

**Christine Carmon**  
**Fiscal Accounts Manager**  
**Maryland Port Administration**  
**Port of Baltimore**

*Meet Christine Carmon*

My name is Christine Carmon. I'm the Fiscal Accounts Manager for the Maryland Port Administration, handling the Accounts Receivable, Payroll Processing, and Expense Reporting Departments for the Port of Baltimore.

I grew up right here in Dundalk, right off of the Peninsula, for ten years of my life and then I moved to Turner Station which is right off the water as well. So you know... the Port is home.

I went to Dundalk High School. When I graduated, math —although it was my favorite subject in high school, it was not what I wanted to do. I wanted to become a psychiatrist but... (laughing)... got kind of crazy (laughing) so, trying to switch gears and since math was my passion. I went back and thought," Okay, let me do something in math, something having to do with math".

Accounting isn't always about adding and subtracting. It's about problem solving, getting to the root of an issue, trying to figure out why something doesn't add up or how you can make it add up differently. So that's where I got my start.

*Explain what you do. Talk about an average day at work for you.*

I start at 5:00. ... Between 5:00 and 5:30 everyday, I come in. I do the deposit for the day, posting the receipts that we've received. From there, I go into doing whatever else is necessary, be it processing payroll or ... the day-to-day collections is what I mostly handle ... collecting the monies that we have not received? Once they had become thirty days old, I start going after our customers to find out maybe there is a dispute that they have not communicated or that there is some problem with the billing itself to try to get that resolved so that we can get those monies collected in its timely matter as possible.

Most of my day is spent right here behind my desk, working on the computer. There is very little telephone communication that I do. This is the world of electronics, so we do everything mostly with email back and forth. So I very seldom get up unless I've got to go out and take care of something out of the office. But, for most part, I'm here behind my desk, either working in Excel or in Word working on spreadsheets, doing reconciliations, things of that nature.

*What personality traits or interests can be a good match for this career?*

If this is the type of job that you're really interested in —in accounting—you've got to have the love for math, because that's basically what accounting is. It's fact finding, it's

problem solving, getting to the root of the issue at hand, be it adding up the money, making sure it's all right.

Some of the skills required in doing this type of job would be self-motivation, because no one going to stand over you and make sure that you're doing what you're supposed to do. It's what expected. You show up to work everyday, you collect a paycheck and there's a certain expectation, as a result to being paid, so, one would want to or need to be self-motivated, particularly in my department. We deal with customers. Some of them are irate, so you've got to still keep that smile on your face and remain professional and friendly at all times. We deal with every individual that works at the Port, being Payroll Processing, so we've got to take the questions, "My check's short", you know... they may not be friendly, they're certainly not going to be friendly if their money not right. You got to be able to suck it up, take it in, take a deep breath and say, "Okay, it's not personal. They are not attacking me. They are attacking the situation. How can I best handle that?" You've got to be a diplomatic. You've got to show some diplomacy in how you deal with individuals, how you deal with the customers.

***What parts of your education do you use most often in this career?***

When I first started working at the Port as a temp, I had very little accounting training. I had finished school, two years of college, and Business Administration was my major. But, you know, you have your accounting courses within that ... but very little did I have with regard to accounting as a major. And although I did not have any formal training in accounting, my high school skills that I learned —math, reading, arithmetic, especially math—played a very important part in my being able to do the job here in Accounting.

English, being able to read a document and understand what the written document truly said, and go beyond that, being able to respond to that document, be it written or mathematically, has helped me in the job that I'm in currently. So you've got to be able to take what you have learned, be it whatever, high school, college, and apply it to what the job that you are trying to do.

***What has been the career track that's gotten you from your first job to where you are now? What special degrees or licenses did you need to get along the way? Carmon 6***

I started off as a temp in 1988 and they just needed someone to help in the files, to help file things away, and from there I'm sitting down doing a little computer work, and the Assistant Controller said, "Wait a Minute, she's pretty fast, pretty good, let's move her over into Account Payable", so I went from a File Clerk to an Account Payable Clerk and from there to a contractual position, from there, (to the first position that opened up) in Accounting as a permanent employee. From there, five to six years later, Assistant Supervisor, for the Account Receivable Department, and from there maybe a year later, Supervisor where I am currently (laughing) employed in that position now.

In order to the job that I'm doing, you don't necessary need a college degree, so it's all hands on for the most part. Learning the trade, learning what needs to be done, and

having the desire to get it done and as I stated previously, doing it to the best of your ability, that's the key to being successful at anything, doing it to the best of your ability.

***What is the best part of your career?***

The thing I most like about this job, not just because it's close to home and it pays my bills but the Math, I love figuring out, finding the solution, and a lot of times everything not going to add up. You got to make sure your debits equals your credits and sometimes they don't, and you got to figure out why. That's the part I love is the problem solving behind the initial collection of the money, processing payment, things of that nature, what goes on behind, figuring out where we may have gone wrong and how we ended up with 500, we should only have only 498. So that's the part I love most, the problem solving.

***How has your work changed over the years? What role has technology played in those changes?***

I've been employed with the Port for nineteen years; I started off as a Temp working in the Accounts Payable Department where everything was manual, we had computers but we did very little with those computers. They were basically used for making up a spreadsheet or sending out a letter but all of the documents that had to go down to Annapolis for payment, we had to handwrite everything. Everything was hand written, we use our adding machine to add up everything we didn't have the Excels spreadsheets that we have now that did the calculations for us so everything was pretty much manual. But through the computer age we've gotten just about everything you can do through the computers so it does just about everything for us, they have various programs written specifically for payables, specifically for account receivables where we put in the data that we have we put them in the computer it does everything that needs to be done for us, so we do very little manual work. There is some manual work involved but very little here to date since we're in the computer world now.

***How does your work fit into the larger framework of the work at the Port?***

In terms of working at the Port, it's a lot more than just accounting here, we've got the people that work down on the terminal which is our Operational Department we got our Crain Department, we got our Maintenance Department, we've got our Fleet Department, so it's a big body of people that makes up the Port. In without the ILA who bring everything off the ships so that the Port can process it, without them, there be no need for us. So we got all these people and then when it comes down to us we do the small part. After all that's done, then it comes down to us to bill it, then we got to collect it. If it's not billed right, we got collection problems. If it's not billed right, we may have to issue a credit memo or something within that nature to erase that bill. But it's not just

accounting, it's made up of a whole a lot of people doing the jobs so that the Port can stay reliable.

***What advice would you have for anyone who wants to have the kind of career you have?***

If you're interested in any job, practically the job that I'm doing right now, you must be good in what you do. Got to learn your Math because you can't exactly count if you don't know how to add or subtract. To be able to speak clearly, be understood in what you're saying, be able to write clearly, so you got to do well in English, got to do well in Math, got to basically do well in school period. In order to be successful in any position, you need to: One, have the desire to do the job, have the desire to do it to the best of your ability and always drive to do something differently, be flexible, you know in some incidences you get to the place where you like, "my job description says, "but you got to be willing to do something outside of that, to go the extra step because people notice everything that you do. I use to tell some of the Temps I had worked for me, if I send you into the file room to swipe the floor, swipe it to the best of your ability because that's what I'm looking at, your ability to do and go above and beyond what you're really hired to do and that's basically what got me to the place where I am now.