

How a QuickBooks class helped a new grad fast-track her career

By Wendy McMahon

A passion for helping small businesses and a practical QuickBooks course helped Samantha Young find her dream job. Now, the 2017 University of Texas at Dallas grad uses her accounting degree to guide small businesses to success.

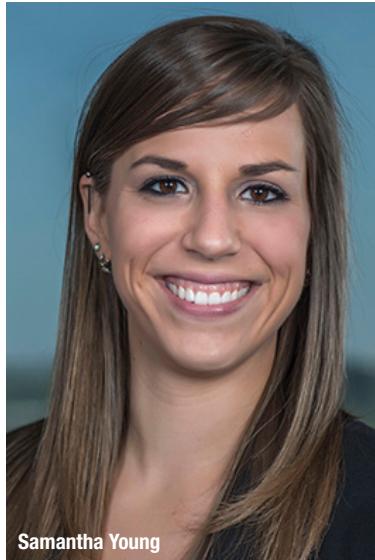
Always craving a challenge, Young chose accounting because she loved the complex work. She set her sights on working with small businesses because it promised something new every day.

She also knew that while many students expect to work in a large accounting firm after graduation, they often don't realize there are significant opportunities to work with small businesses. In fact, research shows 79%* of CPAs actually work with small firms and individuals.

With that in mind, Young felt learning the skills to support small businesses would help her as she launched her career. "QuickBooks is the number one software used by small businesses. I knew it would be helpful for me in my job search when I finished school," explains Young.

And Jennifer Johnson's Accounting 4340 class (better known to students as "the QuickBooks class") was exactly what she needed. Focused on helping students apply theory to practice, the course was more in-depth and hands-on than any course Young had taken before.

The QuickBooks course gave her practical skills, such as how to use reports, budgets, and forecasting as well as how to pull business performance data. It also prepared her to pass the Quickbooks Certified User exam, which would help her hit the ground running after graduation.



When a manager from CliftonLarson-Allen LLP (formerly MWA), visited her class to talk about working in the world of accounting, Young was intrigued by their work with small businesses. She for a job, and the firm hired her as an Accounting Associate right out of school.

"My manager—who hired me a year and a half ago—actually told me how beneficial it was for me to take the QuickBooks class and get certified," said Young. "It helped ease her mind knowing I had worked with QuickBooks and they wouldn't have to train me from scratch."

And because CLA didn't need to pay for Young's Quickbooks training and certification, they offered her a higher starting salary.

Now, as a Senior Accounting Associate with CLA, QuickBooks is part

of Young's daily work. "Every one of my 14 clients is on QuickBooks, whether it's desktop or online. So I'm using it all day long," says Young.

She says the hands-on projects she did in class showed her how to apply theory to real-life scenarios. Now those skills help her advise and inform her clients.

Analyzing data to help her clients find key information and guiding them to make sound business decisions is a key part of Young's role—and QuickBooks makes that part of her job easier: "With coded Quickbooks data, I helped a client who offers a variety of services pinpoint how much money he makes from each particular service. With that information in hand, we could decide which services to continue offering and which he should drop."

Young also shares her expertise with new hires to help get them up to speed when they join the company. "I show them how to pull reports, enter a style sheet, apply payments. It's another reason the class was so beneficial. I learned so much that I've been able to help new hires as well."

Young hopes more students realize their career paths will likely lead them to work with small businesses. And a QuickBooks class—especially one as practical as Johnson's—can provide the practical skills many students don't get in their degrees. "It gives students such a huge advantage and it can definitely help get your foot in the door in a job search."

* (Tiburon Strategic Advisors, 2004)

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*Tiburon Strategic Advisors 2004

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- Jennifer Johnson, CPA & Senior Lecturer of Accounting, the University of Texas at Dallas