

MT OPPORTUNITIES

This is an extra edition of a special series offering graduates tips for winning the hottest management trainee positions in town

Experiencing unconventional challenges

CTI to nurture audacious young management talent

by Grace Chan

Crisis management and decision-making skills are key to successful business management. In this regard, City Telecom (HK) Ltd (CTI) adopts a gallant approach in nurturing its future leaders. In particular, the company's "CXO of the Future" management trainee (MT) programme is designed for university graduates eager to step forward and face uncertainties in the fast-changing business world. This year, no more than three elites will be admitted to the 18-month programme. Established in 1992, CTI is a provider of residential and corporate fixed network and international telecommunications services. Its wholly-owned subsidiary, Hong Kong Broadband Network Limited, is a major fixed telecom network services operator. In essence, the "CXO of the Future" programme is made up of job rotations at all 40 of the company's business divisions in the first 12 months, with the final six-month placement in one to three divisions based on the MT's career aspirations. Trainees are expected to acquire all the essential skills and knowledge,

ranging from frontline customer service to back office operations, through hands-on experience and direct participation in special projects. Unlike any traditional recruitment process, around 10 handpicked candidates go through an Outward Bound adventure in addition to the written tests, group interview and panel interview. The Outward Bound experience will take two days and one night, with a number of tasks assigned to challenge candidates' competence in coordination, organisation and independent thinking. "It is intended to find out if the candidates' personal traits match our corporate culture," says Mimi Choy, director, talent management, CityTelecom (HK) Ltd. "They may be asked to jump into the sea or go high up in the sky, just to test their courage." More challenges still await the selected trainees, as they are required to read 36 management books in 18 months, sit the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Level I exam five months into the programme and participate in a half marathon next February.

Trial of perseverance
The philosophy behind taking the CFA exam and joining the half marathon

is similar—to make an attempt and to learn through the process. Ms Choy says the passing rate for the CFA exam is low, so it is more important for trainees to get familiar with the financial and business language rather than to pass the exam. "Top management always deal with figures and so a good understanding of financial concepts can certainly help trainees move up. Besides, we'd like them to experience early on the difficulties that management staff face," she explains. In line with the company's unconventional management style, the MTs are not assured a job upon completion of the programme. Conversely, they are required to hunt for a job internally after 12 months of training. "They have to look for job opportunities and send their resume to department heads on their own or they'll be out," Ms Choy reveals. CTI's MT programme was launched more than 10 years ago, though each year the programme takes in no more than six candidates. "We believe in quality over quantity. Our management committee members show strong commitment to the programme as each trainee is assigned a member as mentor and a department head as big brother or sister," she says.

Interview Tips

- Do's**
- Be yourself and express yourself
 - Be familiar with the company's corporate mission and values
 - Show courage and be a good team player
 - Read through company's annual report and information on the website before the interview
- Don'ts**
- Be late
 - Be too dominant or too quiet during group discussions
 - Be a "yes-man"
 - Show lack of confidence and passion



Mimi Choy (standing), director, talent management
Kathy Chan, management trainee
CityTelecom (HK) Ltd
Photo: Wallace Chan

Recruitment Schedule

March	Campus talk
	Submit CV with a one-page essay explaining reasons for applying for the programme
31 March	Application deadline
Apri	Written tests (90 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Situational questions in Chinese and EnglishAptitude tests
June	Group interviews (one hour) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Crisis management and decision making skills Outward Bound Live-in (2 days 1 night) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Encourage candidates to challenge themselvesComplete special tasks to show ability of risk taking, coordination, organisation, team building and leadership Panel interview with the management committee (one hour) Offer: 1 to 3 vacancies Salary: 18-month remuneration package of HK\$270,000 plus discretionary bonus (upon completion of programme)
Early July	Programme commencement

Training structure

Duration	18 months
First 12 months	Rotations in all major business units (around 40)
Final 6 months	Final placements in one to three business units
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Take the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Level I exam by December 2009Run the half marathon (21km) in February 2010Finish reading 36 management books
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mentorship by a management committee memberDepartment heads act as big brothers/sisters
Assessment & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reports on every rotation and attachmentSpecial projects and assignmentsOn-the-job evaluation

Entry requirements

Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A bachelor's degree or higherLess than 2 years' work experience
Language ability	Excellent command of English and Chinese
Key attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Passionate about achieving common goalsWilling to take on challenge and take risksSmart, capable, competent, energetic and innovativeSuperb interpersonal skills and leadership competence

Accelerating growth

In July 2007, Kathy Chan could hardly imagine how challenging her life would be—being personal assistant to a major corporation's chairman, completing a half marathon, and helping with a corporate project. Graduating with a degree in systems engineering and engineering management from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Ms Chan was attracted to CTI's MT programme for the its comprehensive exposure to different business units. "To fresh graduates like me, learning the ropes is a priority," she says. Most important of all, she could feel the exceptional corporate culture. "The whole screening process was full of challenges, reflecting the company's 'dare to try' corporate culture," Ms Chan adds. She amazed herself by completing the half marathon last month. "I was never a sport lover at university, but with the company's encouragement, I finished the 10-kilometre marathon last year and a half marathon this year. Now, I love running." During the first 12 months of training, she was attached to almost all 40 CTI business units, while the days working as the personal assistant of CTI's chairman Ricky Wong were her most unforgettable and extraordinary experience. She was given opportunities to sit in on sales and marketing planning and internal budget meetings, learning directly from the top management's point of view. "It's really tough. However, I was motivated to learn extra hard to exceed Mr Wong's expectations," she recalls, noting that she has benefited from reading 36 management books. "While going through them, I'd

think of applying the textbook knowledge into actual working life and sharing my views with colleagues." While digital broadcasting becoming a trend, Ms Chan was one of the think tanks in the company's "set-top box development project", from the start to the completion of the final output. Meetings with developers, in-house technical staff and customers sharpened her interpersonal skills and business sense. There she found the next opportunity for her career advancement—to help develop a new customer information handling system. "I learnt of the project while being attached to the quality assurance unit. Encouraged to take on a challenge, I discussed the possibility of system improvement with the department head," she says. As a result, her final six-month placement at the customer engagement department proved valuable. "Before confirming my final placement, I discussed the issue with my mentor—one of the corporate directors who always shares some far-sighted advice with me," she remarks. Ms Chan now assures herself that striving for learning opportunities is most essential before making further career decisions.

Career Path

- CXO
- Department head
- Managerial level
- Executive level
- Management trainee



A Cisco visit



Christmas party 2007



Carriers World Asia Conference 2008



In the newsroom

Company wine tasting class



The 10-kilometre coporate team