

The Arab British Chamber of Commerce and the Arab International Women's Forum in cooperation with the Institute of Chartered Accounts of England and Wales

### **Panel Discussion**

#### **“The Importance of a Strong Accounting Profession in the Middle East”**

at

*The Arab British Chamber Commerce, 43 Upper Grosvenor Street, London W1K 2NJ*

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#### ***“The experience of becoming an ACA and the opportunities for ACA's in the profession and in the wider business community.”***

##### **Introduction**

- I would like to take this opportunity to say what a great pleasure and honour it is to be here today sharing my experiences of being a newly qualified ACA.
- Let me start with sharing an interesting fact with you. Did you know that I am the only new qualified ACA Female from the Middle East at the ICAEW?
- So how did I get here?

##### **Why I am here and how**

- From an early age I have always had an interest in the Finance and Accountancy profession. To be honest it was when I was 8 when I met my father's friend who was a very successful businessman and asked him what he did, and he replied he was an accountant!
- Having graduated from LSE in accounting and finance, I had to make a decision about my career. Which firm to join and what professional qualification to do. I chose PwC for its outstanding reputation in the industry, being a global firm giving me greater opportunities and networks, as well as offering a supportive encouraging environment. I chose to do ACA as I wanted to do a respected professional qualification with good reputation that was also intellectually challenging.
- Having said that, the vast majority of my friends had not come from an accountancy background which is a testament to the ICAEW training program and how it instils knowledge of the business world and challenges everyone to a consistent level.

##### **ICAEW course structure**

- ICAEW training program is very intellectually challenging and rigorous. These were done in 6 week block release courses with days spent at college with tutors guiding us through and questions set for evenings to prepare for exams. Also let's not forget

the support that PwC offered during these times, by having a professional qualification team available to us at anytime to talk to about anything and discuss problems if one was struggling. This was invaluable support which was appreciated by every student.

- Most people do not pass these exams first time but this is not seen as a failure but highlights the high standards of ICAEW and its rigorous training.

### **What next**

- I qualified a year ago now and looking at back at the 3 years brings back mixed emotions. It was tough studying for these exams and getting used to the challenging and demanding training program, however I can honestly say that the day I qualified was one of my proudest moments ever.
- This qualification has given me a great insight into the business world and provided me with lots of opportunities.
- I spent the last 4 years on audit engagements from large investment banks to smaller clients where I have taken ownership and been responsible for many different lines of businesses and have gained tremendous knowledge about companies and how they operate. In the past month I joined the Consultancy department within PwC which highlights the opportunities available to one once ACA qualified and working for such a big firm.
- Some of my peer group have left and gone onto other firms and global banks, however, the network that I made during the training program has allowed me to stay in touch with many of these people wherever they are and be able to use the networks when needed.
- If one decided to stay at PwC after qualifying, here are the types of things available:

Cycles of experience: This is when you join a new department and start a new role for 3 to 6 months allowing you to broaden your knowledge and skill set.

Secondments: This can be within UK or international, and within the same department or trying something different.

- In summary during my time to qualify and since then I have met some wonderful inspirational people who I hope to stay in touch with, and have gained a wealth of experience and knowledge. It is a great opportunity that I would recommend to anyone considering taking this path.