

*Employer in the spotlight***The formula for success**

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Fanny Chang, Audit Manager at Katax C.P.A. Limited, gives us her views on what it takes to succeed in the accounting profession.

Could you give us a brief introduction to your firm and your responsibilities in the firm?

We are a CPA firm offering a wide scope of accounting services with businesses in Hong Kong, Mainland China and Asia Pacific. My role in the firm as audit manager is to allocate work among colleagues in the audit team and overseeing audit assignments. In addition to supervising our Hong Kong auditing operations, I also oversee the auditing work of our Guangzhou office.

What are the particular qualities of Kwan Hoi Yin that impress you?

Hoi Yin is a meticulous and attentive person. She is also very accurate in her work and has a responsible attitude. These are all good qualities that are well-suited for the accounting profession in my opinion. Hoi Yin did not intend to be involved in auditing when she first joined the firm. However, she was soon praised by our accounting colleagues as a very careful and attentive person. I talked to her about the advantages of allowing herself to be exposed to auditing work. My own experience has shown that auditing experience translates into a more favourable professional profile. Another aspect of Hoi Yin that strikes me is her eagerness and activeness in seeking to advance her career. This has been shown through her decision to undertake HKICPA's Qualification Programme (QP).

What are your views on professional qualifications and academic qualifications for accounting personnel? Do you think professional qualifications help accounting personnel climb up the ladder in their careers?

I think having professional qualifications is crucial in the accounting profession. I have found that clients count on auditing personnel to be qualified CPAs, and are more confident with firms in which this is the case. It may come as a surprise to some people, but occasionally clients do enquire about the qualification of the personnel who handle their audits. They expect accounting personnel to hold professional qualifications – this means that you can be at a disadvantage if you lack such qualifications.

In addition, some supervisors and senior officers of accounting firms place substantial emphasis on the professional qualifications of those they supervise. They may also see such qualifications as a selling point when soliciting clients who pay attention to professional qualifications. The bottom line is that professional qualifications are a widely recognized benchmark which could potentially be more important to any accounting personnel than a university degree.

As a supervisor, what qualities do you look for in accounting personnel?

As you can imagine, attentiveness and accuracy are naturally key qualities for accounting personnel. In fact, I would say they are two of the most important qualities. While some people may assume that accounting personnel must be very sensitive to numbers, my opinion is that it can be a helpful instinct, but isn't always a necessity in every aspect of accounting.

Another important attitude that aspiring accounting professionals should hold is the willingness to ask questions. Do not be afraid to admit your ignorance in the early stages of your career. We do not expect you to know everything. Your supervisors are there to provide appropriate guidance and direction. What we do expect you to be able to do, however, is to point out the areas where you need help and ask about the things you don't know about.

Also, having a solid foundation of accounting knowledge is definitely an advantage. As accounting personnel enter the professional stage of their career, we do expect them to have a confident grasp of basic accounting principles. While this may sound obvious, I have come across graduates who struggle with these basics. This is primarily because having spent most of their time absorbing knowledge in a theoretical vacuum some students find it hard to adjust to the practicalities of the real commercial world. Being able to apply what you have learnt at work is therefore an important area that accounting personnel should pay attention to.

Do you have any advice for students or graduates planning their future studies and career in accounting?

Start planning your career path as soon as possible. In my opinion, the QP, a widely-recognized professional qualification, is a good goal to strive for. With this in mind, you should consider carefully whether the courses and qualifications you are pursuing are conducive to achieving this goal. Do not waste your time on unnecessary or irrelevant steps along your career path.

In addition, the route to success in accounting may not be the easiest path to follow. Once you have set your mind to it, you must be ready to work hard and persevere until the very end. Focus on your goal and put in the effort you need to succeed.