




Establish a relationship with an accountant

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This presentation is an overview of locating an establishing a successful relationship with an accountant.



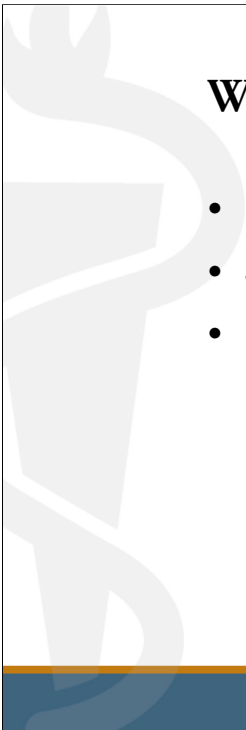
**Hiring and using an Accountant
can be daunting.**

This presentation breaks it down into
3 easy sections:

- What to look for in an accountant
- Identify what you want the accountant to do
- Review the relationship

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This presentation looks at the relationship of an accountant and a medical practice and provides tips in hiring and retaining the accountant that best fits your needs.



What can Accountant do for you?

- Help track and record expenses
- Save money and hassles
- Prevent revenue loss

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Having a trusted advisor can not only save you money, but offer you a peace of mind that your accounts are being handled accurately and reassurance of monitoring of current systems in the practice, including staff accountability.

What services do they offer and should you use allow of them?

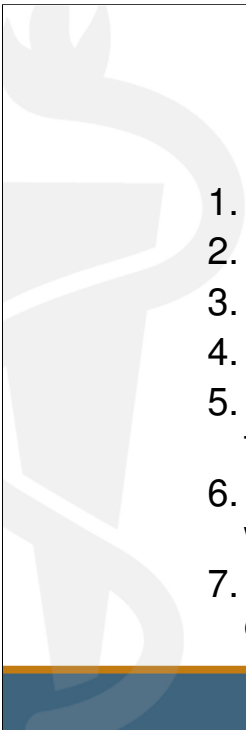
- Frequency of offerings (monthly, annually)
- Type of offerings
 - Accounts payable
 - Reporting
 - Benchmarking
 - Personal finances
 - Etc.
- Cost of services
- What accounting options and services are offered (i.e. monthly, year end, etc.)? Do you need all of them or would it save money and fit your needs to only use part of them?

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What accountants can do for you and what an accountant can vary greatly. The term accountant can mean anything from a Certified Public Accountant to someone that is self-trained. Be sure you are getting what you want and find out what other management services are offered (i.e. estate planning, retirement planning, investment counseling, enterprise analysis or other services)?

Find out if the accountant carries business insurance, have they ever been through an audit? When considering an accountant find out in advance what is the fee and billing procedure (i.e. commission, hourly or other method)?

What can they offer you for the fee? Are records management aids offered? How do they work with your current systems? What type of reports will be generated? How will they be generated and by whom (your staff or theirs-how much access will you allow them?). Do they offer a HIPAA Business Partner Agreement? These are just a few of the considerations to keep in mind.




Tips on what to look for in an accountant

1. Do a careful search for prospects
2. Verify your prospect's credentials
3. Be sure to check references
4. Are you comfortable with the person?
5. Availability and access -how hard is it to make an appointment?
6. Must be an authorized resident of US with no criminal background.
7. What is the level of healthcare experience with regard to accounting?

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The next few slides will look at each of these steps in more detail.



1. Do a careful search for prospects

Don't rush into anything!

Get recommendations from friends, other physicians, state societies, etc. Make sure they have experience in your type of medical practice!

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Don't take the first one that comes along! Take your time and find the accountant that will represent your needs. A little leg work in the beginning can save you money and legal problems in the future.



2. Verify your prospect's credentials

What certifications are presently held?

Can you see the originals?

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Just because they advertise as a bookkeeper, does not ensure that they have any formal training. Are they a CPA? What are they credentials and can you see the originals? Do they specialize in healthcare or handle any type of business?



3. Be sure to check references

Ask around-get references

References in healthcare available?

Do you know any of the references
that they offer, can you contact
them?

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You wouldn't just trust anyone to care for your children, would you? The practice is your baby, your business, your livelihood. Don't just trust anyone with the finances. Does the person have experience with family medicine? Have they worked with a practice similar in size and make-up as yours? How many years have they been in business? Do you know anyone that uses them and can vouch for them?



4. Are you comfortable with the person?

- Do you feel you can trust them?
Can you trust their judgement?
- Do they talk your language?
- Do they answer all of your questions or make you feel silly for asking?

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It is similar to a dating game and you may need to interview more than one person. This person will have access to much of your vital information. Be sure that you can trust the person and that it is a good fit. If you can't stand the person, how much will you be willing to work with them in the future?



5. Availability and access

- How hard is it to make an appointment?
- Are they willing to come to your practice?
- Are they willing to meet after hours?
- Monthly meetings?

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How long does it take to make an appointment? How available are they to you? When you call with a problem, will they take days to return the call? What are their business hours? If they have the same hours as you, will you have to shut the office down to meet with them? Will they come to the practice or do you have to go to them? What works best for your situation?



6. Must be authorized to work

- Are they legally able to work?
- Must be an authorized resident of US with no criminal background.
- Do they have any restrictions on what they can do? Why?

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Are they a US citizen and can they work in healthcare? Have they ever had an indictment ? Found guilty of Medicare Fraud? Ask them to provide documentation of ability to work.

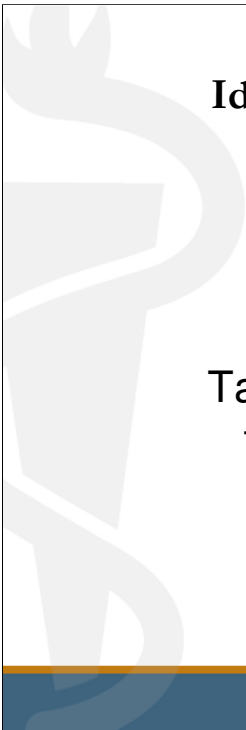


7. Level of Expertise/Experience

What is the level of healthcare experience with regard to accounting?

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What about with regard to tax law? Has the accountant worked with a practice your size and speciality before? References in Family Medicine? How does the accountant stay current with healthcare law and accounting procedures? Are they able to help advice of anti-trust and anti-kickback regulations, what about Red Flag Rules and HIPAA? They may need to suggest an attorney for some of the legal aspects, but they should have a basic understanding of healthcare regulations.



**Identify what you want the accountant
to do
for you-be clear up front!**

**Tailor to your practice needs, needs
to be a good fit for both of you.**

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The answer will depend upon you and the practice and your needs. If you have a limited number staff or they are inexperienced it might be best to utilize the accountant more. If your staff is capable of doing the bulk of the work, maybe you just need the accountant to review and allow staff accountability to be assessed.



What if an audit occurs?

- Has the accountant had clients that were audited in the past?
- How were they handled?
- What was the outcome?

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Ask if they have ever gone through an audit before and what type. What happens if clients are audited?

Will the accountant provide records for audits, accompany client for audit or charge extra for audit representation? Be sure to have this included if you sign an agreement with them.



Review the relationship

- Review the relationship periodically-
 - Is it still working for you?
 - If there was a problem, did they work to solve it?
 - On a scale on 1-10, how would you rate the service?
 - Can you do better?

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Just as friendships and personal relationships can change over time, so can your financial needs. Review at least annually the performance and relationship with your accountant. Are they still the best fit for your practice?



Using an accountant in a practice

- What to look for in an accountant.
- Identify what you want the accountant to do.
- Review the relationship.

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We have reviewed what to look for in an accountant, key areas to help identify what you would like the accountant to do and services that they provide. Then periodically review the relationship to ensure that it is still the best fit for both of your needs.



Thank you!

This presentation should have provided you with an overview of considerations when working with an accountant.

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For additional information:

<http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2004/0100/p46.html>