasks.

I believe that AATs are very good at dealing with the mechanics of the accounting process, especially in maintaining financial records and preparing financial analysis. They have the potential to rise to middle-level or even higher positions since many of them have strong foundation and experience in the accounting field. The technical knowledge complements their practical experience, adding further value to them through their increased contribution to the company.



What kind of recruitment requirements do you have for accounting technicians?

There is a basket of requirements that employers have in mind when evaluating different candidates. When I am recruiting accounting technicians, the top factor that I consider is their enthusiasm since accounting is a challenging role. However, the fact that they are willing to give up their leisure time and social commitments in order to take the AAT exams part-time shows that they are enthusiastic enough to go an extra mile for the job. So I really appreciate their commitment.

When did you first hear about the HKIAAT? What are the general views on the HKIAAT and the AAT qualification?

I first heard about the HKIAAT about ten years ago. And I know it has much longer history than that. Throughout the years, the AAT qualification has received wide recognition. HKIAAT provides an outstanding opportunity to those who want to continue on a professional career path but who, for one reason or another, did not quite make it on the academic path the first time round.

Do you think the AAT qualification can help the accounting technicians to acquire the essential skills they need at work?

Among the eight subjects under the AAT qualification, I am particularly impressed by the quality of the law subject. As accounting and law can never be segregated, I think that my colleagues should be well aware of all the legal responsibilities that a company bears. The AAT exam covers fundamental training of all these subjects, colleagues who have attained the AAT qualification do particularly well in this area.

What are your thoughts of the performance of your staff who have an AAT qualification?

Accounting is all about simplifying complicated information. It is like telling you every detail of a company's operation within a 50-page document. All the extraction, analysis and presentation of massive amount of figures require accounting competency. I find that AAT graduates do particularly well in this area. They have a very clear idea of the processes needed and are capable of presenting these figures well. I am particularly impressed with the improvement in their reporting skills after getting qualified. As a result of their studies they have also become more familiar with accounting language, helping us to communicate ideas far easier.

Do you think it is important that candidates for accounting technician posts have a professional qualification?

I reckon that a professional qualification is beneficial not only to the accounting technicians but also to their employers. A professional qualification is certainly a springboard for accounting technicians, showing a great achievement in their career. To the employer a qualification serves as an unbiased benchmark and an important criterion during the employment selection process in showing the enthusiastic candidates who have already been proven competent.