



## Certified Public Accountant. National credential. Global asset.

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### Where will your CPA take you?

If anyone ever asks you where you think your CPA credential will take you, give them the two word answer. The world.

It's short and sweet. And it's literally true. With global business a fact of life and the initials CPA behind your name, there's every chance in the world you'll have an opportunity for international experience at some point in your career.

### CPAs. They're everywhere.

Every corporation or accounting firm with a global presence needs CPAs with international perspective. For audit and tax work alone, there's an extraordinary demand for CPAs to work internationally in traditional roles. But even the briefest scan of the Big Four accounting firms' websites provides ample evidence that global assignments for CPAs can be much more far-flung and intriguing than most people would ever imagine.

Take for example: investigating fraud in Latin America. Tracking money laundering in Indonesia. Doing tax work in Argentina. Developing a phone company business model in Australia. Training Italian accountants in US accounting principles. Leading a global audit team in China. Wherever you go in the world, if a business is on the map at all, chances are you'll find a CPA involved at some level.



## There's more in it for you than a plane ticket.

It's true, international business is fueling the demand for CPAs. Helping to fill that demand, however, can mean much more for you than overseas travel and some sightseeing opportunities.

Tom Vucinic, President of Becker Professional Education, has noted that the CPA credential not only creates opportunities for international experience, but that the experience gained can be critical to career growth. "Employers all over the world recognize the value that CPAs bring to their organizations. Over the past fifty years in our work with CPA candidates," he says, "we've seen the national CPA credential become a global asset for those who earn it."

It's a message not lost on young professionals. The results of a recent global recruitment survey of professionals living abroad indicated that, "young accountants are increasingly moving overseas to develop their careers." In fact, 47 percent of those surveyed said that career development was their primary reason for working abroad.<sup>1</sup>

## Preparing to make the journey.

So how do you land one of these plum global gigs? On one level, it's deceptively simple because the demand is there with the major global accounting firms and multi-national corporations, as well as with smaller businesses in virtually every industry. On the flip side, landing a global assignment can be complex simply because international business is complex.

Issues such as differences in international accounting standards and principles, professional credentials, and licensure must be taken into consideration. Experience plays heavily into the equation. Often, just as important are the challenges related to language and cultural differences.

Preparing yourself to meet those challenges takes more than just a desire to see the world. Obviously global firms and corporations expect a mastery of accounting and a high level of professionalism from international team members. But accounting expertise alone is not enough. They also look for individuals who have a broad view

of the world and how social customs and cultural diversity affect the way business is done in other countries.

A second or even third language is also a major asset—sometimes even a requirement—if you're aiming for a longer-term international career.

## Where to look. Today and tomorrow.

Few, if any, new CPAs land their "dream" international job first thing off the bat. Nonetheless, a number of very valuable early career opportunities for overseas experience and career development do exist.

All the major accounting firms and many large multi-national corporations have formal programs that prepare and groom staff members for major global responsibilities. Young tax professionals at KPMG, for example, can take advantage of the firm's popular Tax Trek program, which offers a three month international placement. Ernst & Young's Global Exchange Program enables top performers to participate in extended international engagements.

At PricewaterhouseCoopers, a pilot program called EPIC—Early PwC International Challenge—focuses on senior associates with three to five years experience who have indicated a definite interest in international work. Those who qualify—a high job performance rating is prerequisite—receive intensive language and cultural training in preparation for relocation.

Robin Voigt, PwC's Global Mobility Leader, acknowledges that such programs are key to the firm's success. "The international marketplace is very competitive, we are focused on developing the very best of the talent pool on a global scale. Our people simply must have the highest skills and qualifications. Our international clients expect nothing less."

Many independent accounting firms also have global connections. Baker Tilly International, a global alliance of independent accounting firms, counts among its members more than 120 firms in 93 countries. Samuel Wholley, Managing Director of Baker Tilly USA, says that it's not unusual for member firms to send staff

on both short and extended overseas assignments with other alliance members. Some firms, he notes, even have ongoing exchange programs to expose staff to global business issues.

## It's a big world out there. Or is it?

When you look at the world through the lens of a CPA, it doesn't take long to discover that accounting—the language of business—has a way to go before it's truly an international one. Accounting principles and standards vary from country to country, sometimes significantly, which can create serious challenges for companies that routinely cross international borders to do business.

To help find workable, long-term solutions to the complexities of international accounting, both the US Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) and the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) have committed themselves to developing a common set of accounting standards that will enhance the quality, comparability, and consistency of global financial reporting.

So what does that mean to accounting students planning their careers? Obviously it would require new knowledge and skills with implications for education and credentialing. It also makes the CPA credential even more important. Because it is globally recognized and respected, CPAs will remain in the forefront of the profession—as leaders, innovators, and citizens of the world.

## A global view from abroad.

Fadi Ganni, Managing Director of the Morgan Group, represents Becker Professional Education's sizable presence in the Middle East, India, and a portion of Europe. He sees firsthand the growing global demand for CPAs in both domestic and non-domestic firms and corporations, "As the most valued accounting qualification in the world's leading economy, the CPA credential is respected globally. It can open doors anywhere in the world to a wealth of opportunities for moving up the ladder at a faster pace and at higher pay."

Rapidly increasing registration in Becker Professional Education's CPA Exam Review programs internationally confirms his view. Becker now offers CPA Exam Review opportunities in 40 locations in Europe, Middle East, Asia Pacific, India, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Becker's commitment to student success on a global scale was underscored by the release of its first English/Chinese bi-lingual self-study review course on CD. In other countries, Japan and Korea for example, the English language course content is supplemented with lectures in the local language.

### A personal achievement in a truly global sense.

It's safe to say that the CPA credential can be a critical stepping stone to advancement and professional achievement in accounting. Increasingly, outside the United States, it is seen as a passport to success in all areas of the global economy.

Listen to the voice of experience. Melissa Luo, a native of Taiwan, came to the United States to study accounting and passed the CPA Exam eight years ago. Recently she served as the global coordinator for the audit of a multinational client of one of the Big Four accounting firms. She's looking forward to an extended assignment in the Asia Pacific region next year.

"My work has opened windows for me that I never imagined. I see the world differently now. I've worked with people from many different countries and cultures, and I hope to keep doing it. But," she adds, "the path to becoming a truly international accounting professional is a personal one, not someone else's. Where you go depends on your vision of how you fit into the world. And only you can define that for yourself."

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## Commitment and a plan.

Karl Hackenbrack, director of Vanderbilt University's Master's of Accounting (MAcc) program, offers some practical advice to students who want to make themselves more attractive in the international marketplace. In addition to excelling in your academic program, of course, he says it takes commitment and a plan:

- Read and absorb all you can about the global capital markets and international business.
- Study and master other language skills.
- Travel internationally, just to experience other countries and cultures.
- Pursue a well-rounded, liberal arts undergraduate education.
- Take the CPA Exam as soon as possible. And pass, of course.

How important is passing the CPA Exam? Critical says Hackenbrack. In fact, Vanderbilt's Owen Graduate School of Management runs a collaborative program with Becker through which MAcc students complete an intensive Becker review course immediately after graduation and then sit for the full CPA Exam. Many universities offer similar opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.accountancyworldwide.com/mediacoverage\\_2007.htm](http://www.accountancyworldwide.com/mediacoverage_2007.htm)



"Wow! I passed all 4 parts the first time. I could not have done it without Becker. The materials are great and the national instructors are amazing. Thanks so much to everyone at Becker for helping me pass."

- CPA CANDIDATE AND  
BECKER ALUM

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