

Accountants, Business Leaders or Bean-counters?

by Danial Hadi, Helisa Yip and Peggy Ong

Somehow, Accountants are perceived by society to be the ones with the boring profession, with a matching personality. Yet, there is a saying that we should 'never judge a book by its cover'. Of many professions out there, Accountants stand at one of the most advantageous positions to climb really high on the corporate ladder. It is quite fair to say that every Accountant is a potential leader.

We know that a good leader always strives for excellence and improvements. It is similar to that of an Accountant or an auditor's job to improve business processes to achieve maximum efficiency. They conduct analysis to determine weaknesses of operation systems and make recommendations on how to ensure optimum efficiency and effectiveness.

Second, a good leader must be able to communicate to others his ideas and beliefs. Communication is one of the many traits that Accountants and auditors have. They communicate to board members and shareholders their findings. They translate their numerical findings and analysis to their bosses to ensure that corrective measures are taken. That is their capability.

Third, he or she must be a team player. Why do most of us think they are not? Accountants are part of the organisational hierarchy. If there is a problem, they would assist to pinpoint the

problem and give solutions to it. Accountants are part of the corporate family.

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As the reader could probably relate, leaders of a business must always have knowledge of their business' finances at their finger tips. While Accountants do the maths and support that, their job is much more. Modern accounting combines analysis, problem solving and detective work. To do their job right, Accountants must be able to communicate quantitatively, and qualitatively. According to En. Nik Mohd Hasyudeen Yusoff, the current Audit Oversight Board (AOB) Chairman, and the former president of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA), the role of Accountants today is becoming increasingly diversified. Modern Accountants are not merely focused on economics but other aspects like management, information technology, marketing, law and more. In the age of IT, Accountants are even helping IT programmers in developing systems to manage online transactions. So you see, Accountants are getting 'high-tech'.

Accountants are also business consultants. They can assist with a multitude of business problems

and give helpful solutions. For instance, when a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is seeking ways improve the company's performance, the Accountant would be consulted and he may suggest financing solutions to increase the 'financial muscle' of the company, or identify sections



within the company that it could embark on improving efficiencies. Good Accountants always seek to see businesses succeed. A successful business reflects a successful Accountant! Inspiring Accountants!

While not every Accountants (nor everyone in business) are born entrepreneurs, this does not necessarily mean that they aren't good business leaders. A good

business leader plans ahead to seek out business opportunities and manoeuvre against adverse risks. Accountants are trained to take calculated risks. Probably an inspiring instance would be the celebrated CEO of AirAsia, Dato' Sri Tony Fernandes who is an Association Of Chartered

Certified Accountants (ACCA) fellow member and an ex-auditor. So again, wisdom from our inspiring example of an Accountant:

"Believe the unbelievable, Dream the impossible, Never take no for an answer"

Accountants can be leaders because they pursue excellence during their course of business, they can communicate with others about their beliefs, they can be a team player and the most important of all, they have technical

knowledge on accounting and finance, inside and out. Accountants today are not merely bean counters, they are a business' best friend. We should never underestimate Accountants for there's more to them than meets the eye.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Danial, Helisa and Peggy are members of the Assurance & Business Advisory with UHY.