

Successful graduate

A force to be reckoned with

Ray Mo is a police inspector with a difference – his background is in accountancy.

Bank unbalance

“I have had an unusual career path,” says Ray Mo. He laughs as he says it, but he is not joking: after joining the audit department of KPMG in 2005, he moved to investment bank UBS three years later – and then, last year, to the Hong Kong Police Force.

So just how did that come to happen? “I studied in the United Kingdom, and when I graduated, I think I had the same thinking as most of the accountancy graduates – to work for the Big Four,” he says. “It is what everyone wants. I was lucky enough to get an offer from KPMG, in the financial services audit department. At the time I enjoyed it a lot: the work was dynamic and challenging. After three years, like most accountants I wanted career advancement. I decided to move to an investment bank. You can earn a lot of money there, and then I thought that money was very important. But I did not really enjoying working in an investment bank. Two weeks after joining, I realized that it was not what I expected.”

The hard-charging, bottom line-driven culture of investment banking was at odds with Mo’s own values, which are driven by concern for the broader community. He has long worked as a volunteer for organizations that help less fortunate members of society, for instance doing counselling and outreach work for Youth Outreach, which helps young drug addicts and homeless people. (As if all that is not enough, in addition to holding down a challenging full-time job, Mo is also studying for an master of business administration.)

Fraud-busting future

“Working in an investment bank made me understand myself better,” he says. “I like social responsibility, I like to help the community, and I felt like I really knew my mindset after this experience. I realized that the traders and all the other people in the bank were driven solely by money – their decisions were all driven by how much profit they could make, and how much bonus. There was a big gap between their culture and my mindset. I thought: how can I serve the community in a more direct way? So I decided to join the police force, which would allow me to help criminals – and also their victims.”



Graduate profile	
Name	: Ray Mo
QP graduation	: June 2007
Education	: - Bachelor of business administration in accounting and finance, University of Leeds, United Kingdom - Current student of master of business administration, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Job title	: Inspector of police
Company	: Hong Kong Police Force
Past experience	: - Equity derivatives controller, UBS - Assistant manager (financial services audit), KPMG
Hobbies	: Swimming, hiking and running

The result is that Mo currently is the patrol subunit commander of a police station in Sham Shui Po district, with a team of 50 officers under his command. "The biggest challenge is managing the team," he says. "About 90 per cent of them are older than me; the average age is about 40."

But his time at the sharp end of policing is just the start of Mo's plans for his police career; he is doing it because he is on the force's three-year management training programme. After graduating, his aim is to join the Commercial Crime Bureau – the division of the police that deals with crimes such as fraud, false accounting and insider trading, where his accounting background will be directly relevant.

That accounting background includes qualifying as a CPA: Mo started studying for the QP when he was working at KPMG, and graduated while he was at UBS. He says QP helped him in a number of ways, not all of them predictable. As well as helping to prepare him for the world of professional accountancy, he says it also assisted him personally, piquing his interest in finance and the workings of companies – and helping him become more successful in his personal investments. The qualification also had an unusual professional use in recent years: since joining the force, Mo has become the financial consultant for a police-run charity that helps teenagers who have been convicted of minor criminal offences such as shoplifting. Accountants, it seems, are needed everywhere these days.

What should young accountants look for when choosing an employer?

- Choose a career that fits your personality: if you find a career that suits your character, you will enjoy work every day.
- Look for a long-term career: a career with a clear path and prospects is far more important than a short-term salary increment.
- Think about what you can contribute to the employer: successful young accountants consider others before thinking about themselves.



Interview and reporting by Richard Lord