

# A wealth of talent

---

**T**he members of CPA Australia are talented individuals whose skills have earned them high-profile jobs, accolades, and success. There are also some members whose lives are less ordinary.

Bernard Poon FCPA (Aust.), CPA Australia's 2012 Divisional President – Greater China, is Managing Director, Transaction Advisory Services Leader for Hong Kong and Macau Region, at Ernst & Young. Poon has been with the company for more than 20 years in various roles, and says that tenacity comes high on his list of values.

Along with spending time with his family, the energetic accountant enjoys activities outside of the office. He's an active member of the Hong Kong Cricket Club, and takes part in various mentorship programs with different universities and student associations. But his true passion is sport.

In the 1990s, Poon completed Ironman Australia, making headlines as the first Hong Kong Chinese to finish an Ironman triathlon event. He has since completed nine Ironman triathlon events, and he wants to make that 12 before he turns 50. The Ironman World Championship in



*Bernard Poon FCPA (Aust.)*

Kona, Hawaii is something he would like to try.

“Being an active sportsman has extended my horizons beyond anything I could imagine,” Poon explains, saying that through these activities, he has learned the importance of discipline and consistency. “With endurance sports you need to set timetables, keep logs, plan ahead and train hard. I set different goals for myself in each competition too.”

This way of thinking has helped Poon expand his comfort zone as an accountant. “I have learned to set realistic goals for my career. I have always adapted to the evolving business and accounting worlds,” he notes.

Poon’s diverse interests have helped him build a wide network, even though he has to manage his time creatively. “I believe in achieving a work-life balance, but I have to work long hours. I’ve run up and down stairs or commuted by bicycle to keep fit,” he admits. “My favourite motto is ‘do the right thing’ – I always play by the rules and never take advantage.”

Derek Lai FCPA (Aust.), the Regional Managing Partner (Southern China) at Deloitte and CPA Australia’s 2006 Divisional President – Greater China, knows a thing or two about determination.

Lai, who has 26 years of experience specialising in corporate restructuring and insolvency, describes the company as purpose-led, and committed to making an impact that matters to clients and society. He also leads Pass the Torch, one of Deloitte’s corporate social responsibility programs in Southern China, and provides mentorship to secondary school students in Hong Kong.



*Derek Lai FCPA (Aust.)*

Lai also has a personal triumph to be proud of. He overcame Spondyloepiphyseal dysplasia, the bone disease he was born with. “I don’t let it define me, I’m defined by what I do. I have learned to appreciate what I have and never give up,” he says, mentioning a love for travel, movies and monthly birthday parties for staff. Lai champions staff programs that improve well-being and raise a sense of belonging.

Passion is one of Lai's ingredients for success, and it stops him getting bogged down by his heavy workload. "I do what needs to be done, because it is my responsibility to do it, and I take ownership," he says. Faith is another quality he feels is important: "Vision without execution is meaningless, and sustained success is unlikely when there is execution without passion." Lai believes that it's too easy to give up without realising how close success is. "If I can get to be what I am today, anyone can. Failure comes from not trying," says Lai.

A passion for quality drives Patrick Kwok FCPA (Aust.), CPA Australia's Divisional Councillor – Greater China. His accounting career has taken him from Director of Accounting and Finance of McDonald's Hong Kong to Head of Operations of Starbucks (Hong Kong and Macau), where he oversees strategic management, operations, market and store developments.

Kwok cites his 20 years in multinational corporations as the source of his love for quality. "We put extensive attention and effort into quality management, building up systems, and implementing standards and policies to measure the quality of the business and its operations," he says. But he also knows the staff need something extra. "For staff to achieve high-quality work you have to stimulate their love for what they do," he advises.



*Patrick Kwok FCPA (Aust.)*

Kwok says that quality motivates him to refine everything. "My passion for quality developed from my traditional accounting training with CPA Australia. A business can really thrive with the help of a good financial report to base the right decisions around," he says.

Kwok likes to work with others, so he feels operations is the right role for him. "I'm willing to go the extra mile to explore options in doing things differently," he says. "I'm a very imaginative guy, but I believe a strong foundation is necessary too. Thanks to 16 years of accounting knowledge, I think before I act."

Albert Yip FCPA (Aust.), has over 26 years of experience in corporate finance, internal auditing, risk management, compliance and information security across APAC and the USA. He's Chairperson, Financial Services Committee of Greater China, CPA Australia, and Senior Vice President, Regional Head of Corporate Audit, APAC, State Street Corporation.

That might seem a weighty role, but Yip says he enjoys challenges and loves extreme sports including fencing and shooting. He admits that he has dreamt of being a hero in a SWAT team: "An auditor is like a team member of a special task force, well equipped and trained, and being the third line of defence in protecting assets and the best interest of both the company and stakeholders," he explains.

During his career, Yip has experienced global financial crisis and their resulting regulatory regimes, as well as constant changes in technology, and the evolving transformation of the world economy. "It's all emerging or even unpredictable," he says: "You have to be an energetic, versatile professional with a broad knowledge and an all-round skillset. These changes have motivated me to learn, and they have made me a strong believer in teamwork," he explains.

Yip likes to draw on a pool of many different talents to resolve difficult



*Albert Yip FCPA (Aust.)*

challenges. "We are all unique, and we all have different talents. We should also accept other people's weaknesses, and admit our own," he says. His belief in individuals, and in teamwork, enabled his past teams to gain the highest staff engagement scores – and he has received the highest manager effectiveness scores too.

"This is an imperfect world that is full of grievances, but we are all normal people," Yip says. "Integrity and appreciation are at the core of everything I do. These qualities can make this world a better, happier place."