

CPA Profile

Helen Shen



Title:
Managing Director

Company:
Hopkins CM & Associates
Limited

Qualifications:
CPA and FCCA

Why did you decide to start out in a career in accountancy?

It is a long story. The truth is I didn't plan to have a career in accountancy as I have a degree in Economics from Fudan University, Shanghai. I thought I was done with my academic study.

I was born Shanghai in China and have been in Ireland since 1999. The original plan was to learn English for three months at the Peace Language School in Bray, Co Wicklow and to go back to China after. However, after three months my English was still not good, but I didn't want to continue at the language school as I found it didn't help if all your classmates were from non-English speaking countries. With the school principal's help, I was able to join the Senior College, Dun Laoghaire to study Accounting Technicians in Ireland.

Following this, I got my first office job in Ireland as a trainee accountant in an accountancy firm based in Blackrock. I loved the work, I really enjoyed working with numbers and this provided me with the impetus to continue studying accountancy, later qualifying as a CPA and ACCA.

Why did you choose CPA Ireland as your qualification route?

Having decided on what I wanted to do I looked at the various options available and I felt that the CPA route fitted well into my work and personal life schedule. The student supports that were on offer were also a deciding factor.

Please provide a brief history of your career.

I started my first work in Ireland as a trainee in practice in 2000. After 7 years I moved to a mid-sized practice where I enhanced my experience. After several years,

I moved to work as head of finance in Industry with an Irish company who were involved in manufacturing goods in China and importing same to Ireland. Here I gained extensive experience which was a great help to me when I took on the challenge of running my own company. In 2012, I had an opportunity to take over a practice based in North Dublin. I just loved the challenge, to help the clients with their projects and to resolve their financial problems. I always believe the success of our clients is the key to our future.

What one word describes what your CPA qualification has given you?

Confidence - the qualification gives me the confidence to use my accounting knowledge in my career. It also gives me the confidence to meet with existing and potential clients.

What has been your biggest career achievement?

Career goals have changed for me over time. Surviving the first year of business was a big achievement way back when I took over the practice 9 years ago. Working with clients on projects and seeing them come to fruition gives me a big sense of achievement on a day-to-day basis. Being awarded a Grade A in the Annual CPA Quality Assurance Review is something I'm very proud of.

What or who inspires you most in business?

The resilience of business owners, especially women in business. Seeing what they can achieve in a sometimes male dominated environment inspires me. It's their energy, their drive to succeed and positive attitude that sets them apart.

What advice would you give to those recently qualified or currently studying for their CPA qualification?

The CPA qualification is not easy to obtain, you may have to sacrifice your evenings and weekends for the classroom. But it is worthwhile. A CPA qualification provides opportunities for your career. Stick with it and you will gain a wide range of skillsets and expertise that are valuable and transferable across many industry sectors. Have a clear vision for where you want to go and what you want to do. If I can do it with English as my second language, I believe you can do even better.

How do you unwind?

I have a friendly Tibetan Terrier dog and he is absolutely great. It doesn't matter how stressful my day in work has been, he always give me a great welcome home and puts a smile on my face. Taking him out for a walk helps me to relax. Other than that, I love watching Chinese TV series, it's just great to lose yourself in a TV story for a few hours.

What traits do you admire in others?

Try and be happy. Have a positive attitude.

