



MY JOURNEY TOWARDS BEING A CIA

Name: Renee Bong Xi Ern

Current employment: Sarawak Energy Berhad

Work experience: 6 years in internal audit

Education background : Bachelor's degree in Business (Major in Accounting and Finance) from Monash University Malaysia, CPA Australia.

IIAM Membership Category : CMIIA, CIA



1. Why did you decide to pursue a career as an internal auditor?

This role aligns well with my accounting background, allowing me to apply my technical knowledge in a practical way. I enjoy analysing data, looking into details, and understanding how processes work. At the same time, internal auditing gives me the opportunity to engage with people across different functions, which keeps the work interesting and dynamic.

2. How important is an Internal Auditor's role in the organisation?

Internal auditors play an important role in helping organisations improve and achieve their objectives. Through independent assurance and advisory services, we identify risks, strengthen controls, and highlight opportunities for improvement. In many ways, internal audit helps bridge the gap between where an organisation is today and where it aspires to be.



3. What is the typical challenge internal auditors generally face? And amongst them, can you highlight what would be one of the biggest challenge?

One common challenge is managing differing views with auditees, especially when audit findings are not well received. For me, one of the biggest challenges was during my first time leading an audit engagement. The management disagreed with some of our observations. It taught me the importance of standing firm on evidence-based conclusions while maintaining a professional and constructive relationship with stakeholders. Striking that balance is often one of the most challenging aspects of the profession.

4. Does the Institute play a role in supporting your Internal Auditor scope of work? If yes, in what ways? And if no, what can we do better?

Yes, definitely. The Institute provides a wide range of training programmes that are directly relevant to our work as internal auditors. I particularly appreciate that the training topics evolve with current industry trends, covering areas such as ESG, AI, and data analytics, which helps us stay relevant in a rapidly changing business environment.

5. Would you recommend IIA Malaysia to your fellow IA colleagues?

Yes, absolutely. IIA Malaysia provides valuable resources, professional development opportunities, and a strong platform for knowledge sharing within the internal audit community. I would highly recommend it to fellow internal auditors.



6. What motivated you to take the CIA exam?

My department head encouraged the team to pursue the CIA certification as part of our professional development. I was also motivated by the opportunity to obtain a globally recognised professional qualification that complements my role and strengthens my knowledge of internal auditing.

7. What were the challenges you encountered when attempting the CIA exam?

The CIA examination is challenging as it tests both technical knowledge and the application of professional judgement. Balancing work commitments with study time was probably the biggest challenge. What helped me most was consistently practising questions and becoming familiar with the examination format and question styles.

8. How did you manage your study time while working?

I tried to stay disciplined by setting aside dedicated study time on weekday evenings and maintaining a consistent routine. Even on busy weeks, I would make time for practice questions to keep the material fresh and build momentum towards the examination.

9. As a CIA certified professional, where do you envision yourself?

I hope to continue growing within the internal audit profession and eventually take on a management role. Beyond career progression, I also aspire to contribute more strategically to the organisation by providing insights that support better decision-making and risk management.



10. How important is CIA for an internal auditor?

The CIA is an important professional certification for internal auditors as it demonstrates competency, commitment to the profession, and adherence to international standards. It also enhances professional credibility and provides greater recognition within the industry.

11. Please provide 3 main advice for those attempting to take the CIA examination?

- Be consistent with your study schedule
- Practise as many questions as possible
- Stay disciplined and trust the process