

*Employer in the spotlight***Carving your individual path to success**

**Name:** Venus Fok  
**Title:** Account Manager  
**Company:** Union Alpha C.P.A. Limited

Account Manager Venus Fok believes that personality and dedication, not simply academic background, make a candidate stand out from the crowd.

***Tell us about the different kinds of work your team does.***

My team handles a variety of accounting matters for our clients, ranging from taxation to liquidation. Our services vary from client to client, but typically they include running or closing estates, straightening accounts, and even resolving disputes between parties. The skill set involved in these cases is therefore much broader than is usually required, and communication skills and emotional intelligence are just as important as accountancy knowledge.

***What are the particular qualities that Ruby demonstrates that impress you?***

Ruby is a very meticulous and dedicated employee with a sound knowledge of accountancy. I often ask my subordinates to think through their questions carefully before they consult me. I think Ruby's background has paid off in this regard as she is able to analyze her actions critically before she has questions for me.

I was also impressed by the path Ruby took to obtain her qualifications. Not many candidates take the Professional Bridging Examination (PBE) if their degree can bridge them directly to the HKICPA's Qualification Programme (QP). However, Ruby chose to take the PBE during her undergraduate years. To me, this shows a great deal of not only dedication to the accounting field but also a dedication to self improvement. I have no doubt the PBE training helped her to attain the CPA qualification smoothly. Finally, she is a well-rounded individual with a solid foundation in accounting knowledge.

***What are your views on professional qualifications? As an employer, what importance do you place on professional and academic qualifications?***

Sub-degree holders should not be disheartened when they start looking for jobs. To be frank, many companies tend to hire degree-holders to join their team, and my company is no

exception. However, we also highly welcome people from diverse educational backgrounds to be part of the company. As long as you prove yourself to be a hardworking person, a lack of degree qualification is not a large hindrance at the start of your working life. There are always ways to achieve success in your career, including enhancing your soft skills and acquiring professional qualifications by studying after working hours.

I have met a few colleagues who took a sub-degree or vocational route in their accounting career, such as taking the AAT Examination and PBE. I have found them all to be independent individuals. I suppose that the training needed to tackle public examinations on your own, as opposed to studying in a school environment, is very different. Self study takes a lot of discipline and inner strength. Therefore, people who attained their qualifications through self study seem to be more motivated and autonomous than their university graduate counterparts.

***Could you share some stories of your own career development?***

My route into the accounting profession was not a straightforward one by today's standard. In my time, it was quite common to start working at a young age while studying at night school, which is what I did. I worked as an auditor for more than 10 years, gradually climbing to reach a managerial position. Along the way, I undertook different professional examinations.

I am committed to continuous learning, and even now I am taking classes in nutrition and elderly care during weekend. My advice for young graduates is to retain their willingness to learn after leaving school, to think before asking and to take action. Everyone has their own unique path for success. I would not discount somebody's worth simply because his or her academic background does not fall into the established moulds. As my own case shows, as long as you persevere on the right track you will succeed!