

10 Things to Consider When Choosing an Accountant

1. Reputation

Did you find this accountant through a referral? If so, who recommended them, and what did that individual have to say about the accountant? (Just because they are in the same networking group doesn't mean much, did they put their money where their mouth was?) What are other people saying about this accountant or firm? One of the quickest ways to learn about a company's values and results is to read their reviews.

2. Approachability

We have all been there, having a conversation and it is clear the other party is not invested in the dialogue, whether they are acting distracted or condescending, or just plain unresponsive. Work with an accountant that you can go to when you have questions or concerns, one who will not talk down to you, but will answer and explain in simple terms that will not leave you feeling even more confused or like you have been chastised.

3. Personality

Not every accountant is going to have a personality that fits with yours. Choose an accountant that you will not dread having to chat with from time to time, because dreading those conversations usually means they will not happen. When conversations do not happen, you suffer.

4. Level of communication

Speaking of conversations, how often are you having conversations with your accountant? How often are they communicating with you? Are they pro-active or re-active when it comes to helping you with your needs? All of these are questions to consider before settling down and forming a partnership with an accountant or firm.

5. Ethical philosophy

Just like everything in life accounting and taxes are a spectrum when it comes to ethical philosophy. Of course, this means there are a lot of things in a "grey area" (you know, the area between illegal and safe) where those pesky things like business meals tend to fall (mostly because the guidance changes so often). Everything in that "grey area" comes with some risk, and as a result each accountant falls somewhere on the spectrum in terms of their conservativeness. Be sure the

accountant you plan to work with lands in a similar space on the spectrum as you, as it relates to the risk you want to assume, and how far into the grey area you are willing to play.

6. Fee structure

There are as many different pricing structures in the accounting industry as there are colors in the rainbow. Fee structures range from inexpensive to astronomical, hourly or flat rate. Finding the right mix for you and your budget is critical. Beware though, as the old adage “you get what you pay for” generally applies.

7. Are you getting what you pay for?

This is two-fold. Before signing any type of engagement be sure you understand exactly what the accountant is supposed to do for you or provide to you. Once you know exactly what the service entails make sure the value is on par with the price you are paying.

8. Are they doing you any good?

Is what you are paying for helping you solve the problems you face. As an individual are you getting the tax advice you need to make your life easier? As a business is your time freer because someone else is handling the tasks that bog you down, or are you getting the guidance to grow your company?

9. Specialty

Look for an accountant who has experience in the areas you need help. Just like you would not send a family practitioner to perform open heart surgery, be sure you hire an accountant that can not only perform the task but do it excellently. Some accountants focus solely on one niche market, and you do not want to be the old man out in that situation, because it can bode ill for your experience with them.

10. Do they like dogs?

We will let you decide for yourself why this one is important....