

# ACCA Hong Kong Graduation Ceremony & Top Achievers' Awards Presentation 2005

Speech by Ms Mandy Tam

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Dear President, my fellow ACCA students and affiliates, professors, ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

I would like to thank ACCA for inviting me to join you in this important occasion, and for giving me such a great pleasure of being your guest of honour today.

First of all, I would like to congratulate all the top achievers who have achieved outstanding grades in the ACCA Professional Exams in June this year. Passing the exams is already not an easy task, not to mention being an award winner. As an ACCA member myself, I know how vigorous the exam is and I know so well how difficult it will be to work and study at the same time. All of you really deserve a big applause!

Speaking at this occasion is like going back to my old school's gathering – meeting a lot energetic juniors who are facing a bright future with lots of possibilities, and eager to try everything new. It also reminds me how I started my career in the accounting field.

26 years ago, I left Hong Kong to further my university education in Middlesex. I registered as an ACCA student in 1984 and become member in 1987. My experience in the UK and the ACCA qualification have no doubt broadened my horizons and opened up further doors for me. Upon qualified, I worked for Shell UK and returned to Hong Kong in 1995 when I worked for the then Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand, before becoming the CEO of a tax consultancy firm.

Till that moment, everything seemed to have worked out quite smoothly for me, although there were a lot of hard work and sleepless nights for never-ending tasks and deadlines. However, my typical accountancy career experienced a drastic change in 2003 when the SARS struck Hong Kong. The outbreak of the disease made Hong Kong a pariah state – we saw tourism stagnated, hotels and airlines emptied, business visitors stopped coming and the economy hitting its bottom. However, behind this dreadful scene, we all witnessed the brightest side of human beings. Every citizen in Hong Kong joined hands to fight the disease. Like most of you, I was so much touched by the fearless dedication of our medical staff while combating the SARS epidemic. At that time, I asked myself, ‘As a professional accountant, is there anything I can do for the public? How can I “*uplift the professionalism and serve the Hong Kong citizens*”?’

I then stood in the district council election and won the seat in Wong Tai Sin District. The mass rally in 2003 demanding for a more democratic political reform spurred me to go further. That’s when I stood myself for – and won – a seat in the Legislative Council last year.

Why am I telling you my story? – I want you to recognise YOUR potential not only in your career but also in our community as a whole.

I see my accounting background as an ideal preparation for my new role. I have substantive working experience in different fields in the accountancy profession. This unique experience enables me to collate different views from accountants working in different industries and sectors and to improve communication within the accountancy profession. It also helps me have direct and sincere dialogue with the business and industrial sectors.

I remember that ACCA chose ‘responsibility’ as its theme for the Centenary celebration last year. I think the theme not only aimed to rebuild the lost trust in

the post-Enron era but also reinforce the importance of social responsibility for today's accountants.

As Jimmy has mentioned in his speech, professional bodies, such as ACCA, are introducing their mandatory *continuing professional development (CPD) scheme*. In my opinion, this initiative serves to demonstrate our commitment to responsible accounting, that is: being willing and able to keep our skills up to date and relevant, in the best of the public interest.

I am also grateful for what ACCA has done in promoting the sustainability reporting and raising awareness of corporate transparency issues. I believe that a successful leader must ensure a future that is both sustainable and equitable for future generations. And this sustainable future is highly depended on every one of us to ensure a *positive triple bottom-line on our people, profits, and planet*. I believe that we, as professional accountants, must stand up for the cause of strong integrity and professionalism as the best way to safeguard both the profession and the public interest.

The training and education of accountants are no longer sufficient to focus solely on wealth maximisation and economic value added for shareholders. As the "conscience" of an organisation, accountants have no excuse not to take an essential role in promoting and enhancing social responsibility and corporate governance in their organisations.

Apart from the area of professional practice, we should also take an active role in serving our community. I understand that ACCA has the annual Charity Fun Day and charitable events to advocate the spirits of equality, acceptance, and integration among ACCA members and the public. I hope that you can spend more time participating in this kind of events and show your love and concerns to those people in need. I do hope that your excellence in study can be extended to your work and our society. As an accountant of the new generation, the prosperity and harmony of Hong Kong are rested on you all.

Lastly, my congratulations again to all the outstanding top achievers and affiliates. I wish that you all have the persistence and courage to pursue the excellence and become a real professional accountant of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And thanks ACCA again for giving me this chance to meet all these energetic, budding professional accountants. I do look forward to exchanging ideas with you all on the profession and the wellbeing of our society.

Thank you and have a nice evening.