
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Employment by Industry of Accounting Graduates: China as an Example

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| ABSTRACT

As the number of highly-skilled individuals in China continues to rise, their employment problems will become increasingly visible. This article begins with the variety of work options for accounting majors, evaluates the employment industry for accounting majors, and emphasizes the requirement for accounting majors to obtain a certification. Finally, this research provides advice for accounting graduates looking for jobs.

| KEYWORDS

Employment, the accounting profession, certification

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 November 2022

PUBLISHED: 12 November 2022

DOI: 10.32996/jefas.2022.4.4.11

1. Introduction

The Big Four (Big Four accounting firms) are the four largest professional services networks in the world, the global accounting networks Deloitte, Ernst & Young (EY), KPMG, and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The four are often grouped because they are comparable in size relative to the rest of the market, both in terms of revenue and workforce; they are considered equal in their ability to provide a wide scope of professional services to their clients; and, among those looking to start a career in professional services, particularly accounting, they are considered equally attractive networks to work in, because of the frequency with which these firms engage with Fortune 500 companies (Dorken & Dawe, 1957). The Big Four each offer audit, assurance, taxation, management consulting, actuarial, corporate finance, and legal services to their clients (Dorken, 1958). A significant majority of the audits of public companies, as well as many audits of private companies, are conducted by these four networks. Until the late 20th century, the market for professional services was actually dominated by eight networks which were nicknamed the "Big Eight". The Big Eight consisted of Arthur Andersen, Arthur Young, Coopers & Lybrand, Deloitte Haskins and Sells, Ernst & Whinney, Peat Marwick Mitchell, Price Waterhouse, and Touche Ross. From the development background of the four major accounting firms, the current accounting profession is gradually becoming more diversified (Imhoff, 1978).

2. Diverse Fields of Work for Accounting Majors

2.1 Accounting Firms

Using the Big Four accounting firms as an example, beginners typically begin as assistant auditors before advancing to auditors, senior auditors, managers, senior managers, and finally, partners. Each role has its own responsibilities and objectives. After achieving the objectives and gaining project experience, one can be promoted to the next level.

The tasks at each level are nearly set. Taking auditing the financial statements of a listed firm as an example, audit assistants and auditors are frequently assigned to fulfill various fundamental subjects (such as management fees, etc.) and responsibilities (such as correspondence, supervision, voucher auditing, etc.). Often, senior auditors are tasked with consolidating financial statements and share-based payments. It is the responsibility of managers and senior management to review audit working papers and financial statements. Partners are accountable for the ultimate product quality of the project. Accounting firms' work is characterized by anticipation and growth.

Those who work in an accounting business may be exposed to a variety of cutting-edge real-world difficulties. In addition, individuals can learn audit methodologies, accounting issues, tax law policies, and other professional knowledge with a group of peers (Iyer & Raghunandan, 2002). This condition of learning at any time and in any location helps people feel as though they are still on campus. According to the statistics of the Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the top ten famous accounting firms by revenue are PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhongtian, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Ernst & Young Hua Ming, Lixin, KPMG Huazhen, Ruihua, Pan-China, Grant Thornton, Moore Global, and Baker Tilly, with the first four being the four well-known international accounting firms.

Many graduates prefer to work at accounting firms because they believe these firms can serve as a launching pad for their careers. Rich project experience in accounting businesses can boost their comprehension of professional knowledge and industry expertise, thus sharpening their professional judgment on a variety of practical challenges. Consequently, prominent accounting firms have become a talent pool for organizations and institutions specializing in financial management. Experience in an accounting firm can certainly enhance a resume, but only by acquiring knowledge in a practical manner can we realize our personal worth.

2.2 Corporation

In corporations, the career path begins with the financial manager and progresses to the financial director and even the chief financial officer. As the corporation's business operations get more complicated, the knowledge system necessary for financial work must also evolve. In addition, businesses impose ever-increasing criteria for middle- and upper-level financial management staff, including exceptional professional knowledge and practical skills.

Not only must individuals at the middle and upper levels of financial management have a foundational understanding of accounting and financial analysis, but they must also keep abreast of the most recent tax regulations and accounting standards and be able to deal with the consequences of their changes. According to the firm operation and development strategy, a financial executive must also be capable of establishing financial plans, coordinating the administration of financial systems and budgets, and scientifically enhancing the financial evaluation system. The CPA exam, which aspires to cultivate and select top-level financial talent on a national scale, incorporates knowledge and skills in its numerous disciplines (Lennox, 2005). The exam has been shown to aid with promotion and wage increases, career development leaps, and the enhancement of general skills. I believe that studying for the exam can significantly enhance one's overall quality, thereby preparing him or her for future prospects.

2.3 Finance-related Work (Investment Bank, Commercial Bank)

In addition to conventional banks (deposits, loans), securities firms (buying and selling stocks), and insurance companies (purchasing insurance), financial institutions also include novel trust businesses, fund companies, investment institutions, financial leasing organizations, etc.

Accounting, financial management, taxation, and legal affairs are required for key roles in the core business sections of numerous financial organizations. When an investment institution makes an investment choice, it assesses the operating performance and financial statistics of the project, as well as the return on investment and investment payback duration. When determining whether or not to grant loans to consumers, the bank conducts credit checks to assess their ability to repay debt (Sier Education, 2021). The significant degree of overlap between the requisite skills of financial practitioners has become an essential recruitment criterion for large financial organizations.

2.4 Teaching and Research

Qualification is a consolidator of professional abilities and an enhancer of teaching capacity. Some individuals decide to enroll in professional finance and economics vocational education and training institutions in order to become outstanding instructors. When teaching the CPA exam, professional expertise and accumulated learning experience can be imparted to a greater number of students (Whiting, 1961).

In conclusion, with the evolution of society and the increasing diversification of economic activity, accounting firms have become much more comprehensive. Diverse sectors and business lines throughout the world, as well as diversified work and cooperation, offer tremendous chances for personal growth. Only by persistently acquiring information can we realize the true value of our own lives.

3. The Influence of City Size and Salary on the Choice of the Accounting Profession

Table 1

Categories	Tier 1 City	Tier 2 City
Accounting Firms	5000-8000	3000-5000
Commercial Banks	6000-8000	4000-6000
Listed Companies and Private Companies	3500-5500	2500-4500
State-owned Enterprise, Civil Servants, Public Institutions	6000-8000	3000-4000

Note. The data is based on the statistical results of various recruitment websites for reference only.

- 1) The salary gap between first-tier cities and second-tier cities is 3,000 yuan, as shown in the table. The majority of corporations do not place as many limits on education and majors as they do for other positions. The starting salary of new employees will not be excessively high, with the disparity between first- and second-tier cities being evident. It is common for their salaries to accrue over time, which will increase with work experience and professional certifications.
- 2) As the accounting industry expands, the national accounting talent market is gradually exhibiting a polarization tendency. Normal accountants are highly oversaturated, whereas specialized accounting talents are so scarce that some even need to be imported from abroad.

The Chinese accounting industry has reached maturity, and relevant industry laws and regulations are gradually being enhanced. In the future, training in China will be centered on elite accountants. About two-thirds of all accounting professionals exhibit feminine features. The necessity of accountants for the normal operation of institutions has led to a growth in accounting education. The compensation level of ordinary accounting employees has been stagnant due to heedless expansion. Therefore, relevant employees should further enhance the industry's comparability, clarity, and transparency.

Other market issues include the fact that many graduates are only willing to find jobs in large cities; their salary expectations are higher than the market value; job selection focuses on specific corporations; graduates are willing to start at the bottom; there are more requirements for accounting graduates.

4. Conclusion: Advice on Studying for Different Qualification Certificates

1. Accounting has several applications and is a highly skilled and technical field. The demand for accounting professionals varies, with businesses and public institutions seeing high demand. Regarding size, state-owned large and medium-sized firms are becoming increasingly saturated with accounting experts, whereas small and medium-sized enterprises are becoming the primary factor driving talent demand. In general, there are many employment opportunities available for accounting professionals, but the bar to entry is low, and there is little room for advancement and relatively poor pay. Talents are relatively abundant in the industry. Positions such as cashier do not require specialist knowledge or related work experience; there is no possibility for growth; the pay is low; there are no restrictions on gender. However, in today's environment, businesses are more eager to hire young accounting majors. Qualified accountants must possess high moral standards and other attributes such as patience, reliability, decisiveness, broad-mindedness, and organizational skills. However, it is difficult to find highly skilled financial professionals because they are necessary to manage economic information systems and control systems. The employment market is becoming more competitive. Desired talent should have extensive experience and outstanding business skills, as well as strong learning and adaptability abilities and a high level of professionalism.

2. The position of a semi-senior accountant has strict criteria for professional experience and education, as well as a high entry bar. It is the ideal promotion certificate. The exam preparation cannot be completed in less than 500 hours as it is of moderate difficulty. This exam is mostly taken by office employees, notably cashiers, accountants, accounting supervisors, and financial managers. The title holders are qualified for positions in the accounting division, accounting department management, and even financial manager.

3. The greatest and most immediate demand is for CPA qualification holders, particularly in accounting businesses. Investment banks primarily engage in mergers and acquisitions, private equity, and investments. Investment banks favor financial law and commercial bank accounting professionals. In addition to the role of president, the bank president's most prominent titles when handing out business cards are CPA and senior accountant. CPAs place a premium on the needs of senior financial personnel in China's big and medium-sized state-owned firms. With a CPA certification, advancement within an organization occurs incredibly quickly. Enterprises will also set aside a portion of the proceeds to reward staff who get CPA credentials. The People's Bank of China, the National Audit Office, the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the China Insurance Regulatory Commission, and the China Banking Regulatory Commission are currently seeking individuals for numerous roles needing a CPA qualification. CPAs

work as internal auditors, financial analysts, etc., on a regular basis. The certification for certified public accountants is tough to achieve, which increases its worth. In addition, the exam's entry requirements are low, making it increasingly popular among graduates and personnel seeking promotion. Typically, at accounting firms, holders are assigned to positions such as auditing and consulting. Accounting is a highly specialized field that requires academic credentials, certifications, and hands-on experience. The majority of recent graduates prefer to work for an accounting company. Experience, together with sufficient energy and physical power, acts as a springboard to open up promotion avenues. Traditional accounting has been unable to keep up with the changes of the times; therefore, multifaceted accounting is more crucial. The relationship between theory and practice is ideal. Lifelong education is both a requirement and a recommendation for young people. In addition to a degree, accounting also requires qualifying credentials.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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