

EXAM PREPARATION POSITIVE THINKING

If you are preparing to retake an exam this June, Susan Lefand, head of education, ACCA Middle East, talks about positive thinking and lessons from Batman

Have you ever noticed that you always seem to learn more when you make a mistake rather than when you don't? In the film *Batman Begins*, Bruce Wayne's father tells his son 'Why do we fall down, Bruce? So we can learn how to pick ourselves up again.' I want you to learn why you fell, so you can pick yourself up. Focus on the fail and truly understand why it happened. There is a reason; there is always a reason.

A few possibilities are that: you didn't learn the material sufficiently or you didn't master exam techniques that help you demonstrate your knowledge, or perhaps you panicked in the exam hall and let your nerves get the best of you. Whatever it was, accept it, learn from it and go into the June session with a resolve to pass.

If it's a content issue, invest in a quality tuition course with an approved learning provider, whether online, distance learning or in a classroom setting. If it's exam technique that's letting you down, sign up for an intensive revision course and practise answering exam-like questions under time pressure. Keep doing this until you feel confident and comfortable that you are ready for the big day. The more you practise writing great answers, the better your chances of passing. If the issue is controlling your nerves, then there are plenty of techniques and exercises that you can practise to relax – including deep breathing, listening to music, meditation and positive self-talk.

Underpinning each and every failure is a learning lesson. Rise above the emotion and take the time to learn from the experience and grow stronger and better prepared into the June session. Believe that you can do this. And recognise that maybe you had to fall down before you could learn how to get back up.

Think Pass.

PROBLEM SOLVED

I WANT TO LEAVE ON TIME

I'M UNDER PRESSURE FROM MOUNTING WORKLOADS. HOW CAN I MINIMISE STRESS AND MAINTAIN MY WORK-LIFE BALANCE BY LEAVING ON TIME MORE OFTEN – WITHOUT SHOWING A LACK OF COMMITMENT?

Many employers, while having started re-hiring into finance, don't yet feel confident to expand headcounts to keep pace with new recruits in sales, business development and operations – creating a new kind of stress for accountants to replace the past two years' job security fears.

When the heat is on, it's difficult to be first to down tools and make an exit, especially if colleagues make a big deal about the excessive hours they choose to work. But leaving on time (maybe not every day, but certainly when it's feasible) will make you happier, more relaxed and, ultimately, more productive.

So structure your day better by taking reporting and transaction cycles into account, allowing time for occasional but inevitable unexpected demands. But more importantly, make personal commitments for after work – and ensure your colleagues (and boss) understand you're not leaving them for no good reason. Cultures of 'presenteeism', exacerbated by the recession, do no-one any good, and you may find your colleagues follow suit. Consider more constructive ways to use your lunch hour, even if that's only once or twice a week.

Knowing you're leaving at a certain time – at lunch or the end of the day – will force you to be prioritise more objectively and ruthlessly, and develop the skill and confidence to say a constructive 'no' to those who otherwise might take advantage of your good nature and company loyalty. Your sunnier attitude and greater productivity will be more visible than your leaving on time – which will be regarded as well-earned, not as shameless clock-watching.

Problems at work or with your studies?

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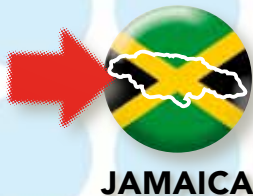
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INTERACTIVE MAP

CLICK ON THE INDIVIDUAL
COUNTRY'S BUTTON TO VIEW
ITS PROFILE

REGION PROFILE THE CARIBBEAN

ACCA IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN THE CARIBBEAN AS A PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION WITH A GOOD REPUTATION. *STUDENT ACCOUNTANT* SPOKE TO BRENDA LEE TANG, ACCA HEAD OF CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT – CARIBBEAN, TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ACCA IN THE REGION

BARBADOS

ACCA operates a Joint Examination Scheme with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Barbados. There is currently one ACCA Approved Learning Partner in Barbados – Prestige Accounting Bookshop and Accountancy College. There has been improved recognition of ACCA in the region as students are recognising that with a global qualification they can work anywhere and in any industry. Many younger students are looking for a way to improve their marketability and are turning to ACCA as one way of doing that. There are high numbers of CAT students in Antigua, St Vincent and St Kitts. One interesting fact of our students in this region is that many tend to be mature females with families who are balancing work/life/study.

Rest and relaxation

Entertainment and nightlife: The nightlife and entertainment in Barbados is alive with music, bands, festivals, concerts, bars, nightclubs, piano bars and rum shops. Calypso, Reggae and Steel pan tend to dominate the local music industry. Although most of the bars tend to boast a Bajan ambiance, you can also find Mexican, Irish, Indian, English, and American which include sports bars and pool halls. Local shows are very popular with Bajans and tourists alike. Some jaunts to consider include: Harbour Lights nightclub, Lexy piano bar, the Plantation theatre, The Mews, Spago, McBride's Pub & Cookhouse, Reggae lounge in St Lawrence Gap and Mojo's.

Restaurants: Barbados boasts a wide variety of dining experiences. Local cuisine is available on every coast as well as fare from France, Japan, China, Mexico, Ireland, New Orleans and India to name a few. Restaurants range from casual to five star, steak or seafood, eat-in or drive-thru, side of the road or water's edge. Popular restaurants include: Aqua Restaurant & lounge, Brown Sugar Restaurant, The Ship Inn, Josef's Restaurant, Black Pearl Seafood & Steakhouse and Bellini's.

Sightseeing: Barbados' tourist attractions vary and offer activities to satisfy from the nature lover to the adventurer. There are rivers, waterfalls, caves and botanical gardens – Harrison's Cave, Animal Flower Cave, Orchid World and Andromeda Botanical Gardens are a few.

Activities: These range from the very relaxing to the seriously active. Some activities available are: sailing, diving, snorkelling, round-the-island excursion, visit to the island's rum maker, surfing, horseback riding, a tour of Barbados' best beaches, visit to the island's ocean park aquarium and visits to the islands' museums and arts and crafts makers.

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TRINIDAD

Students first started sitting ACCA exams back in the mid-1950s in the region. However, most students as recent as 20 years ago still went to the UK to study and sit exams. With the establishment of the *ACCA Caribbean* national office in 1999, we have seen a steady increase in student growth.

In the Caribbean, students see ACCA as a professional qualification of great repute and do ACCA to experience the professional mobility which comes with holding such a prestigious qualification. Further, with a global qualification, ACCA members are able to migrate to other countries to practice.

There are currently nine ACCA Approved Learning Partners (ALPs) in the region, with six in the Southern Caribbean (one in Guyana and five in Trinidad). It is expected that with the strengthening of accreditation councils throughout the region, and through *ACCA Caribbean's* own efforts, that more tuition providers will seek to become ALPs because of the benefits that such a status brings to them and the chances of students gaining success. Visit www.accaglobal.com/students/study/search to search for a tuition provider in this region.

Challenges

The issues facing students include striking the work-life balance to allow them to find the time to study, as well as in affording the fees associated with being an ACCA student. The *ACCA Caribbean* office, along with ACCA in general, is looking at ways to meaningfully engage the new generation of students to prepare them for exams and the world of work and keeping professionals relevant and up-skilled.

Future prospects

The future prospects for ACCA members in the region remain positive in that the profession is still fluid with great job prospects, and the fact that there is still a demand for accountants. Good accountants and accountants who are good will be needed more now given what has happened globally, and how this has affected the Caribbean. The ACCA professional has all the skills required to lead organisations.

Rest and relaxation

There are many ways to spend your free time in Trinidad. During the week, or on a weekend, many of our ACCA students visit any of the pristine beaches on the north coast, especially Maracas or Las Cuevas, and also sample the local 'Bake and Shark'. Once they have finished studying during the day on the weekend, they may interest themselves in a meal with friends or family at any one of the great restaurants which exists in Trinidad. Given Trinidad's multi-ethnic composition, there are many food choices available: for example authentic Indian food at Apsara or Thai food at Tamnak Thai. Students can then round off the evening by visiting the Movie Town complex to catch one of the latest global releases or hit one of the nightclubs such as 51 degrees Zen for some socialising.

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JAMAICA

Students in Jamaica register for ACCA because it is considered to be the qualification of choice and is preferred by employers. There is currently one ACCA Approved Learning Partner in Jamaica – the Academy of Business and Continuing Studies.

Attractions

Jamaica's attractions include: Ocho Rios – Dunn's River Falls, Fern Gully, Brimmer Hall, Kingston – Blue Mountains and John Crow Mountains National Park, Institute of Jamaica Museums, National Heroes Park, Bob Marley Museum; Montego Bay – Rose Hall Great House; Port Antonio – Manchioneal, Nonsuch Caves and Athenry Gardens.

Recommended restaurants

Indian – Akbar, International – Anna Bananas, Day-O Plantation, Jack Sprat, Caribbean – Almond Tree, Coconuts, Jake's, American – Margueritaville, Seafood – Rick's Café, Glistening Waters Inn and Marina, Cosmo's seafood restaurant, Italian – Toscanini's, San Tropez.

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MOVING ON

MIKHAIL POZDNYAKOV, CYPRUS

ACCA student Mikhail Pozdnyakov has been promoted from accountant to chief accountant at Laurus Services Ltd in Limassol, Cyprus. As chief accountant, Mikhail will prepare necessary reports for the Cyprus companies, prepare and control the budget, and supervise other accountants. He is also involved in consulting on international business issues such as tax advising, and liaising with auditors for the preparation of audit reports.



MIKHAIL SAYS:

- ▣ **Best recruitment website:** www.grsrecruitment.com
- ▣ **Top job-hunting tips:** be interesting, have your own vision on different subjects, and show loyalty to your previous employers.
- ▣ **General advice for ACCA students who want to find a job:** don't spend all your time studying. Use it for social growth as well.

'WHEN YOU'RE JOB-HUNTING, BE INTERESTING, HAVE YOUR OWN VISION, AND SHOW LOYALTY TO PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS.'

VINCENT NGABIRANO, UGANDA

ACCA student Vincent Ngabirano has become a finance associate at the United Nations Development programme – Uganda in Kampala. His main responsibilities include implementing operational strategies to ensure full compliance with financial processes and financial records in accordance with UN/UNDP rules, regulations, policies and strategies. He was previously a finance/administrative assistant at NatureUganda.

'I would advise my fellow ACCA students in Uganda to make use of newspapers such as the *Daily Monitor* and the *New Vision*. If you're interested in specific organisations, visit their websites: for example, the United Nations (www.un.org/en/employment/) or World Learning (www.worldlearning.org/employment). For some websites, www.ugandajobline.com or www.futureoptions.co.ug for example, you can subscribe and receive email alerts of recent job postings.

'For those who are looking for their first job, my advice is never overlook a job offer. We have a tendency of wanting to start big and when one is offered a clerical job, we think we are over qualified. As long as a job can pay me a living wage, I would take it rather than not work and wait for the right one to come along. These small jobs are important for the experience required to take on the responsibilities of the bigger jobs we want. Start small and grow big. It is easier to grow within an organisation because you will be aware of internal job openings.'





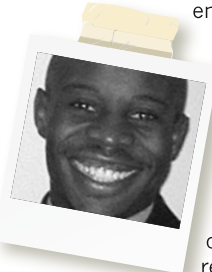
PHIBION MGUNI, SOUTH AFRICA TO BELGIUM

ACCA student Phibion Mguni has relocated from South Africa to Belgium in an internal promotion to become an internal auditor at DHL Worldwide Network NV in Brussels. The internal auditor team is responsible for the audit of European entities. He was previously a cost and management accountant for DHL Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Services in Johannesburg.

'In terms of finding my current job it was fortuitous in that it was on an internal job board. I was due to be downsized from my previous role and decided to see what else was on offer in the group. Internal audit were recruiting and I felt I was a pretty good fit based on my previous external audit and group experience. I was interviewed and was offered the position.'

'In terms of advice to other job seekers: I have become more aware that significant job opportunities come down to a person's ability to network. Try getting out and meeting people in the particular industry that you would like to work in. Don't just read industry news for the sake of passing exams but also read to develop an interest in the finance world. The ability to adapt the theory to the real world is a huge advantage in an interview.'

'Lastly, I would always say feel comfortable with being yourself. Don't pretend to be someone you are not: in the long-run the job will be more comfortable if you get it based on who you are and not someone you are pretending to be.'



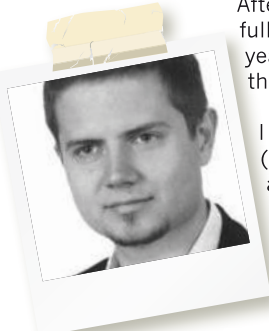
MARCIN PYCKA, POLAND

ACCA student Marcin Pycka has been promoted from internal auditor to manager at Bank Pekao SA in Warsaw, Poland. His main responsibilities include managing the team of CAAT auditors in the internal audit department, risk evaluation activities, and fraud detection.

'I was seeking for a job in the final year of my MA studies in management in 2006. I started by looking for information on the large corporate websites. However, it was my friend who told me that there was a recruitment project at Bank Pekao SA. After two weeks I met with the HR department and started working as a trainee in internal audit. After three months I became a full-time auditor and after three years I was asked to become the manager of this team.'

'During those three years I started my ACCA studies (10 exams passed now) and successfully submitted my Oxford Brookes University RAP so I am also an OBU graduate.'

'It is really motivating when your manager sees that you are focused on continuous self-development, you are up to date with the latest financial regulations, and you do the best that you can at work. I think that studying ACCA helped secure me my promotion. Even though I haven't finished the exams, it is a clear signal that I am a specialist and it is worth investing in me.'



YOU NEVER SIT STILL

Whether you have changed your role, organisation, home address or even country – don't forget to tell us. Login to myACCA at www.accaglobal.com to review and update your details