

CLASSIFIED POST

HKICPA CAREER FORUM 2018

CHANGING TIMES

Adapting for the future demands of “Accounting Plus” is vital for CPAs, says HKICPA president Eric Tong, writes **WILSON LAU**

To further sharpen their competitive edge, young CPAs are encouraged to embrace “Accounting Plus”, and create business value for employers using high-order analysis skills and technical abilities in the ever-changing business landscape, all while handling the emergence of disruptive digital technological advancements.

Nowadays, CPAs are expected to go beyond traditional accounting/auditing to further elevate their contributions. Having acquired the essential professional skills and technical knowledge as well as strengthening their higher-order capabilities through work, CPAs are well positioned to diversify into other equally

essential value-adding roles or specialisations in their organisations, adding value to business in this “Accounting Plus” era. Eric Tong, president of the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants, says these specialisations include risk management, forensic accounting, strategic management, and IT consultancy.

At the “HKICPA Career Forum 2018”, now in its 11th year, attendees will be able to build an understanding of the new career possibilities available to CPAs. Leaders in these various specialisations will share insights and provide updates on the latest developments in their fields. They will also discuss how young CPAs can equip themselves to excel in these diverse roles.

“To maximise the benefits of this annual forum, students should capitalise on the opportunity to give some thoughts to their future careers by developing a thorough

understanding of ‘Accounting Plus’ and gain an in-depth look at the diverse roles available beyond accounting and auditing,” Tong says. “They should also take the opportunity to get to know the CPAs attending the forum and explore the career exhibition to find out more about the profession and get some ideas about the corporate cultures of the various exhibiting firms.”

To equip themselves for the exciting possibilities brought about by diversifying roles, young and aspiring CPAs should first identify their interests and then map out the overall direction of their career path accordingly so that they will have the sustained passion to pursue their career goals. “The HKICPA has developed many programmes to support its member CPAs throughout their careers. For instance, our mentorship programme matches mentors and mentees, who do not work in the same organisations, based on their

experiences and personalities. The objective is that both mentors and mentees can feel at ease while sharing their experiences and the mentees will receive guidance, which is not confined to their own workplaces,” says Tong. He adds that the HKICPA organises many continuing professional development training courses that help its members enhance their knowledge and skill sets as well as organising a host of conferences and networking events that help members build connections.

Overall, Tong believes that CPAs are at an advantage to take up and excel in these diverse specialist roles under “Accounting Plus” because the nature of their work and training requires them to look at the big picture.

“For instance, in my line of business, auditors gain exposure to many industries, encounter different business models and consider a wide array of business scenarios, such as bad debt provision,” Tong notes. “Through this exposure, CPAs adopt a forward-looking mindset by assessing various scenarios. Over time, auditing CPAs will accumulate experience and develop insights which they are able to draw on when they specialise in other roles.”

Regional initiatives offer good prospects for CPAs

The prospects for the accounting profession in Hong Kong are bullish, thanks to the city’s status as a global financial centre, its role as “super-connector” in the Belt and Road initiative, and the closer

ties and economic integration developing between Hong Kong and the rest of the Greater Bay Area.

Amid this optimism, the HKICPA Career Forum 2018

> CONTINUED ON 2



Eric Tong, president, Hong Kong Institute of CPAs.



Jonathan Ng, acting registrar of the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs.



The HKICPA has developed many programmes to support its member CPAs throughout their careers



Hong Kong Institute of
Certified Public Accountants
香港會計師公會



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■ SPECIAL REPORT ■

aims to help attending students enhance their understanding of the profession, sharing with them the latest information about recent developments in the profession. This information is vital for students planning their career paths after graduation, says Jonathan Ng, acting registrar of the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs, the territory's only statutory licensing body for the accounting profession. "The forum is a one-stop-shop platform. As well as obtaining information, students can foster connections through direct interaction with the attending CPAs, who could very well be their future employers."

The forum's theme "The Critical Piece" highlights the fact that CPAs, equipped with their essential foundation of professional skills and knowledge, are core to their organisation's operations and act as indispensable connectors and contributors of diverse value-adding business functions. It also highlights that many CPAs, with their experience and insights which accumulate over time, combined with their professional judgment, and analytical, critical and lateral thinking, have gone beyond the traditional roles of accounting/auditing and diversified into other crucial specialisations and functions, including valuation, forensic, risk and IT consultancy, and financial controllership. "Many CPAs have advanced to become the leaders of their organisations, as CEOs and CFOs, making decisions as part of the C-Suite," Ng says.

The HKICPA's qualification programme (QP) is a holistic training platform that teaches the essential foundation accounting skills while also

cultivating the enabling skills and higher-order competencies needed in CPAs of the future. It also prepares students for specialising into a role which interests them. The institute is preparing for the release of the new QP, which further opens doors to the profession for non-accounting degree holders. "Although we are widening the entry channels, the exit channel – that of becoming a CPA – will be maintained at the highest level. The requirements for technical competencies as well as ethical standards are vital to maintain the consistently high quality of CPAs and the public trust in the profession," Ng says.

The new QP will launch in 2020 and features three successive levels – associate, professional and capstone. "The highly flexible associate level was designed as the foundation for non-accounting degree holders. Based on their needs, individuals are able to study modules to make up for any shortfall in accounting or financial knowledge before advancing to the professional level," Ng explains.

"To build the all-roundedness, the capstone level, comprising three-day workshop and a case study exam, will demonstrate genuine business scenarios, and allow students with several years of work experience to solve problems through integrating the technical skills and knowledge learned from the previous levels of the QP, their enhanced higher-order capabilities and their real-world perspectives developed through their work. As well as providing these technical, higher-order skills, the new QP continues to strongly emphasise the integrity and high ethical standards expected by employers."

Technology can be a CPA's friend

Disruptive digital technologies with wide applications for the accounting profession help further enhance the quality of work delivered by CPAs, and open up a range of more exciting possibilities for professionals'

career advancement in their chosen fields.

In artificial intelligence and robotics, CPAs with expertise in new technologies help clients implement robotic process automation and machine

learning, while blockchain has become a reliable and secure solution for rapid data transmissions, according to Stanley Yung, partner, advisory services, at EY. "Many large corporations use blockchain to manage transactions," says Yung. "The accounting profession leverages cloud computing like OpEx for IT projects and changes the business model. Professionals utilise data analytics for fraud detection in finance."

CPAs need to keep abreast of the latest disruptive technologies to deliver high-quality work because these technological advances alter the needs of businesses. The best way for CPAs to keep pace with the newest changes, adapt and acquire new skill sets is by embracing on-the-job learning and practice, he believes. Young CPAs should seize the opportunity to use cutting-edge technologies and solutions to help their clients and optimise the quality of their work of auditing and financial transactions, among others.

Support from the employers is also essential. Firms offer structured training and diverse platforms for learning and practising to familiarise CPAs with the latest technologies.

Successful CPAs are those who excel in leveraging advanced technologies to elevate work quality and efficiency. The coupling of such higher-order abilities, including professional judgment, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, with the "innovation mindset", which encompasses the drive for continuous learning, open-mindedness and the ability to collaborate, will help young CPAs to make good use of the latest technologies.

This enables them to create added value for their clients and employers as well integrating digital thinking into all aspects of the business operations, Yung says.

The accounting profession leverages cloud computing like OpEx for IT projects and changes the business model



Stanley Yung, partner, advisory services, at EY says disruptive digital technologies with wide applications for the accounting profession help further enhance the quality of work delivered by CPAs.

Equipped to lead

Equipped with the essential foundation accounting skills and technical knowledge, many CPAs have been able to develop insights into their employers' operations and become adept at envisaging the overall direction of their organisations' future developments. This is the prerequisite for strategic management.

Over time, these CPAs in accounting will excel at the business projection of their organisations and in formulating effective strategies to help their employers achieve growth in sales and profits, according to Patrick Kwok, general manager, Starbucks Coffee Singapore. "On top of the accounting skills and knowledge, CPAs who aspire to diversify into strategic management need to have a thorough understanding of their corporations as well as the sectors they are in," says Kwok. "Excellent communication and interpersonal skills are essential because effective strategic management executives should be able to collaborate with others and engage and motivate team members to work towards their shared goals."

"Before I work on the

consulting and analysis of a company's various business functions, I must develop a firm grasp of what each function does and then use the gathered data to analyse and provide forecasts of the likely impact of their individual business plans," Kwok continues. "In addition to CPAs' basic skills in financial reporting, strategic management executives are expected to take on the roles of consultant and analyst to clearly communicate the key points to the other decision makers and provide the viable solutions to improve growth further."

He adds that CPAs working on strategic management should also keep abreast of new developments at their competitors, the latest trends in the overall business environment and local, regional and global markets.

"Many CPAs these days have contributed beyond their traditional accounting and auditing functions. Through auditing, they have gained exposure to different industries and such insights enable them to diversify into other value-added functions like consultant and analyst," Kwok says.



Patrick Kwok, general manager, Starbucks Coffee Singapore says CPAs have the essential foundation skills and technical knowledge to become great business managers.

Follow the money in forensics



Keith Lee, associate director, forensic accounting, at Deloitte China says forensic accounting is key to combatting fraud and financial malpractice, as well as helping with insolvency cases and financial investigations.

Forensic accounting has evolved from inquiries into insolvency cases to investigating fraud and financial irregularities conducted to identify various malpractices, including the so-called "cooking the books", inflating companies' revenues, and falsifying profits by misusing accounting methodology.

Nowadays forensic accounting also covers litigation support services in the event of disputes among company shareholders, according to Keith

Lee, associate director, forensic accounting, at Deloitte China. "We carry out analyses to help companies assess losses, quantify the quantum and advise on other related matters."

A growing number of CPAs, who excel in leveraging their professional accounting knowledge, coupled with higher-order analysis skills and critical thinking, have diversified into forensic accounting. Their expertise is in strong demand. "Many corporations, such as

banks, have adopted a proactive approach to addressing issues such as money laundering," Lee says.

"They seek assistance from forensic accountants in looking at their existing policies in such areas as internal compliance to identify loopholes and formulate remedies. Rapid technological developments have also prompted companies to actively conduct research and seek advice from forensic accountants. For instance, companies will enlist our help in looking at any deficiency in their control environments, identify the potential risks and implement risk-mitigating procedures."

With a detective's mind required, individuals who are inquisitive, curious and sceptical are likely to perform well in forensic accounting.

"They also should have good common sense and an attention to detail because we always examine in depth transactions under investigation and sometimes the small details, like dates and rounded off figures, are actually the keys to cracking a case," he adds.

The best way for CPAs to successfully diversify into

Many CPAs these days have contributed beyond their traditional accounting and auditing functions

forensic accounting is through case practice, Lee believes. "Each individual case is unique and forensic accounting features up to six broad categories. Young CPAs can get involved in cases in each of these categories to

familiarise themselves with them and accumulate the relevant experience. Meanwhile, specialised targeted continuing professional education is also essential in sharpening and enriching one's skill sets."

Risk experts in demand

The demand for CPAs with risk management expertise has been on an upward trend, driven by the increasingly complex regulatory landscape worldwide and the growing need among organisations to implement stringent corporate governance.

To sustain their long-term business development, companies need to heighten their risk awareness and strengthen their capabilities to develop the controls to mitigate them, believes Ken Lin, senior manager – risk advisory at Baker Tilly Hong Kong Risk Assurance. "CPAs can excel in risk management. To deliver their work properly, CPAs, auditors or accountants, need to identify the risks and the corresponding mitigation controls day in, day out. Over time, they can definitely draw on their experience and insights gained to help their organisations strengthen risk management."

While risk awareness is of fundamental importance, Lin thinks the traditional accounting and auditing skills and knowledge are helpful for CPAs to optimise risk management. "For instance, before an auditor provides the audit assurance, he has to consider all the risk factors involved," he says. "When an auditor has developed risk awareness, the learning curve is not too steep for him to diversify into risk management because the two functions are closely connected."

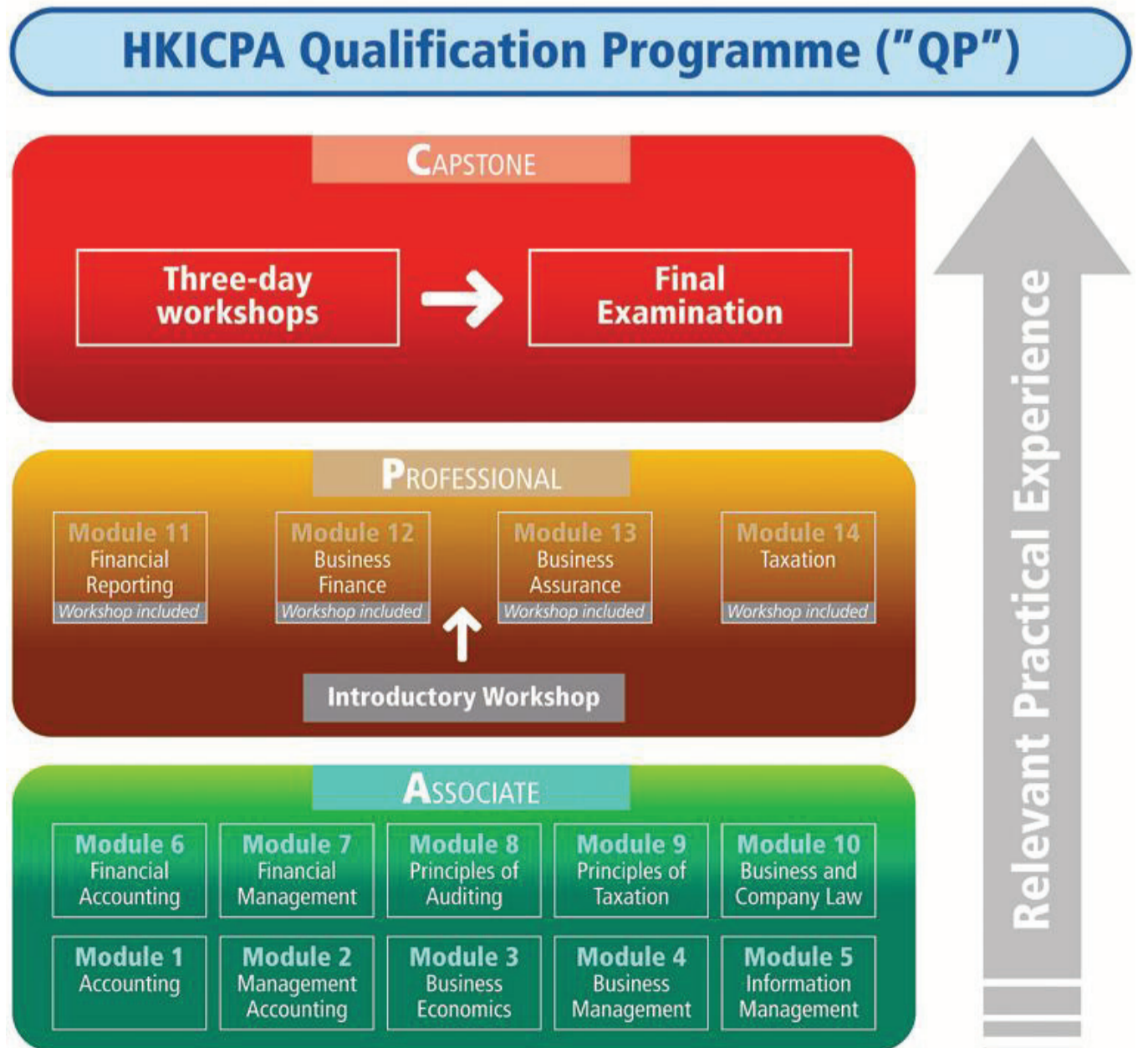
qualification programme (QP) transfers the comprehensive range of essential skills as well as updated knowledge of business developments for CPAs to carry out a host of business functions, including risk management, Lin says. "Equipped with the wide-ranging skills and knowledge covered in the QP, I embarked on my professional career at an audit firm. I accumulated the

relevant experience and diversified into risk management.

"This area is as exciting as it is forward-looking. It calls for the specialists to look at the big picture of the environment in which their organisations operate while paying attention to the minute details to identify the risks and formulate outside-the-box solutions to address them."



Ken Lin, senior manager – risk advisory at Baker Tilly Hong Kong Risk Assurance.



會計專業為各行業以至政府部門的財務健康把關，近年在發展上更超越傳統的核數與稅務範疇，廣及風險管理、法證會計和策略管理等不同領域，提高會計專業創造的商業價值。香港會計師公會舉辦的年度職業論壇，明日（7日）將以「The critical piece」為題於科學園舉行，並邀得多位在不同領域卓具成就的業界翹楚出席，與一眾大學生分享會計專業的多元發展路，助他們為迎接「Accounting Plus」的世代。

本報記者 何詠儀

提升會計專業拓多元發展 迎接「Accounting Plus」新世代

香港會計師公會
會長
唐業銓



加強裝備拓發展機遇

「步入創新科技的年代，部分低層次及重複進行的工作，料會逐步由AI（人工智能）取代，但不同會計範疇同樣需要專業判斷、全面分析及多角度思考，AI卻是無法取代。」香港會計師公會會長唐業銓指出，在現今世代，會計專業已注入「Accounting Plus」概念，意指業界人士在取得專業資格後，可通過發展其他專業範疇，包括破產重組、融資、風險管理及企業管治等，為專業增值，進而投身政府部門及不同企業擔當管理職位，使專業出路更見寬廣。

唐業銓期望，以加入會計專業為目標的莘莘學子，可透過由公會舉辦的職業論壇，掌握行業趨勢及所需技能，了解自己對會計的興趣，待日後入職有了實戰經驗後，再按興趣及專長決定下一階段的發展方向，更有助抓緊「Accounting Plus」的新機遇。

另一方面，香港會計師公會將推出新專業資格課程（QP），唐業銓深信這有助全面加强會計師在市場觸覺、分析技巧、演講與溝通技巧等方面的培訓，進一步提升專業水平。「會計師即使往後轉投其他領域發展，取得會計師專業資格亦肯定對事業發展更有利，公會有不少會員都在大企業擔任行政總裁或財務總監等重要職位。事實上，從QP所學的技能，對分析和處理問題，以至推動企業拓展業務均有幫助。會計師專業資格絕對是個人事業發展的重要資產。」

提到最具發展前景的行業，會計專業肯定榜上有名。展望行業未來，唐業銓深感樂觀。他相信，在「一帶一路」倡議推展下，香港作為「超級聯繫人」，可望為會計專業及相關增值服務，帶來大量潛在機遇；再者，隨著粵港澳大灣區的規劃即將出台，勢將吸納更多本港企業前往區內9個廣東省城市拓展商機，對會計服務的需求亦會持續增加，故香港會計師公會亦會舉辦相關的講座，助同業增進對兩大國策的了解，把握當中不可多得的機遇。

香港會計師公會
署理註冊主任
伍大成



新QP廣納人才

要成為認可會計師，考取專業資格是必備條件。香港會計師公會署理註冊主任伍大成表示，隨着會計職能更多元化及專業化，對業界人士既是機遇，也有挑戰。由香港會計師公會推出的專業資格課程（QP）為追上時代步伐將進行更新，藉優化課程設計，加強配合準會計師的專業發展所需。

「課程特設『基礎級別』，讓曾修讀商業學科的非會計本科畢業生，可因應本身情況，獲得部分單元豁免。有別於以往須一刀切完成整個銜接課程，才可與『專業級別』接軌，大大提升進修效率及靈活度，不同專業背景的有志之士皆有機會投身會計界，對業界廣納優秀人才也有幫助。」

伍大成形容新QP覆蓋內容更全面，並設有實務工作坊，助新入職人士增強難題能力、高層次分析力、批判思維及橫向思考等軟技巧；同時建立正確價值觀，秉持良好的商業道德，踏上事業成功路。

「由本會舉辦的職業論壇來到第11個年頭，今年以『The critical piece』為主題，彰顯會計專業在現今商業社會，置身任何行業皆是在整塊拼圖上不可或缺的一部分。」伍大成補充，一如往年，論壇設有涵蓋不同會計範疇的工作坊、多間會計師行及企業展示最新行業資訊與提供實習機會的展覽攤位，以及安排同學與資深會計師直接交流的午膳等，讓他們可充分掌握行業現況及專業路向。」

安永會計師事務所
諮詢服務合夥人
容勁



緊貼科技發展增競爭優勢

科技急速發展，有人形容現已進入第四次工業革命年代，對會計專業的未來影響深遠。安永會計師事務所諮詢服務合夥人容勁直言，數碼化與任何行業都有關係，人工智能（AI）的出現，可代替人手處理刻板的工作，包括基本的會計事務，長遠有助企業節省成本，惟會計師的專業職能無可取代，增進科技知識與技能，更名為事業全面增值。

若干行業的從業員會被AI代替的憂慮時有所聞。容勁強調，除會計專業知識外，會計師兼具解難能力、創意及國際視野，實在看不到被AI取代的可能性，特別是作為諮詢顧問、商業夥伴及決策者這三大角色，只有曾接受專門培訓的會計專才方可擔任。「相對而言，AI可協助業界處理入數及對數等刻板工作，使業界人士有更多時間集中處理財務分析及制定策略等複雜的事務，提升工作效能。」

科技帶動行業發展是大勢所趨，容勁以其公司為例致力透過兩大方向，其一是全方位在職培訓；其二是邀請海外同事來港分享科技應用經驗，助同事了解會計行業的科技發展現況，以掌握「ABCD」這四大範疇的技能，包括AI、Blockchain（區塊鏈）、Cloud（雲端）及Data analysis（數據分析），以配合業界數碼化的進程。

德勤中國
財務諮詢部副總監
李啟祥



法證會計抽絲剝繭反詐騙

會計專才不一定只留守於寫字樓處理帳目及數據，也有恍如偵探般專責蒐證及商業調查的法證會計團隊。精通此領域的德勤中國財務諮詢部副總監李啟祥指出，頭腦慎密且性格外向的會計專才，尤為適合從事法證會計工作，助企業在尋找商業夥伴及簽訂重要的合作協議時，大大減低遭詐騙以至被利用作犯罪掩飾的風險。

「相對其他會計項目，法證會計的工作性質較靈活刺激，同樣具有大量發展機會。」李啟祥稱，入職人士同樣須透過攻讀QP課程考取專業資格，並透徹理解會計準則，配合從實際工作中積累經驗，由此可通過商業調查及蒐證，助公司了解潛在買家、賣家或商業夥伴的背景和誠信度，更重要是辨別各種違規行為及犯案模式，如不明來歷的金錢交易、有問題的帳目等。

化身法證會計先鋒，李啟祥指邏輯思維、反覆思考及事事求證固然是關鍵元素，更必須加入特許詐騙審查師學會、公認反洗錢師協會等專業的業界組織，輔以積極進修，不斷與時並進，務求掌握最新的商業罪案模式及手法，如近年愈來愈多虛擬銀行出現，網絡交易漸成趨勢，業界不一定能從紙張進行查證，故必須對金融科技及數據分析有一定了解，蒐證才可事半功倍。

新加坡星巴克
總經理
郭百祥



會計根基有利推行策略管理

良好的策略管理是現代企業提升競爭力的致勝關鍵，新加坡星巴克總經理郭百祥引述自身經驗稱，具會計背景的人，很適合出任與策略管理相關的職位，因他們往往能善用專業技能及經驗，從各部門帳目及整體業績等多重數據，分析公司每日、每季以至每年的發展趨向，藉此制定各部門所需的政策，助公司持續達致甚至超越預期績效。

不過，郭百祥補充，每間公司的構成，最重要的資產並非金錢，而是人才。因此，作為策略管理決策者，在會計根底以外，也要對企業營運及行業有一定認知，同時善於與人溝通，確保從數字看出公司的問題所在及對症下藥後，有能力推動團隊共同努力，朝既定目標前進，化解挑戰，抓緊商機。

「從事策略管理，絕非一個人在辦公室內看着公司帳目便可做到，而是必須將數字與全世界連繫起來。」郭百祥強調，公司出現問題未必由內部引起，也有可能源於外在經濟環境及市場動盪，如近期的中美貿易戰等。惟有了解背後成因，作出正確判斷及決策，方能治本。他寄語新入職人士從核數做起，有機會接觸不同類型的公司及財務事項，盡量在這段時間建立良好的會計基礎與溝通能力，為晉升至策略管理職位儲備更多資本。

會計知識助企業做好風險管理

不少初入職的會計從業員均會選擇從事熱門的核數工作，以累積經驗。天職香港內控及風險管理有限公司風險管理部高級經理連浩然指出，在會計專業中，核數是廣博通用的技能，除會計師行設有相關職位外，業界人士也可投身不同行業發展，為企業「睇住盤數」，故出路甚廣。

「帳目管理與公司盈利乃至經營前景息息相關，近年備受企業重視的風險管理環境，亦多要求團隊以至管理層具有會計背景，因而為會計專才提供更多發揮所長的機會。」連浩然直言，公司管治（Corporate Governance）是風險管理的核心一環，廣涉《環境、社會及管治

（ESG）報告》等範疇，對企業持續發展尤為重要。因此，從事風險管理的會計專才，務必掌握市場最新資訊，並洞悉如網絡安全等箇中風險，進而評估公司是否已制定適切有效的控制措施及對應方案，並適時作出修正與提升。

連浩然建議有志加入會計行列的同學，在大學階段宜爭取到會計師行及企業實習，快人一步了解行業運作及工作環境。「同學藉參與職業論壇，既可尋找實習機會，也能借此平台與業界交流，加深認識核數及風險管理等會計範疇，對日後在相關領域發展大有幫助。」



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