

Career Advice for CPA Candidates and MST Students

By: Tracy Feng-MST Student

On November 15, 2011, I had the opportunity to interview Mr. Barry Slivinsky. He is the Vice President of Tax for Adobe Systems and an SJSU MST alumnus. Prior to working at Adobe Systems, Mr. Slivinsky started his career at Ernst and Young and stayed there for 3 years, before moving to Synopsys.

Through our conversation, Mr. Slivinsky shared helpful tips for anyone who wants to become a CPA and do well. First, he had high praise for the SJSU MST program, because he has high regard for Professor Nellen, who is a professor and the director of the program. During his beginning years with EY, Mr. Slivinsky found the tax research class taught by Professor Nellen extremely helpful. The lessons taught in the class were immediately applicable to his work. He also enjoyed Professor Nellen's contagious passion for the subject.

Second, Mr. Slivinsky told me that developing professional relationships is crucial in the business world. He observed that Silicon Valley is small enough that most tax accountants know each other. Mr. Slivinsky was able to gain his second job at Synopsys through a coworker's recommendation. The company was also his client, and the decision-makers there had seen and trusted the quality of his work.

Third, Mr. Slivinsky advises beginning accountants to be smart employees who know when to say no to additional work. In his days, he has seen quite a few employees accepting more than the healthy balance of workload, which adversely affected the quality and the efficiency of their work, as well as their work life balance. One of the key factors to being a happy employee is to manage time wisely, by planning at least two weeks ahead and jotting down deadlines accordingly.

Finally, like any business, anyone who desires to become a successful CPA should have personal goals for career advancement and voice those goals with upper management in order to receive promotions. As part of upper management, Mr. Slivinsky expressed that often he does not have the time to guess his employees' career goals. To him, an employee who works hard with a silent desire for promotion looks like an employee who enjoys remaining in his current position.

I am very grateful I had the opportunity to talk with Mr. Slivinsky. Talking with him and seeing his passion for his current job excites me and I look forward to a great start as a tax accountant.

