

UEA Graduate Career Profile: Management Accountant

What did you do after leaving university?

After graduating I decided to stay in Norwich with a few friends, and looked for any work in the finance sector, as graduate level opportunities locally seemed to be fairly limited. I applied for three roles – a temporary role in a bank branch, a job working in the buy-to-let mortgage market, and one as graduate trainee management accountant. I was offered the first two positions, but I was a bit naïve for the third position and wasn't particularly well briefed by the recruitment agency as to the job in hand. However, it gave me an insight into the role of management accounting, and the CIMA qualification, which is aimed at training people to play a supporting role in various divisions in a modern business. It is much wider ranging, and more involved in operations side of business than a pure financial accounting role.

I took the job in the bank, and learnt a good deal about how retail banking operates, and took some financial service sector exams.

Why did you choose your first/current graduate employer?

Whilst working in the bank, I noticed a position for trainee management accountant at my current firm – Clays Ltd – based in Bungay, Suffolk.

I decided to apply for this as the role paid for the tuition and exam fees for the CIMA qualification, which I had looked into previously. I felt that this was a good offer, and would give me a much wider practical understanding of how a business operates and would be an excellent additional qualification in addition to my degree, which was mainly theoretical.

I applied for this, and made sure I was fully prepared for the interview, including researching the business of the firm [Book Printing], recent related business stories in the newspapers, and how my experience in work and education made me suited for the role. I feel this was fairly key, as other applicants had stronger qualifications.

What does your job entail?

My job initially involved generating and issuing management information reports, but quickly grew, and within six months [with a generous slice of luck] I was managing a team of 10 people. The role mainly involves commercial pricing of new jobs, and dealing with the sales ledger side of the business – pricing contracts, invoicing work, sales forecasts, credit control etc.

What opportunities for progression are there in your role?

Progression opportunities have been good. Because the firm is mid-sized, it has stability, but also offers good opportunities for regular involvement with the work of the board of directors, and other senior figures. This makes it easier to get noticed, and progress. In addition, passing various exams over the years has added to my understanding of the business. I would suggest that it is easier to gain experience and progress in a small or medium sized business, as the work you do there is of a wider variety, and offers more interaction with different sides of the business – this helps you to gain valuable experience that you may not get in a large company which is heavily departmentalised and bureaucratic.

Name: Chris Mccaffrey

Employer: Clays Ltd

Location: Bungay

Degree: BSc Economics (2:2)

Year of Graduation: 2006

The CIMA logo is displayed in white, stylized capital letters on a solid magenta rectangular background.

Chris' tips for gaining graduate employment

Experience, and how you apply that experience to the job you are applying for are key things employers look for. It's worth getting internships / any relevant work experience during your degree – whether by a year in industry, or over the summer.

When applying for jobs, it's good to do research about the company, the industry they are in, and the type of job, and then tailor your experience to suit this.