

Bulletin

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feature article
Training for success

**BURGESS
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Chartered Accountants

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TRAINING for success

As you'd expect with a leading firm of accountants, when it comes to training at Burgess Hodgson, all the numbers add up. In 2003, for example, out of seven trainees who qualified as Chartered Accountants in Canterbury, six were from Burgess Hodgson.

It's a strong message, and one the firm is extremely proud of. Every year, its recruitment of trainees belies its size. Last year, for example, the firm took on six new recruits – despite the costs involved in taking individuals through the training process.

"We probably take on more trainee Chartered Accountants every year than any other firm in the area," says partner Richard Stewart. "It's an indication of how fast we are growing. We invest heavily in the training of our successful candidates.

"The fact that, year on year, we are recruiting more trainees means we can continue to grow our client base – and expect to develop talent from within to handle the growing requirements of the business."

Every year, partners and current trainees from Burgess Hodgson visit Kent University and Canterbury Christ Church University to talk to students about the merits of accountancy – and the benefits of working for one of the leading firms of accountants in the South East. Judging by the numbers of new recruits in 2005, the programme is proving a resounding success.

Alexej Ignatow is one of our newest recruits from Kent University, and is already starting to feel the benefits of training at the firm.

"When you are at university, you might think that accountancy is just one thing, but once you get into it, you realise that it's made up of lots of different facets.

"Training at Burgess Hodgson gives an individual a much wider exposure to all the different areas of accountancy. At the end of my training, I will know which area I want to specialise in – which I wouldn't if I'd trained in one of the big London firms."

The firm is keen to continue to foster its links with local education providers and to attract new trainees that want to experience a far broader portfolio of work than they might be exposed to at one of the larger London accountants.

Celine Marius, who is currently awaiting the results of her final exams, says, for her, the choice of going to Burgess Hodgson was easy. "My main motivating factor was to be able to evolve and have responsibilities early on. I also didn't want the work to be repetitive.

"I knew that by choosing Burgess Hodgson, which is a local firm but one with a broad client base, I would be able to get that greater level of responsibility early on and contact with the client that I enjoy. I wanted to be able to make a difference to the client."

With the costs associated with training, there's always a risk that a firm will lose out if an individual moves on to new pastures. But, at Burgess Hodgson, there's a flexible, team approach that helps to develop a sense of loyalty.

"You only find out what sort of business adviser a person is once they've finished training," says Richard. "We then help to develop them further by being more client-facing and sitting alongside partners in final meetings. "And, just because they've qualified, doesn't mean they can rest on their laurels. We also encourage newly qualified accountants to take further professional qualifications such as Chartered Tax Advisor."

It's not a prescriptive process, but one that is geared towards the needs of the individual. There is a strong, informal mentoring system within the firm, where trainees at different stages can discuss problems among themselves.

"The number of people actually training here surprised me when I first started," explains Tom Saltmer, who is in his second year with the firm. "Everyone's in various stages of training, which is a good thing. You can speak to colleagues about any problems you have. Everyone knows the challenges the training presents – and people are always willing to help." It certainly seems to have paid off for Tom, who recently scored top marks in the whole of the South East in his accountancy exams. He achieved first place out of the South East students in the Professional Stage of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) for his audit and assurance paper – the first part of his accountancy qualifications.

Increasingly, there is a more hands-on approach to training within the firm. Richard Stewart and Colin Reid, the two youngest partners, are becoming more heavily involved in the firm's trainees.

And their age is also an advantage: new recruits realise that it's not too long ago that they themselves might have been taking the exams – and can remember what it's like! The other key factor is that the level of expertise within Burgess Hodgson provides a rich vein of skills and techniques that trainees can benefit from – and partners are more than willing to share.

With the success of the firm's recent recruits, the future for the firm's business adviser's of tomorrow is looking bright.

"We see the recruitment and training process as an integral part of the firm," says Richard. "The trainees of today will be the partners of tomorrow, and potentially advising our clients about their businesses. We want to see our trainees flourish within an exciting business environment."

Burgess Hodgson: forward thinking business advice

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Trainee profiles



Celine started with the firm in October in 2001, having completed an LLB in law and an MBA at Kent University. For her, the choice of going to Burgess Hodgson was easy. "I wanted to be able to make a difference to the client – which you would never get in a large firm. It was also important for me to retain some sort of social life outside the office.

"At Burgess Hodgson, I had the ideal solution: I had the responsibility, the salary was competitive and my quality of life was maintained.

"Partners are always happy to give up their own time before and after work and at lunchtime, which really helps to motivate you. They are extremely supportive, although you have to show a commitment to the firm. If you ask for the help, it's always there".

Tom joined in August 2004, having completed a degree in business administration at the University of Kent. He sees accountancy as a fundamental part of business, and is clearly enjoying his studies. "I was quite surprised when I started the number of people who are actually training here. Everyone's in various stages of training, which is a good thing. "You can speak to colleagues about any problems you have. Although there's no formal mentoring process, everyone knows the challenges that the training process presents and people are willing to help."



Alexej joined Burgess Hodgson last year after studying business and economics at Kent University. Originally from Russia, he lived half his life in Germany before coming to the UK to study in 2001. "In the last six years, I've lived in five different countries, so I wanted to settle down for a minute – and be able to call one place home!"

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We are a leading firm of chartered accountants and business advisers, specialising in personal and corporate tax planning. Our experienced professionals have a strong reputation for providing quality technical advice and the ability to implement practical financial solutions as flexibly as our clients demand.

Building relationships has always been at the heart of our business. We understand that business success is measured by the strength of our relationships with clients. Our partners' technical skills, professionalism and business acumen is complemented by the commitment of our staff to provide our customers with the best service possible.

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