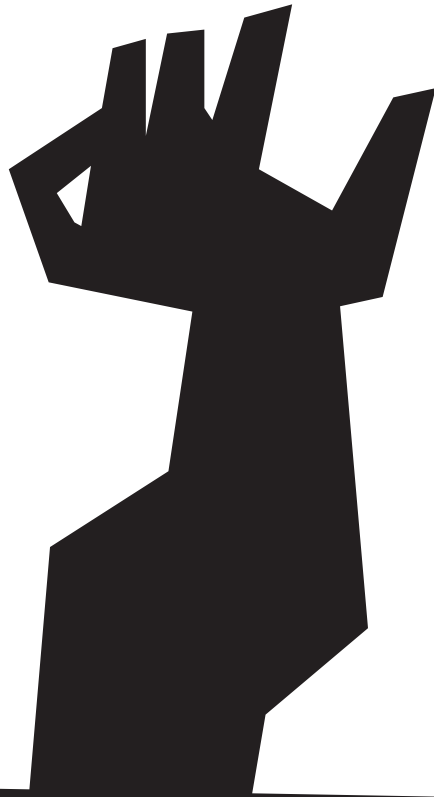


Reach!



Charlie Goss and Zane Carrazedo took very different routes to becoming ACA trainees, but determination and hard work have helped them both to reach their potential



nce upon a time there was a little girl who wanted to be a Blue Peter presenter; then she wanted to be a fashion designer; she even contemplated becoming a dancer.

But by the time she left school she was out of ideas. 'I didn't know what I wanted to do when I finished my A-levels,' says Charlie Goss, 'I knew that I didn't want to go to university,' she explains, 'so I decided that finding a job seemed like the best course of action.'

Charlie has A-levels in dance, maths, sociology and general studies, so her next step could have been in any one of myriad directions, but as a friend was already working for a firm of chartered accountants with an opening for an administrative assistant, Charlie joined Creaseys in Tunbridge Wells, and the rest – as they say – is history. 'After six months I knew that I was interested in accountancy,' she recalls.

After doing some bookkeeping work for her department, Charlie knew that she wanted to be an accountant and within a year she was studying for her AAT. 'It was a good way to start my accountancy studies and has helped with my ACA studies,' says Charlie, but they still felt like a leap up. 'Studying for the ACA requires a lot more time and commitment than anything I've ever done before,' she says, but Charlie is staying motivated because she explains: 'Every exam passed is another step towards my goal of being a chartered accountant'.

If her achievements so far are any indication, Charlie is well on the way, as she recently achieved 100% in her Financial Accounting Top-Up exam (for students already qualified through AAT), winning the Carter prize from ICAEW. 'I was really surprised when I found out, although I did come out of the exam feeling very positive,' she says, because it related to tasks she was used to doing. 'I work on preparing accounts every day, and this gave me a huge advantage, because once you start practising something daily it becomes impossible to forget,' she says, modestly, but hard work is also a factor.

'My parents can't believe the change in me; they are impressed that I want to study and how quickly I have passed my exams so far,' says Charlie, who is looking to Creaseys' Chief Executive, Emma Roberts, as a role model. 'She progressed quickly through her career and became a partner at quite a young age, something I'd love to do,' says Charlie, 'and I believe she also has an A-level in dance,' which is more important than you might expect. 'It made me believe that it doesn't matter that I have a completely unrelated A-level, and it won't stop me getting to the top.'

Although Zane Carrazedo also trained for his ACA in practice, he took a very different route into accountancy. 'I graduated from the University of Hull with a first class BSc in accounting,' says Zane, who enjoyed the subject so much that he decided to become an accountant. 'I began looking into the training options during my final year at university, and I decided to opt for the

ACA training scheme,' he recalls, 'as I could see that the qualification has a high standing in the marketplace.'

After seeing an advert at a careers fair, Zane contacted the HAT group of accountants, which provides training and recruitment for small and medium-sized practices. 'I was impressed by the extent of their involvement with trainees,' says Zane, who liked the fact that HAT offers additional guidance and support to trainees, outside the firms they have their training agreement with. 'HAT is active socially and organises various events throughout the year,' he explains, 'and because HAT is responsible for training, you progress in college with the same group of trainees, helping you to foster and build lasting friendships along the way.'

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HAT assesses and interviews candidates and matches those who meet its criteria to the requirements of its member firms. Zane signed a training agreement with the London firm of Wilder Coe LLP. 'The audit team here is highly sociable and I immediately felt as if I was a valued member,' as managers and partners were always open to technical queries, and workflows were managed so that he wasn't too busy in the run up to exams. 'Training with the same HAT students meant that the group essentially supported each other too,' he adds.

'Without all of these support structures in place I firmly believe that my progression through the qualification would have been much more difficult,' he says. Though he also cites 'dedication to ones studies and time management' as vital. 'The ACA qualification itself is a challenging but do-able one,' he says. 'To succeed does mean late nights and all-weekend study sessions,' he says, 'and while this is difficult when all of your friends are out and about, it's worth it in the end' – and Zane knows what he's talking about.

After three 'rewarding but highly challenging' years he recently completed his training agreement. 'This can be considered a daunting period, as trainees have to decide on their future career paths,' he observes, 'but I was lucky to be in the position where I knew that my passion lay in audit practice, and I was already at the firm I wanted to continue my career with.' So when Wilder Coe LLP offered Zane an audit supervisor role, the opportunity to manage a small portfolio of clients, and the prospect of rapidly progressing to audit manager, he knew exactly what to do: 'I gratefully accepted.'