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40
YOUNG
BUSINESS
LEADERS
2013



They're young, ambitious, highly motivated and – if they're not there already – on the fast track to top decision-making roles. Meet INTHEBLACK'S 40 Young Business Leaders for 2013.

YOUNG BUSINESS LEADERS 2013

For the second year running, INTHEBLACK invited nominations for high achievers aged under 40 for the Young Business Leaders list. The result is a group of remarkable young professionals, as varied in their fields as they are geographically dispersed, that gave the selection panel a difficult challenge.

Encompassing investment banking roles in Britain, CEOs of successful Vietnam-based global food chains, leaders in professional services firms in Hong Kong and the bosses of not-for-profits, industry associations and businesses in Australia, each of the final 40 stands out for leadership abilities and drive.

The process of whittling down the field of early achievers sparked intense discussion on the defining qualities of outstanding leaders among the members of the selection panel. All experienced leaders themselves, the panellists looked for indicators of career success, inspiration, innovation and leadership initiative, beyond the parameters of day-to-day jobs.

Those who displayed leadership in their professional lives and the community were a keen focus for the six panel members, who convened at the Sydney offices of CPA Australia to evaluate entries. Sadly, one of the most vocal and incisive, James Strong – best remembered as a former Qantas CEO and managing director – died just before this edition went to print.

James was supportive of our Young Business Leaders list from the outset, participating on the panel two years running. His involvement reflected his belief in the need to nurture young talent and this year James led much of the discussion. Panel members assumed entrants had the ability to land a top job, develop others and get the most from a team, and leading by example was also a must-have attribute.

John Cahill, CPA Australia's president, also prized "a sense of integrity". Alex Malley, CEO of CPA Australia, highlighted the significance of having passion and the courage to fail. James was on the lookout for people who had "done well from a tough start". Ruth Medd, executive chair of Women on Boards, also was alert to individuals who were professionally well-rounded. Financier and philanthropist Chris Cuffe recognised that early leadership traits often emerge in individuals who "have the get up and go to experiment". This rang true for public practitioner Jason Cunningham, who noted young leaders were likely to be ahead in sports, volunteering and other activities.

Entries for the 2014 INTHEBLACK Young Business Leaders list will open in October.

PHOTO: GRAHAM JEPSON

MEET THE SELECTION PANEL



REPORTING BY CAROLYN BOYD, BELINDA PARKES AND AMANDA WOODARD

A panel of six experienced business leaders convened to assess the entries for the 2013 INTHEBLACK Young Business Leaders. From left, Jason Cunningham, John Cahill, Ruth Medd, James Strong, Alex Malley and Chris Cuffe.

JAMES STRONG AO

The late James Strong was chairman of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Kathmandu Holdings Limited and the Organising Committee for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015. He was also a former CEO and managing director of Qantas Airways Limited from 1993 to 2001, chair of Woolworths Limited, a director of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and a member of the Nomura Australia Advisory Board. He also was previously chair of the Australian Council for the Arts and Insurance Australia Group Limited.

JOHN CAHILL FCPA

Cahill works as an independent non-executive director. He has more than 25 years' experience in senior treasury, finance, accounting and risk management positions and has held the positions of CEO of Alinta Infrastructure Holdings and CFO of Alinta Ltd. He is a non-executive director of Emeco Holdings and deputy chairman of Electricity Networks Corporation. Cahill is also a councillor of Edith Cowan University, and chair of its Resources Committee and a member of the ECU Foundation Board.

CHRIS CUFFE

Cuffe has more than 25 years' experience in building wealth management practices. He led Colonial First State Investments from a small start-up to Australia's largest investment fund manager. Subsequently, at Challenger Financial Services Group, he grew the wealth management business from A\$3 billion to A\$12 billion. In 2006 Cuffe joined not-for-profit organisation Social Ventures Australia (SVA) as an executive director and went on to become chairman of the SVA Future Trust. He is now involved in a portfolio of activities including directorships, managing investments and roles in the not-for-profit sector.

JASON CUNNINGHAM FCPA

Cunningham, who featured in the inaugural INTHEBLACK Young Business Leaders, is an accountant, financial planner, author and radio commentator, who over the past 15 years has built a Melbourne-based public practice with more than 40 employees.

ALEX MALLEY FCPA

As chief executive of CPA Australia, Malley is responsible for 19 offices globally and more than 144,000 members in 127 countries. He serves on several boards and government sector committees. On *The Bottom Line* national television series, which airs on the Nine Network, Malley interviews high achievers and explores their insights on leadership.

RUTH MEDD FCPA

Medd has held senior positions with the Australian Association of National Advertisers, Telstra, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal and the Australian Government. Since 2000 she has been pursuing a career as a non-executive director. Currently she is executive chair of Women on Boards, chair of Australian Ethical Superannuation and a director of the National Foundation for Australian Women.



Building on success
FERDINAND SADELI, 39
PROPERTY

Executive Director and CFO, Sinar Mas Land

For three years running, Ferdinand Sadeli CPA has landed on *Fortune* magazine's Indonesia Top 40 Under 40 list. In his 17-year-career, he has worked as an auditor, accountant, business valuer, consultant, CFO and banker. Now, Sadeli leads mergers, acquisitions and joint ventures for Sinar Mas Land, a large real estate and property developer. He has overseen the group's corporate restructuring and directs investor relations.

At 33, Sadeli became CFO of one of Indonesia's biggest property companies, Bakrieland Development, which "encouraged the younger generation to step up with confidence", he says. He is passionate about combining the corporate and academic spheres and has lectured at universities for 15 years. In 2009 he set up a CFO forum where he invited top CFOs to share their experience with students of Binus University in Indonesia.

"This has become a regular event and brings big benefits to the community," says Sadeli, who has a masters of applied finance from the University of Melbourne and a Bachelor of Economics from Indonesia's Trisakti University.

He encourages young accountants to aim high and says: "With hard work and strong will, everything is possible."

"I'm looking for a contribution beyond career... a leader must be more than one dimensional, so you look for other aspects of their lives such as community leadership."

CHRIS CUFFE, SELECTION PANEL



Strong road ahead
JESSICA RIDDELL, 30
PUBLIC SECTOR

Regional Business Manager – Far North Queensland, Department of Transport and Main Roads

Whenever there is a road built in Far North Queensland, Jessica Riddell CPA is behind the scenes, overseeing the business side of the construction.

"This year I have managed and led a large, diverse team through a tumultuous time in the Queensland Government's history – the change of [state] government has had a significant impact on how we do business," Riddell says.

"As a new, young manager in a remote region I am passionate about my people and the value they add, not only to my region but to statewide business, I feel an incredible responsibility to ensure they achieve their goals and feel empowered to follow their passion."

Riddell manages teams in HR, communications, finance, administration and facilities. She began her career in a vastly different industry – working with some of the most beautiful pearls in the world for Paspaley Pearl Company in the Northern Territory.

"To start a career with a privately owned organisation whose owners have an incredible nous for successful, lean business was career-defining," says Riddell. "It blew my original career goals out of the water and made me realise just how far hard work and good business acumen could take me and coined my career catch words – persistence, resilience and courage."

"What's the difference between a good and a bad leader? When you work for a good leader you can work enormous hours with high stress and still be all go... Good leaders walk the talk so leading is often by example. They have their antennae out."

CHRIS CUFFE, SELECTION PANEL



Team player
KYM WILLIAMS, 36
BUSINESS ADVISORY

Managing Director, BRS

As the owner of a consulting firm, Kym Williams has had to steer his way through the highs and lows of business.

Williams' most difficult moment occurred early last year when his Adelaide business, BRS, was forced to swiftly change plans for expansion after the Australian infrastructure industry came under intense pressure, in turn affecting his own business.

"This meant shelving ideas of growth and downsizing the core team in order to continue as a focused niche advisory firm," employee Erin Petrys says. "Kym and [his partner] Nicole dealt with this in a professional and personal manner, assisting redundant staff to find other employment, all while maintaining the positive and encouraging culture that BRS

had worked hard to create and maintain."

As a passionate leader, Williams' success comes from developing others and bringing people, projects and organisations to life through solution-focused thinking and high-performance cultures.

"Kym also remains completely accessible to his team and is committed to coaching and mentoring us all with regular frequency," Petrys says.



Changing lives
JONATHON MUNN, 32,
NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION

Business Manager, Hutt Street Centre

The realisation he could make a difference for society's vulnerable drew Jonathon Munn ASA to the NGO sector.

As business manager of Hutt Street Centre, Adelaide, South Australia's leading homelessness organisation, he gets satisfaction knowing his decisions ensure the greatest amount of money and resources possible to benefit those in need.

Within months of joining the fast-growing Hutt Street Centre two years ago, Munn had redesigned the financial, accounting and IT systems, met all compliance requirements and identified significant cost savings, earning admiration from his board.

He first saw the impact of NGOs as marketing co-ordinator for Anglicare SA, one of South Australia's biggest employers. But it was the business side that attracted him and within six years, aged 28, he was finance manager reporting directly to the CFO for the organisation, which had an annual turnover of A\$90 million, A\$150 million of assets and A\$100 million in equity.

Munn also volunteers many out-of-work hours to help the homeless.



Family ties
WONG KAH LIN, 37
FOOD AND BEVERAGE

CEO, TCRS Restaurants

Wong Kah Lin CPA co-founded a humble family business and took it global.

From a desire 13 years ago to capitalise on one of Malaysia's favourite dishes – chicken rice – Wong has developed a restaurant chain with more than 70 outlets, including stores in the Philippines, Singapore and Taiwan, with plans to expand into Brunei.

Wong founded The Chicken Rice Shop with her mother, Gaik Wong, who had spent 25 years working for KFC in Malaysia before retiring as a senior executive. The mother-and-daughter team's focus on quality and staff empowerment drove the store to instant success and the brand expanded rapidly to become a shopping mall must-have.

Since then, Wong has built on her success by developing three other brands – halal dessert chain Sweet Chat Cafe, Pancake House International and Dubu Dubu Seoul Food.

Wong has a Bachelor of Commerce (accounting and finance) from the University of Western Australia. She started her career as an auditor with former global firm Arthur Andersen Singapore and PricewaterhouseCoopers Malaysia before gaining her CPA designation in 2000 and teaming up with her mum.

“A clear indication of a leader is how they develop others. In the management group in our organisation we look to see how they have got the most out of their team.”

JASON CUNNINGHAM, SELECTION PANEL

Green lighter
DAVID O'DRISCOLL, 36
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

CEO and Head Product Designer, Brightgreen

At the height of the global financial crisis David O'Driscoll launched LED lighting design company Brightgreen, with his brother Barry. Despite having no financial backing, the O'Driscoll brothers had enough faith in David's designs to pursue turning a product on the brink of becoming obsolete into profit with the 2008 release the world's first LED light as bright as a 50W halogen.

Less than five years later O'Driscoll has steered Brightgreen into a multinational multi-million dollar enterprise averaging an annual growth rate of 489 per cent for the past three years with a staff turnover of just 1.7 per cent.

An inventor at heart, with a sharp business mind, O'Driscoll is inspired by his ideal future. His product designs have been catalysts for five start-ups that grew into ASX-listed multinationals. He has won more than 20 awards, has 17 patents and 14 design registrations. He has also implemented the necessary internal systems while managing the personal and corporate opportunities for business success.

O'Driscoll wants Brightgreen to lower energy consumption in every major world market.

On a cloud
BRENT SZALAY, 33
PUBLIC PRACTICE

Managing Director, Seiva

For Brent Szalay CPA, the future is clear. Cloud accounting will lead the way.

Less than a year ago, the Melbourne resident formed an integrated accounting and financial services business for clients using the online accounting platform Xero. Already, Szalay has 11 staff.

“Brent is passionate about the business side of accounting and believes the accounting industry is undergoing revolutionary change; and he is leading the change,” says his wife Stacy Szalay, who is the HR manager in the business.

“The use of innovative technology and cloud-based software is making the traditional compliance model obsolete and allowing advisers to share and manage client information live over the internet.”

Growing up, Szalay played numerous team sports, which taught him about leadership, team work, commitment, integrity and hard work.

One of the greatest lessons he learned was to accept criticism and deal with adversity. “He learned that he had to work hard to be the best and nothing comes easy,” Stacy says.

Debt buster
SCOTT PARRY, 31
FINANCE

Founder and CEO, Crown Lending

Scott Parry's goal is to get Australians living free of debt. His national company, Crown Lending, began in a one-man office in Perth, Western Australia. Ten years later it manages A\$250 million in home loans belonging to 1000 clients.

Parry says he is driven by a desire to help people by offering an alternative to the big banks, and tackling the growing issue of national debt. “It is about getting back to basics and living in a cash-based society like generations gone by – a stark contrast to today's widespread consumerism and reliance on credit-card debt,” he says.

His motivation came in 2000 when a blood clot to the brain forced him to withdraw from university. He started working in financial services, but felt ethically challenged in putting people into more debt with credit against their mortgages.

He also helps relieve poverty through the not-for-profit Awareness Cambodia.

Emotional rewards
ANTHONY ALEXANDER, 38
NOT-FOR-PROFIT

CFO, Oxfam Australia

Anthony Alexander CPA has spent 15 years working in the not-for-profit sector and as CFO and company secretary of Oxfam Australia for the past 18 months has played a key role in restructuring the organisation.

After beginning in banking, Alexander made a decision to forgo the high salaries in the private sector. “I felt I needed to make a more direct connection with people and communities; to develop broader social skills and experience in my working life,” Alexander says.

He worked at Mission Australia as commercial manager before joining the Royal Flying Doctor Service as national finance manager.

At Oxfam, Alexander manages a A\$90 million annual budget used to promote social justice and fight poverty around the world. One of his first tasks was to make the organisation fit for the future by building financial capacity and reducing costs. He achieved that, recording a A\$2.4 million surplus last financial year.

Alexander says his biggest challenge, besides juggling a young family with his career, is working in a sector in which non-financial objectives are paramount, especially when objectives are intangible and hard to quantify.



From left: David O'Driscoll, Brent Szalay, Scott Parry and Anthony Alexander.

PHOTO: DAMIEN PLEMING

Global recognition

DAI XUAN NGUYEN, 38
AUDITING

Audit Partner, Ernst & Young Vietnam

A strong work ethic has earned Dai Xuan Nguyen CPA success and the respect of his Ernst & Young peers.

Based in Vietnam, Nguyen Xuan specialises in the audit and advisory services to banks, securities companies and other financial institutions while also managing the 60 staff in the company's Ho Chi Minh office.

He spent four years with KPMG Vietnam before moving to Ernst & Young in 2006 and has developed a deep understanding of banking and finance operations across industries

ranging from construction and insurance to pharmaceuticals and real estate.

All of this was done amid Vietnam's ongoing accounting reforms that have led to audits having to be prepared under both the Vietnamese Accounting Standards and International Financial Reporting Standards.

Nguyen Xuan received recognition in 2011 from the Ministry of Finance in Vietnam for his contributions to the development of the accounting profession and, in 2010, from Ernst & Young's global chairman and CEO.



Driven to help

JENNY TAING, 29
LEGAL

Board Director, Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital

The daughter of refugees who made new lives for themselves after fleeing Cambodia, Jenny Taing has a special sense of public purpose.

"It's what has driven me in life," Taing says. "My career goal is to become a highly regarded leader in healthcare. I aspire to be a CEO of a health organisation and lead in a way that has direct impact and outcomes for the community."

Taing, who works as a lawyer for the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, was appointed to the board of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital last year after volunteering her legal expertise at the hospital for four years.

Taing is also a former commissioner of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), a director of Melbourne Community Television Consortium (Channel 31) and a member of the advisory board of the Centre for Advanced Journalism at the University of Melbourne. "Being appointed a commissioner of the VMC developed my leadership, communication skills and networks. I

could directly impact multicultural policy," she says. Taing met her mentor, former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser, in this role. "He inspires and encourages me."

Complex solutions

ANTHONY LAU, 38
INTERNATIONAL TAXATION

Partner, Deloitte

Anthony Lau CPA says the key to keeping his prestige clients satisfied is finding almost impossible solutions in a complicated tax landscape.

Concerned with unravelling international tax issues affecting cross-border transactions across Hong Kong, China and other Asia-Pacific countries, the Hong Kong-based international tax specialist has some of the world's highest-revenue-ranked companies and conglomerates on his client list.

Lau's tax consulting career started in Sydney, but it was in Hong Kong that his talents really shone. He recently led the global restructure across 10 jurisdictions for a company with a US\$30 billion annual turnover and obtained tax-free reorganisation relief in the Asia-Pacific worth

US\$15 million in tax savings.

In 2009 Lau was instrumental in leading a Deloitte team to develop a highly complex plan for a global alternative asset manager to deal with assets totalling more than US\$150 billion to form one of the first foreign-invested private equity funds in China.

He has had much success helping clients settle tax disputes with the Hong Kong Inland Revenue Department and obtained favourable advance rulings on offshore income.

Lau was a strong lobbyist in getting the Hong Kong Government to clarify the profits tax exemption for offshore funds before the law was enacted in 2006 and is a technical reviewer for CCH's *Hong Kong Master Tax Guide*.

Brave beginnings

LENNARD PENG-KUANG YONG, 39
FINANCIAL SERVICES

CEO, ING Hong Kong

The biggest career challenge for Lennard Yong CPA came as the global financial crisis hit. In January 2009, he became CFO of ING Hong Kong.

"Navigating an organisation through the crisis as a first-time CFO was a real baptism of fire," Yong says. "The challenge was to apply my financial analysis skills to diagnose the real issues fast and come up with a credible plan. Then switching to my people skills, which was tough as a new joiner, [I had to] gain maximum engagement at the management board to support my plans."

By 2011, ING HK & Macau, which offers life and general insurance, pensions and financial planning,

was achieving a five-year compound annual growth rate in its sales of 29 per cent, well ahead of the industry average.

Yong was offered the chief executive role less than three years later. He went from managing a staff of 40 to overseeing 400 employees and more than 3000 sales agents and distributors. "The key I felt was to be authentic and have a sense of charisma so that you can influence people to do things for you," he says.

Yong's early choices paved the way for his success. "I changed careers from banking to finance in 1999.

"It has been one of my best decisions to focus on accounting as a foundation for a business career."



PHOTO: SÉBASTIEN LÖFFLER



PHOTO: CALVIN SIT

Anthony Lau, left, and Lennard Peng-Kuang Yong.

“There’s a surprising difference in opportunity. Look at the US, where there are two societies, one that lives and breathes success and the other. If someone is born into an environment where high achievement is the way, you aspire to be a leader and do good things – it’s very different having no history of that. I love stories of people who’ve done well from a tough start, where someone was the first member of the family to go to university.”

JAMES STRONG, SELECTION PANEL



Stepping up
TAN HEANG SHIN, 37
OIL AND GAS

Project Finance Manager, Shell Malaysia

Tan Heang Shin CPA is not afraid of confronting challenges, seizing opportunities and working hard. As project finance manager of a US\$2 billion Shell liquified natural gas (LNG) project in Malaysia, Tan is a hands-on manager who knows that the only constant is change.

“As global paradigm shifts occur in economics, society and sustainability, it’s a revolutionary time for finance,” Tan says.

“We’ve got to step up, speak out and raise our game to meet the changing demands and stakeholders’ expectations.”

Tan considers it a privilege to be part of the growth of Malaysia’s LNG business; the country is now the world’s

third-largest exporter. “I no longer see myself confined to a vanilla, one-dimensional role in a back office,” she says.

“Instead, I have accountabilities beyond figures. To earn a seat at the table I need to provide value-adding inputs and explain [the] financial impact of a project’s decisions to managers whose strengths are not finance.”

Tan has devoted her spare time to raising money to build a Buddhist learning centre, a palliative care centre, kidney dialysis rooms and a meditation retreat in Malaysia.

A\$5.7 million

RECORD PROFIT ACHIEVED BY TIMOTHY OLIVE FOR THE HOUSING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



A holistic approach
PETER FOWLER, 34
PUBLIC PRACTICE

Partner and Business Strategist, Collins Hume

Peter Fowler CPA joined Collins Hume in 2001 as a graduate accountant and became a partner in 2005 at the age of 26.

He says the company takes a holistic approach, looking at all factors of a business from wealth creation to tax minimisation. He works with established firms – most recently turning around the fortunes of a retail outlet to become debt free – as well as start-ups. A new company he’s been advising is set to turn over close to A\$1 million in its first year of operation.

On course to complete his MBA this year, Fowler is also honorary accountant and adviser to Ballina Tourism and Hospitality Board and Northern Rivers Tourism where he sits on the roundtable forum on tourism.



Deep understanding
TIMOTHY OLIVE, 38
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Chief Executive, Operations and Corporate Services, Housing Industry Association

Timothy Olive CPA has spent more than nine years with one of Australia’s most recognised industry bodies, the Housing Industry Association (HIA), which has 40,000 members, revenue of A\$75-93 million and A\$82 million in net assets. Olive oversees seven of the organisation’s corporate streams and a wide range of HIA’s businesses. In 2010 his team achieved a record profit of A\$5.7 million.

He is on the HIA board, as well as the board of HIA Insurance Services, and is tasked with driving HIA’s strategic direction and developing new business initiatives.

One of Olive’s biggest challenges and delights has been mentoring the next generation of managers rising through the company’s ranks.

At 36, Olive became the youngest chairman of any principal racing club in Australia when he was appointed chairman of the Canberra Racing Club.

Opportunity seeker
CHERYL-ANNE NAVARRO, 34
PUBLIC SECTOR

Acting CFO and Company Secretary, Aboriginal Hostels Limited

The Australian Public Service has given Cheryl-Anne Navarro CPA opportunities to grow in her career. She has worked in the Australian National Audit Office, Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Attorney-General’s Department, and made her way up from chief accountant of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, and one of its youngest directors, to deputy CFO, with stints as acting CFO.

Navarro likes being influential in government policy decisions that she knows will affect her first-hand as a consumer.

In February she was seconded from Infrastructure and Transport to oversee the financial operations of the government-owned Aboriginal Hostels Limited as acting CFO and company secretary.

Her new role covers the company’s property portfolio, compliance and financial management.

Navarro says the move was an opportunity to gain commercial experience in a company structure without leaving the public sector.

Pursuing a career while raising a young family has had its challenges, but Navarro says it pushes her to work more efficiently.

Her brother, Daryl Pereira, also made our Young Business Leader’s list (see page 54).



Focus on growth
ANDREW PEARCE, 32
FINANCE

Principal Advisor, Collins SBA

After helping Collins SBA double the size of its wealth advisory service last year through a A\$3 million acquisition, Andrew Pearce CPA is poised for another big year.

A director and head of the business advisory and accounting division, Pearce is charged with integrating the merging teams while recruiting the right mix of specialists to entrust with the finance issues of their small-to-medium sized business clients.

An entrepreneur himself, Pearce bought his first business, a curry shop, when he was a 22-year-old graduate accountant.

Within two years he had a second business, a record shop with café. He sold both

for a profit, the curry shop for twice what he’d paid four years earlier.

Pearce joined Collins SBA in 2003 as senior accountant and was made a partner by the age of 27.

He is prepared to make the tough decisions when needed and will think outside the box to come up with the right solution for the problem.

Pearce was CPA Australia’s 2009 Tasmanian Young Accountant of the Year.

“The diversity aspect is important ... staying with one organisation and achieving there, that’s someone looking after their own career path. Age doesn’t place a limit on other opportunities, whether it’s with a sporting club or school – that diversity is a character trait of a leader.”

JASON CUNNINGHAM, SELECTION PANEL

PHOTO: CHALK STUDIO

“Leadership must involve an awareness of people and a sense of integrity.”

JOHN CAHILL, SELECTION PANEL

Broad client base

SHABNAM AMIRBEAGGI, 38
PUBLIC PRACTICE

Managing Partner, Crouch Amirbeaggi

The only female managing partner of an insolvency firm in Australia, Shabnam Amirbeaggi is one of a handful of women qualified as both a trustee in bankruptcy and official liquidator.

One of the most experienced practitioners in her field, Amirbeaggi's technical knowledge and financial management skills – including forensic accounting – have won her a client base that includes Westpac, Commonwealth Bank of Australia and ANZ, as well as a large number of accountants and lawyers.

This year Amirbeaggi took up her new appointment as chairman of CPA Australia's public practice program promoting career development.

High on her agenda is the need to encourage more women to qualify as trustees in bankruptcy and official liquidators and to move into senior management roles within insolvency firms.

In recognition of her achievements, Amirbeaggi was a finalist in the Telstra Australian Business Woman of the Year awards in 2009 and also sits on the Australian Government panel that registers and disciplines trustees in bankruptcy.

Thought leadership

DOUGLAS FERGUSON, 39
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

National Managing Partner, Australia China Business Practice, KPMG

A leading expert on China and fluent in Mandarin, Douglas Ferguson CPA embodies the Australian Government's aspirations in Asia. Ferguson spent the past 10 years in Beijing and Hong Kong where he worked in Transaction Services and headed the Private Equity Advisory Group for KPMG. Recently he returned to Australia to take charge of the Australia China Business Practice.

In collaboration with the University of Sydney, the rapidly expanding China Practice provides thought leadership on Australia and China trade and investment, publishing reports used by federal politicians, the New South Wales (NSW) Premier – whom Ferguson escorted on a NSW Trade Mission to China – media and business.

One of Ferguson's major achievements at KPMG came after the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. He spent three years disposing of about US\$1.5 billion worth of Lehman's Asian assets.

The China Club is one of his creations: a group of 300 ethnic Chinese within KPMG running social and business forums that provide clients with awareness and expertise on China.

Ferguson has also taken part in several KPMG team charity events to raise funds for disabled children in China and victims of the 2008 Chengdu earthquake.

People manager

SHIRLEY CHO, 39
HOSPITALITY

Director of Finance and HR, Cambridge Hotel

Working in a senior financial role in the hospitality sector is about much more than the bottom line, says Shirley Cho CPA, who heads finance and HR for the Cambridge Hotel in Sydney.

People management and motivation is key to staying ahead of the competition, insists Cho – a lesson she learned from her Chinese mother.

“She was an excellent accountant who was proud of making a difference in her firm and enhancing employee welfare,” Cho says.

She recently led an organisational restructuring, introduced automation processes and increased efficiency through the integration of property management and accounting systems.

Last year the hotel won awards for Best Accommodation in Sydney and Service Excellence. But Cho's greatest leadership challenge, she says, is getting the right people in the right positions

and getting the best out of them. Her aim is to become the CFO of a leading hotel chain.

Cho has a Bachelor of Economics from Nankai University, China, and a postgraduate diploma in accounting from Sydney's Macquarie University.

A firm believer in professional development, she is convenor of CPA Australia's New South Wales (NSW) Women in Business discussion group.

Cho's talents were recognised in 2011 when she was awarded the President's Award for Excellence – Young Leader for her contribution to the NSW division of CPA Australia.

300 members

NUMBER IN KPMG'S CHINA CLUB, SET UP BY DOUGLAS FERGUSON TO PROVIDE INSIGHTS ON CHINA

PHOTO: GRAHAM JEPSON



From left, Shabnam Amirbeaggi, Douglas Ferguson and Shirley Cho.

“Leaders must have the courage to fail. I look for evidence that when people confront a challenge they will stick it out, work through it and are willing to make the tough decisions.”

ALEX MALLEY, SELECTION PANEL



From the ground up
RANA AHMED, 36
PETROCHEMICAL

Finance Manager, Qatofin

When Rana Ahmed CPA joined Qatofin in 2009, the joint-venture petrochemical company, which comes under the umbrella of the giant Industries Qatar, was still in the development stage.

Starting from the ground up, Ahmed set up a finance department, implemented successful enterprise resource planning and developed policies and procedures for sound financial management and administration into the future. That's no mean feat.

Originally from Pakistan, Ahmed moved to the United Arab Emirates in 2003.

He worked for Nakheel, one of Dubai's biggest property developers, and was instrumental in laying the financial foundations for three large residential communities on Jumeirah Island, an artificial archipelago built using reclaimed land.

His recommendations relating to health and safety

for staff and contractors on the site were held in high esteem and he received an award from the chairman of Dubai World for his initiatives.

Ahmed's responsibilities continue to keep pace with Qatofin's development, managing project financing for complex, multiple-stakeholder ventures with revenues in excess of US\$880 million.

A\$15m
ANNUAL VALUE OF SERVICE CONTRACTS OVERSEEN BY RYAN ARBLASTER FOR ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI



Cross-cultural career
DINESH AGGARWAL, 38
PUBLIC PRACTICE

Partner, Noble & Associates

Dinesh Aggarwal CPA enjoyed early career success as the CFO of Indian Samtex Fashions, which had operations in the Middle East and the US. The Perth, Western Australian-based tax specialist in charge of compliance at Noble & Associates left the commercial world for public practice, but still retains his entrepreneurial streak.

Aggarwal made the inaugural Young Business Leaders list last year due in no small part to his career agility: his shift from the private sector to public practice and between cultures, along with retraining to meet Australian accounting standards. This year he's tackled innovation, ensuring the firm's clients – including many multinational subsidiaries – need look no further by instigating a one-stop “conglomerate” that offers accounting, financial planning, financial broking and legal services.



Water world
RYAN ARBLASTER, 33
MINING

Manager Business Support and Services, AngloGold Ashanti, Sunrise Dam

Keeping 800 employees of a goldmine in outback Australia happy requires excellent organisation and planning. It's a primary concern for Ryan Arblaster CPA on the remote Sunrise Dam mine, 220km north-east of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

Promoted after working for the company since 2003, Arblaster oversees service contracts worth A\$15 million a year and uses his management accounting, business planning and budgeting skills to help drive the mine towards becoming a high-volume, low-cost operation.

When floods left staff stranded in 2011, Arblaster and his team had to ensure food supplies didn't run out.

A former competitive swimmer, Arblaster has moved into officiating. Last year he was named Official of the Year by Swimming Western Australia and was the only Australian selected to officiate in swimming at the London Olympics.

Scoring goals for charity
NICOLE GRAHAM, 31
NOT-FOR-PROFIT

Chief Executive, Spastic Centres of South Australia

Appointed to her current role at 28, Nicole Graham became one of the youngest CEOs in Australia. Since then she has led campaigns and programs to improve the lives and raise awareness of people living with disabilities.

Graham joined the HR department at the Spastic Centres of South Australia (SCOSA) nine years ago from a human resources role at Mitsubishi Motors.

“I was seeking an organisation that aligned with my values to make a positive contribution to the community as well as adding value to my professional skills,” Graham says.

Promoted to General Manager of Client Services, she took on responsibility for an annual budget of about A\$7 million, overseeing nearly 200 employees across 11 locations in South Australia.

One of her greatest satisfactions has been to see one of those locations turned from an empty shell into a state-of-the-art resource for the SCOSA community. “Close to a quarter of a million dollars worth of equipment – and time – was donated by businesses and individuals after we put out a call to action,” she says.

Another partnered campaign raising awareness has been with Port Adelaide Football Club. Every time the Australian Football League team scores a goal, the SCOSA logo is broadcast and money is donated.

Drawing on her HR background, Graham says “having the right people in place and building a team of professionals committed to making a difference” has been one of her chief achievements.

As president of the YWCA of Adelaide's board of management, Graham is determined to pass on the good mentoring experiences she had. “It's about empowering and promoting young women, so we do a lot of early intervention in schools as well as an executive partners program with the University of South Australia. Promoting the next generation of leaders is one of the most valuable investments we can make.”



Role model
MALINI RAJ, 32
BANKING

Executive Manager, Commonwealth Bank of Australia

Malini Raj's potential as a future senior leader of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia was recognised with selection into the bank's Executive Development Program, offering her exposure to a broad variety of managerial roles over a short space of time.

Heavily involved in the Financial Services Institute of Australasia (Finsia), Raj is a regional councillor, part of its mentoring program, chair of the young finance professionals committee and serves on the women in Finsia committee.

Determined to be a role model for women in business, Raj seeks opportunities to shift existing mindsets about gender diversity within the finance sector and is an experienced keynote speaker.

She was awarded the inaugural Finsia member's choice award for the

Most Outstanding Young Professional under 35.

While working at Westpac Banking Corporation in 2011, Raj was seconded to a remote Indigenous community in Cape York, northern Australia, to be a business and finance consultant to the Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation.

“I'm looking for a contribution beyond career ... a leader must be more than one dimensional, so you look for other aspects of their lives such as community leadership.”

CHRIS CUFFE, SELECTION PANEL

PHOTO: RANDY LARCOMBE

Big picture**KHUSHWANT KUMAR, 39**
BANKING**Senior Vice President, BNP Paribas**

Khushwant Kumar CPA prefers big corporations. He began his career as accounting assistant at India's leading life insurer, Life Insurance Corporation, then became deputy manager of India's largest bank, the State Bank of India, before moving to the Middle East at 34 to join BNP Paribas, one of the world's largest banks.

Now based in Adelaide, South Australia, Kumar is Senior Vice President (Corporate and Institutional Banking) of BNP Paribas, where he is in charge of the company's asset portfolio.

BNP Paribas has total assets of €2.06 trillion and a market capitalisation of €66 billion. It operates in 84 countries and has more than 200,000 employees. Kumar has responsibility for policies, products, marketing and pricing, as well as risk management, financial analysis and business development.

He has been a speaker at corporate and international accredited programs and volunteers for the Adelaide Nautical College with investment advice and arranging offshore funding for a shipping project.

Board ready**ANGELA WATSON, 29**
POWER GENERATION**Financial supervisor, CS Energy**

Angela Watson CPA knows exactly where she wants her career path to lead.

"My career goals include gaining a paid board of directors position, becoming CFO of a large corporation and playing an instrumental role in Australian Government policymaking," Watson says.

She is already well on her way, having gained experience across sectors such as not-for-profit, commercial and government. She is completing an MBA, building on her Bachelor of Commerce from Griffith University.

Watson is also learning the ropes of being an independent director by volunteering her time as treasurer of the Kidney Support Network.

In her role as financial supervisor with CS Energy, Watson is responsible for a team of accountants. One element of the job she particularly enjoys is mentoring new recruits.

"Coaching the new staff is crucial to how quickly they settle in and enjoy their new roles – not to mention the increased productivity that goes along with it," she says.

Watson's potential was recognised early in her career when she was sent to Las Vegas by her then employer, Flight Centre, to receive the global company's Individual Finance Award in 2006.

Her greatest challenge has been running as an independent candidate in last year's Queensland state election.

"I was completely out of my comfort zone, but knew it was the right thing to do at the time," she says.

Support for the homeless**JAMES FARRELL, 33**
LEGAL**Director, Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services**

A committed lawyer, taxation expert and advocate for people experiencing poverty, recently James Farrell became Director of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services (QAILS), a body representing Community Legal Centres (CLCs) throughout Queensland.

He is also the deputy chairman of the Council to Homeless Persons and he lectures in law at Deakin University.

Farrell is well-placed to offer leadership and support to the 33 CLCs, having been manager and principal lawyer of the PILCH Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic for two years (2009-11). There, he supervised more than 300 volunteer lawyers from big commercial firms who visited shelters and welfare agencies to deliver advice, advocacy and representation.

Dedicated to improving the lives of disadvantaged people, Farrell was invited to contribute to a workshop on the penalisation of poverty in Geneva, providing advice to the UN and International Council on Human Rights Policy.

Last year he won an Australian Leadership Award and in the previous year was a finalist in the Law Institute of Victoria's President's Award.

Shaping tomorrow's leaders**NAOMI RULE, 33**
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**Global Finance Manager, Ventyx**

When automation and power technologies company ABB acquired Mincom (which later became Ventyx) in 2011, Naomi Rule CPA worked hard to ensure a seamless integration of two finance teams.

Rule managed Mincom's global finance team after joining the company in 2010. When she started she cleared a backlog of work and brought everything up to date, and was well prepared for this next challenge.

An expert in change management, and looking for the best way to drive the business forward, Rule was able to identify problems and leverage local knowledge to fix them at both local and corporate levels.

The Brisbane-based Rule travelled much more than usual, supporting financial teams in the US, Latin America and Europe.

Rule recognises the strength of good teamwork and takes pride in helping individuals identify their strengths. Many of her employees have gone on to become financial leaders in their own right, attributing their success to Rule's mentorship.

Rule is now moving on from Ventyx. She'll take this opportunity to work towards fulfilling her ambition of becoming CFO of a global company.



From left: Angela Watson, James Farrell and Naomi Rule.

PHOTO: RANDY LARCOMBE

PHOTO: DAMIEN BREDBERG



PHOTO: STEFAN CHOW

From left: Meena Dafesh, Donald Tong and Daryl Pereira.

On a new path MEENA DAFESH, 32 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Director of Treasury Asia Pacific, Ingram Micro Asia Pacific

The greatest career challenge for Meena Dafesh CPA may have been the decision to leave her home, family and friends in Australia and move to Singapore in 2007.

"I was also leaving an Australia-centric career to go on a new path with responsibility for Asia-Pacific coverage. I was nervous," she recalls.

However, Dafesh whose early career encompassed a telco and construction services provider Transfield Services has not looked back. At 29, she was appointed to head the regional treasury team at Ingram Micro, a Fortune 100 company that's one of the world's largest technology distributors.

In addition to financial know-how, cultural sensitivity is essential to her role.

Dafesh is now responsible for treasury across nine countries in Asia and, more recently, the Middle East, where a large part of her role includes negotiating funding deals, managing bank relationships, mergers and acquisition activities, corporate finance, foreign currencies and financial risk.

Following a series of recent acquisitions she has also overseen the integration of all treasury activities, sharing knowledge and skills with staff across jurisdictions.

Making a difference DONALD TONG, 35 FMCG

Regional Finance Manager, Financial Planning and Reporting, Diageo Asia Pacific

Donald Tong CPA made his mark early in his finance career. "When I was still quite junior I helped turn around a newly acquired business that would have continued to lose money if we'd stayed on the same course," he recalls. "I guided the business to make tough choices and focus on most impactful initiatives. The results were immediate."

Tong spent 13 years working with fast-moving consumer goods company Procter & Gamble and transferred from Sydney to Singapore in 2003. Last year he moved to drinks maker Diageo to lead the Financial Planning and Reporting group, overseeing the Asia-Pacific and Middle East businesses, which record £2 billion in sales, covering brands such as Johnnie Walker, Smirnoff and Guinness.

Tong says he enjoys mentoring younger colleagues. "My greatest contribution in each of my roles is transforming the young finance [staff] into business leaders," he says.

"Coaching and helping them to look at things differently, finding insights instead of 'weather reporting' numbers and seeing them advance in the company gives me the fulfilment beyond any business results.

"Making a difference is what makes my work meaningful."

Master of change DARYL PEREIRA, 38 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Director of Management Consulting, KPMG Singapore

Daryl Pereira CPA is not afraid to go beyond his comfort zone. Dual qualifications in business and information technology have given him the ability to think from multiple perspectives and positioned him to work in hybrid roles.

Pereira spent six years with Big Four accounting firms working for Australian Government clients before moving into the banking world at Westpac Bank.

He has twice pushed himself by changing role, industry and city in one fell swoop, including moving from Sydney to Singapore (with four children) to join Deutsche Bank.

Two years ago he joined KPMG Singapore and set about establishing an IT regulatory risk management and compliance service line that delivered more than S\$1 million revenue in 12 months.

He co-leads a team of 80 focused on IT and assurance work for the banking and financial services industry including management of a S\$3 million revenue portfolio.

Pereira is a recognised conference speaker on the use of technology in the banking and finance industries.

His younger sister, Cheryl-Anne Navarro, also made our Young Business Leader's list (see page 47).



Spearheading change ADAM AWTY, 38 FINANCE

Chief Operating Officer – Commercial, CPA Australia

Adam Awty joined CPA Australia in 1998 as a senior project officer. As COO he manages extensive internal and external stakeholder groups and provides strategic leadership advice to CPA Australia's governing body and corporate services.

Renowned for his technical accounting skills and strong business acumen, Awty has worked with CEO Alex Malley to sharpen the organisation's commercial focus and deliver a stronger service culture. The result has seen a record surplus for the not-for-profit organisation.

Awty is also director and chairman of CPA Australia's Malaysian subsidiary and an independent member of the audit committee of the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.



The sky's no limit NICK CRAWLEY, 38 FINANCE

Head of Consulting, Chairman and Co-owner, Corality Financial Group

When Nick Crawley left a lucrative career in investment banking in 2005 to launch his own global consultancy firm, he was setting his sights high. But Crawley is a visionary and a prize-winning theoretical astrophysicist to boot.

His Australian company Navigator Project Finance took off and in 2011 merged with Corality. Dedicated to the understanding and minimisation of modelling risk across sectors, Corality pioneered a best practice financial modelling methodology that has won international plaudits.

Crawley won his spurs with the embryonic financial modelling team at Ernst & Young in London, before moving to ANZ Investment Bank where he specialised in credit risk analysis. He mentors alumni from Macquarie University, New South Wales, where he studied and where his firm has established an internship program.

PHOTO: MICHAEL ROBERT WILLIAMS



On his mark CYRIL YIP, 36 FINANCIAL SERVICES

Director and Global Head of Valuations, Credit Suisse

A determination to continually improve has flowed through Cyril Yip's career. The CPA and former Singapore Army infantryman is fast becoming one of the world's leaders in the financial sector.

"He leads international teams of more than 50 specialist professionals in London, New York and Singapore in a highly complex area of work, which combines quantitative finance, risk management and technical accounting skills," says Yip's boss, Credit Suisse managing director Tony Bullman.

When Yip graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from Australia's University of Queensland, he was in the top 5 per cent of undergraduates. He has since gained a master of science in risk management and financial engineering from the Imperial College London, UK, and last year, he completed the prestigious Leadership in Financial Organizations executive training at Harvard Business School. "This opportunity is given to only top leaders who have demonstrated professional achievement and organisational responsibility," Bullman says.

During the lead-up to the 2008 global financial crisis, Yip was working with Barclays Capital as head of rates and foreign exchange valuations.

"Yip's greatest challenge has been successfully navigating through the financial crisis," Bullman says. "Emerging from it has taught him to be more innovative and resourceful when faced with challenging market conditions and a scarcity of resources. Today, the demand for specialist risk management and valuation skill sets have taken on unprecedented importance."

Yip lives in London and mentors younger accountants through the Imperial College alumni and Credit Suisse's chartered accountants and women-in-leadership programs.



Leap of faith
CAXTON PANG, 38
BUSINESS CONSULTANCY

Founding Principal, Linton Solutions

Caxton Pang CPA took a leap of faith when he quit his job as a senior manager at a booming accounting firm to start up his boutique accounting and business advisory practice.

He had A\$5000 start-up capital and a tiny home office, but six years on Linton Solutions has become a two-partner firm with 12 employees and expected 2012-13 turnover of A\$1.3 million. Pang says he considers himself a partner in his clients' businesses and combines his risk-management skills and passion for innovation to help his small-to-medium enterprise clients reach their potential.

Reputation, says Pang, is his greatest asset. Within the next five years he aims to grow Linton Solutions to be one of the top 100 accounting firms in Australia.



Grassroots start
AMIT PRASAD, 34
EDUCATION

Accounting Manager, University of Auckland

From factory hand to accounting manager at University of Auckland, New Zealand (NZ), Amit Prasad has taken the scenic path to success. He took a job earning just FJ\$40 a week at an Australian-owned clothing factory in Fiji to fund his university studies, but within two years had become a trainee accountant and went on to be acting general manager in charge of 100 staff.

This experience gave him confidence to expand his vision and migrate to NZ, where he now volunteers to help other immigrants through the Papua Islands Region Enterprise.

In 2012 Prasad was awarded a Young Managers program scholarship by the NZ Institute of Management and the Asian Association of Management Organisations.

He loves to identify and solve complex finance problems and has his sights set on a CFO role of a large corporation.

On the move
DARREN TAVARES, 39
LEGAL

Regional Director of Finance and Operations – Asia, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

On any given day Darren Tavares CPA could be in one of four countries, juggling different tax and accounting jurisdictions and overseeing staff in the six offices he has responsibility for.

"My greatest career challenge to date has been my move to Asia," Tavares says. "Every day is varied as I work with different offices across the region, as well as head office in London. Any day could see me work on issues from country-specific tax, accounting and billing queries to staff management, client profitability, pitches, presentations and new hires." This is the second year Tavares has been included in the Young Business Leaders list.

Between times, he's switched from the CFO role at Hong Kong-based law firm Allen & Overy. "As a result of my inclusion in the list last year, I have been asked and will be mentoring a CPA Australia associate member this year," he says.



Training the next generation
MARTIN GASKELL, 34
BANKING

Divisional CFO, Enterprise Support and Operations, Bank of New Zealand

Senior colleagues of Martin Gaskell CPA praise his "special leadership qualities, rare in a person of his age" and the commitment he is able to elicit from team members.

This ability to communicate, engage and motivate people is key to the success of this high-achieving management accountant, who was named Young Finance Manager of the Year in the 2012 New Zealand CFO Awards.

Gaskell's nine years of industry experience began with the Ford Retail Group in Britain before he moved to the Bank of New Zealand in Auckland as a financial accountant. Wide financial responsibilities and an operational expenses account of more than NZ\$400 million come with his current role, which includes HR, risk and legal departments, technology, marketing and strategy.

Training the next generation of skilled accountants has been a priority for Gaskell, who led recruitment and development for the bank's Finance Graduate Program in which more than 25 graduates have participated in four years. He has also rolled out a Pacific Islander internship program to help the bank achieve a culturally diverse workforce. ■

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