

Choice learning

As CPA Suzanne Liu Duddek learned, the Institute's CPD programme is a valuable business development tool

By Ryan Swift

The Institute's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme provides members with training on a wide range of subjects and skills that cover the gamut of an accountant's needs.

CPA Suzanne Liu Duddek, a sole proprietor in Hong Kong, advises, "Different sources enable you to acquire new technical skills as well as non-technical ones, such as presentation, interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills. You become a well-rounded and more interesting person."

Attending CPD programmes is an excellent way to build a business, particularly a small or medium-sized practice (SMP), Duddek says. A CPD seminar on negotiation conducted by Peter Nixon, a chartered accountant and business author, proved particularly effective. "I've acquired many tactics to negotiate win-win deals with my clients, staff, business alliances, suppliers and landlords. I've become more confident and communicative in conducting my daily business," she says.

Duddek is ambitious (she aims to read 52 business books a year) and her CPD hours include personal development. She cites a recent workshop, "How to learn more in less time and attain better grades," in which she learned the concept of mind mapping. "The application of mind mapping has helped me learn faster,

improve my memory, think more creatively and speed read. I've saved time and also attained a better work-life balance."

Duddek says her client skills have improved with clients finding her a valuable reference source, which is a good sign that a client will keep coming back.

There is pressure on SMPs to find a niche market or specialized skills to differentiate themselves. CPD programmes can help. "You cannot be everything to everyone and try to serve the mass market. Identifying a niche comes with skills and experience, but the CPD programmes can certainly accelerate the process," Duddek says.

Institute members need to accumulate at least 120 CPD hours in rolling three-year periods. To meet the requirement, members can attend courses, seminars, workshops and work on various committees of the Institute.

The Institute's member services department works towards making sure options available get better. A CPD committee receives views from a wide range of sources to ensure high quality learning opportunities. The member services department solicits feedback on CPD courses from participants and seeks their views on improvements.



>> Suzanne Liu Duddek advises accountants to take advantage of the CPD programme

Gary Wong, director of member services, says the Institute has a lot to offer and that members should try to structure their own plan. "Members need to plan their CPD hours carefully to excel in their careers and not just accumulate hours for the sake of hours," he says.

Considering how important it is to stay abreast of the latest developments and develop areas of expertise, it's clear that CPD is more than a requirement – it's a valuable business development tool.

Careers helpline

How to make a memorable impact at a job interview



Interviews can be stressful. To help avoid stress, find out beforehand specific facts about the company such as office locations, products and services offered, and growth potential. Also keep in mind the following tips:

First impressions last

Develop a good rapport with the interviewer and try to relax – get that high-pitched or tense tone out of your voice – and appear to be self-assured.

Try and relax the interviewer

If you put the interviewer at ease he or she will immediately feel more comfortable with you. Do not assume you are the only one who is tense. Many people who do the hiring are also tense when they conduct interviews.

Interview the interviewer

Ask questions about the culture of the

company, team structure, challenges within the organization and potential career opportunities.

Demonstrate enthusiasm

An employer is often willing to give someone a chance, even if they do not have all the relevant skills, because they are enthusiastic about the position.

Close the interview positively

Do not leave the interview without asking questions about the position and company, and do let the interviewer know you are keen to pursue the position.

Follow up

Send a polite email saying “thank you.” Identify a few points of interest that will put you in a positive light.

– *Information provided by Talent2 Hong Kong*

Auditors Q&A

Q. I have been working as an auditor at a medium-sized firm for four years. I ultimately would like to work for a Big Four firm, but am unsure if my skills and experience make me a suitable candidate. What are the qualities that a Big Four firm looks for and what career development opportunities exist for experienced auditors?

A. Big Four firms look for experienced auditors with excellent leadership, language and interpersonal skills. Other competencies include innovation, business vision and motivation gained from work experience or training.

A variety of career development opportunities, gained through projects auditors work on, the people they work with, or through structured training programmes, are offered by Big Four firms. There may

be opportunities to gain international experience working on multinational accounts or working in overseas offices. There is also the opportunity to work on the mainland for those with the right experience.

Coaching, feedback and regular performance reviews help staff identify their strengths and areas for development, ensuring they reach their full potential.

– *Information provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers*