MotionOps

CONTRACTOR STARTER HUB · BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ESSENTIALS

Accountant Meeting Checklist

Use it twice: to choose an accountant, and to get the answers your books and your tax savings depend on. Bring it to the meeting and write the answers in.

An introduction, not tax advice. Your accountant decides how your books and taxes should be set up, based on your business structure and state.

MEETING DATE	ACCOUNTANT'S NAME	CPA, ENROLLED AGENT OR OTHER

1. Before you hire one: six questions

Write each accountant's answer next to the question.

Question	Accountant 1	Accountant 2
Do you work with other trade contractors or small construction businesses?		
What do you do, and what do you expect me to do?		
Which bookkeeping software do you prefer, and can you access mine directly?		
How do you charge: per return, monthly, or by the hour?		
Will you tell me what to set aside for taxes and when to pay estimated tax?		
How quickly do you answer questions during the year?		

2. Who does what

Role	What they do	Who it is for me
You, or a bookkeeper	Record and categorize transactions, match receipts, send invoices	

Role	What they do	Who it is for me
Accountant (often a CPA or an enrolled agent)	Set up your books, advise on structure and taxes, prepare and file returns, help with estimated payments	

3. Decisions to get from your accountant

Ask	Their answer
Which accounting method do I use: **cash** (income counts when I'm paid, expenses when I pay) or **accrual** (when I invoice and when I'm billed)?	
What would you change in my category list (section 5)?	
What's your limit for expensing tools?	
How do I record customer deposits not yet earned?	
Does my state tax my work? If so, how do I record the sales tax I collect?	
What percentage of each customer payment do I move to my tax savings account?	
Do I need to pay estimated tax? How much, and when?	
My business structure: which forms and rules apply to me?	

Example, with an example rate only: your accountant suggests 25%. A customer pays an invoice of $1,755: $1,755 × 0.25 = **$438.75** goes to the tax account the same day. Yours may be higher or lower. Don't guess low.

4. IRS facts to have in mind

Nobody withholds tax from your job income, so you have to.

- You report business income or loss on **Schedule C**, used "to report income or loss from a business you operated or a profession you practiced as a sole proprietor."
- On top of income tax, "The self-employment tax rate is 15.3%", and it applies if "Your net earnings from self-employment ... were $400 or more."
- You may also have to pay **estimated tax** during the year, generally if you "expect to owe tax of $1,000 or more when their return is filed."

5. Your categories, to review together

Group	Categories	Changes my accountant made
Income	Job income · Service calls · Maintenance plans	
Job costs (change with each job)	Materials · Subcontractors · Equipment rental · Permits · Disposal and dump fees	
Overhead (paid whether or not you work)	Insurance · Vehicle payments · Fuel · Vehicle repairs · Phone · Software · Accounting and legal · Licenses and fees · Marketing · Tools under your accountant's limit for expensing · Office and storage · Bank and card fees	
Not an expense	Owner's pay or draws · Transfers between your own accounts · Loan principal · Sales tax collected (if your state taxes your work) · Customer deposits not yet earned (ask your accountant how to record these)	

Keep the list short. Twenty categories you use correctly beat sixty you guess at.

6. What to send them

- [ ] Access to your bookkeeping software, or the reports they ask for
- [ ] Bank and card statements for every business account
- [ ] 1099s you received and the W-9s and payments for anyone you paid
- [ ] Vehicle mileage or expense records, and receipts for large purchases
- [ ] Estimated tax payments you made, with dates
- [ ] Your list of questions

7. Questions saved up during the month

At each monthly close, write down one question for your accountant, instead of guessing.

Month	Question	Answer

8. Your next action, this week

- [ ] Ask your accountant (or find one with the six questions) which software and accounting method to use

- [ ] Set up your categories with the table above
- [ ] Put the weekly routine and the monthly close in your calendar
- [ ] Open a separate tax savings account and decide your percentage with your accountant