

FOUR UNEXPECTED ROLES WHERE ACCOUNTING COUNTS



Fighting terrorism and mobsters

SAM checked his smartphone as he rode the New York subway into Manhattan from his Brooklyn apartment. It was early, but already had several email updates on ongoing FBI investigations he was involved with.

There was another batch of financial records from a suspected terrorist group for ready for him to dig into. Tracking the flows of money to and from terrorist groups was a critical part of prosecuting terror cases. Perhaps even more important, though, was that the analysis done by Sam and other FBI accountants supported efforts to choke terrorists' financial lifelines.

Sam's phone pinged again. It was a message from his boss. "Meeting at 11. Prosecutor needs our help with an organized crime case."

His days were full of surprises. It looked today he might also get a chance to take on some mobsters. He smiled. When he told his parents he wanted to get a Master of Accounting degree, he was pretty sure they didn't realize how he would end up using it.



Financing a mission to save lives

HECTOR flopped the thick document down on his desk. There had been big news that morning in the senior staff meeting of the humanitarian organization where he was CFO.

The U.S. government was ready to fund a program that would allow Hector's group to install new water filtration systems that would serve more than a million people in third-world countries. That meant cleaner water, fewer illnesses and many lives saved.

Hector had always dreamed a career where he could make a difference. The UNC MAC program led him into a series of nonprofit financial management jobs and ultimately this position. His organization worked to provide clean water in poor countries.

The document on his desk outlined new financial controls that USAID required before it would fund the clean-water program. Hector had put solid financial controls in place, but Uncle Sam had some additional requirements.

But making changes to the accounting system was a small price to pay to save more lives. Hector opened the document to the accounting section and got to work.



Guiding global business strategy

GRACE put the Wall Street Journal down on her desk, mind still whirling from the front-page story on Asian currency prices. As chief financial officer of a large technology company with most of its assembly plants in Asia, she watched currency values closely.

Accountants work everywhere: In Silicon Valley, on Wall Street, in Hollywood and on Main Street. Some help track down terrorists and criminals. Others travel the world.

It was time, she decided, to look at the financial implications of having so much manufacturing in Asia while it sold most of its products in North America and Europe.

She quickly tapped out an email to one of her senior financial analysts. He was new to the company, but had spent several years with one of the Big Four accounting firms. Like Grace he had a Master of Accounting degree from UNC.

She asked him to review the firm's Asian manufacturing finances, to better understand the impact this morning's currency news could have on future profits. Grace suspected — but needed an analysis to confirm — that higher currency prices could cut into margins.

Her email program pinged. It was the senior analyst. No problem, he said, he would have the analysis for her in two weeks.

Grace looked at her calendar. Just a month until the next board meeting, but that would give her enough time to review the analysis and meet with the CEO to potentially get the issue on the board agenda.

Making healthcare more efficient

ISABELLA walked into the bustling medical center thinking about her 9 a.m. team meeting. After three years with the academic medical center, she had been promoted to manage the hospital's purchasing cost control systems.

Isabella and her team had spent the last year analyzing the hospital's use of thousands of medical supplies, talking to department managers about their frustrations with things running out, and reviewing proposals from suppliers.

Her team was preparing to roll out a real-time inventory management system that would ensure doctors, nurses and technicians had the medical supplies they needed, when they needed them. It would also lower the hospital's expenses because it would help them forecast future demand and save money by ordering bigger quantities.

As she waited by the elevator, an orderly pushed an elderly woman in a wheel chair by. The woman reminded Isabella of her grandmother.

Though she had chosen a Master of Accounting degree over medical school, she got deep satisfaction knowing that woman, and thousands of other patients, would get better, more cost efficient care thanks to her efforts.

WHERE MIGHT ACCOUNTING LEAD YOU?

If you'd like more information on the accounting profession or the UNC Master of Accounting program, our career and admissions experts can help. Visit us online at mac.unc.edu or contact us at mac_info@unc.edu or 919-962-3209.