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Why I chose a career in accountancy

By Dina Medland

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Ayo Awosika is a 2009 graduate of Brunel University, with a BSc in Finance and Accounting. He has an ACA training contract with UHY Hacker Young, one of the UK's Top 20 accounting and auditing firms.

Mr Awosika has done work experience in finance with KPMG and London Metropolitan University, and a corporate finance internship with Warner Bros. He has also been a safety steward with Chelsea Football Club. He explains why he chose accountancy:

“From a very young age I had a good grasp of numbers and logic, and I chose maths and economics A-levels, so accountancy made sense. Accountants are always in demand.

“I also know people who have recently qualified as chartered certified accountants and since they qualified the calibre of the companies they are working for is amazing. That has inspired me to keep going.

“It's definitely going to be hard work and long hours but I think it is worth sacrificing my social life to some extent to be successful. I have always been interested in businesses and I studied corporate finance and turnaround/recovery as one of my modules at university.

“During the training now I find I am meeting like-minded people from all sorts of different backgrounds. Everyone knows that it is hard work but we are all aiming high.

“If I had to name a role model, it would be someone like Warren Buffett – one of the world's richest men who has made his money solely by investing in companies. I would like to help companies to achieve their goals – and to help businesses come to market, to help them with their initial public offerings (IPOs).

“It will depend on how I do in the next three years, but my ‘dream job’ in five years would be to be a manager in UHY Hacker Young in the corporate finance or turnaround and recovery department.

“When I was first researching UHY one of the first people I found (on the internet) was Andrew Andronikou, the turnaround and recovery partner, who was also the administrator for Portsmouth Football Club. It was the first Premier League club to enter administration.

“Mr Andronikou has brought a lot of attention to the firm, and I would love to do something like that, bringing in such an important client. Becoming a partner who can do that would be

the dream. He has shown everyone the ambition of the firm, and I consider myself to be an ambitious person.

“But first there is a lot of training to get through, and experience to gain. London is the greatest place to be, but the training and the work is the most important thing – if I’m required to audit in Brighton I’ll just have to make that journey. At the end of the three years of training I will know how I have done and where I am going.”

AN EXPERT’S RESPONSE

Paul Stephenson is lead graduate recruitment partner at Deloitte, the business advisory firm which recently announced plans to hire 100 school leavers in 2011 in recognition that the costs of a university education may no longer make it the most attractive option for many of the UK’s brightest students. This is his reaction to Mr Awosika’s thoughts:

“Ayo’s ambition is good and he is looking ahead, which is excellent. I think it is important to have the right level of ambition. Graduates these days are more focused and they just need to carry it through.

“The ACA is globally recognised, and a very strong qualification and many people do it for that reason. You can fine tune it with further qualifications if you have a thirst, but it isn’t necessary.

“If you are looking for a challenge and manage your career well, there is always room for change and something new – and if you are ready for that, accountancy is a good profession.

“A lot of people who start off coming into accounting will move into corporate finance, but they also develop by working in teams and gaining important managerial skills. Getting them on an audit, however big or small, teaching them about understanding risk and developing a programme to mitigate risk, as well as the best team to handle that programme – and dealing with potentially difficult clients – is all part of the training.

“Mr Awosika mentions hard work – and it is hard work, especially at this time of year. But it does also come with a very good in-built social life. As we have learnt at Deloitte, if you burn people out they under-perform and it affects their client work.

“Graduates today tend to be very well-informed and understand what we, the employer, does – and whether that reflects what they want to do. The use of online media and ways of researching has changed and people now select their employers based on their brand and their reputation.

“Having taken on the graduate recruitment partner role at Deloitte three months ago, I am trying to understand what attracts people to any particular firm, and often it is the clients the firm works with, which has clearly been the case for Mr Awosika. It is often the intangibles that draw students to a firm.

“It is great that he has talked about his academic career but also about his interests. When graduates go through the selection process there are tough academic hurdles but we also look

at their other interests and their leadership potential. It becomes very interesting when you see a graduate who has also done other things.

“Mr Awosika has a degree in finance and accounting but there are opportunities in accountancy for all sorts of degrees – I have found that humanities students may be better at the narratives while maths students are better at the numbers and in the end, it is important to put all kinds together in a team.

“I joined what was then Touche Ross 20 years ago and since then much has changed including a much stronger desire from students and the new intake to ‘give back’ – so at Deloitte we do get asked by graduates about corporate social responsibility, volunteering and what else they can do as part of their career with us.”

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