
Accountants

This document provides guidelines and referrals for choosing an accountant.

Choosing the right accountant is an important step for your business. Investing time upfront by researching will help you find an accountant well suited to your businesses' needs. The following are basic guidelines and questions that you may want to consider when conducting your search, as well as resources for referrals.

- Since there are many specialty areas in accounting, financial statement preparation and tax filings, make sure the accountant or firm you choose can handle all of your needs. Ask if they are familiar with the issues facing your type of business. Have they handled clients in your line of work before?
- Do you need a big or small firm? Will you be more comfortable with the name and prestige of a larger firm even though you may be getting junior, less experienced people working on your business? Or would you be better served at a smaller firm where the partners handle your account? There is no right or wrong answer; it is just a matter of preference.
- What type of relationship are you looking for? Are you looking for them to provide financial planning, help writing a business plan, to introduce you to potential clients, create systems for you, handle payroll, or do you just need them to prepare a tax return and year-end financial statements? Not all accountants/firms are set up to handle the day-to-day financial management of a company.
- Ask for references from clients in your industry and/or in your size range. Remember, a good reference does not mean that the firm will be able to meet your specific needs. It is also important to check the references of the actual accountants who will be handling your business. Check their qualifications. You should find out their educational background and whether they are a member of professional organizations such as the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) or the New York State Society of CPA's?
- These organizations require continuing professional education and therefore ensure your accountant will stay current with the latest accounting and tax changes.
- Will the firm/accountant add value to your business? Will they map out a long-term financial strategy or big picture for your business? Can they refer business to you?
- Is the firm's fee structure acceptable to you? Will you be paying a fixed fee for service or an hourly rate?

Once you have done your research and have identified several accountants, you should interview them. By doing so, you will make sure you feel comfortable talking with them and that they have the expertise to assist you with your particular accounting issues. To identify a possible pool of accountants to interview:

- Ask friends and family for recommendations
- Ask other business owners in the same line of work for referrals



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- Do an Internet search on the firm or accountant
 - Call professional associations for lists of members

Referrals

- The National Association of Small Business Accountants:
<http://www.smallbizaccountants.com>
- CPA Directory: <http://www.cpafinder.com>
- Listing of tax professionals by state and geographic areas: <http://www.tax-directory.com/>
- 1-800 Accountant: <http://www.1800accountant.com/html/index.cfm>