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another tax season, the latest rankings of tax, audit and consulting firms is out.

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Now that many professionals are breathing a sign of relief at having gotten through another tax season, the latest rankings of tax, audit and consulting firms is out.

The Vault Accounting 50 surveys more than 10,000 professionals annually to rank the best accounting employers to work for in North America. For the second year in a row, PwC was ranked as the top firm to work for in North America, as well as being ranked first in the **Prestige Rankings** for the sixth straight year. The Big 4 firm also swept the three categories making up Vault's newest Accounting Practice Area

Rankings. Meanwhile, Rothstein Kass's struggles with overstaffing made room for

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3. [Deloitte](#)
4. [KPMG](#)
5. [Grant Thornton](#)
6. [BDO USA](#)
7. [McGladrey](#)
8. [Plante Moran](#)
9. [Baker Tilly Virchow Krause](#)
0. [Crowe Horwath](#)

This year's rankings are significant for a number of reasons. Most notably, unlike last year, the Big 4 firms occupy the top four spots; also, PwC's No. 1 finish marked the first time a firm has ranked No. 1 twice as well as the first time a firm has repeated as the best employer.

"Overall, it seems clear that PwC is the dominant force in accounting," says Derek Loosvelt, Vault's senior finance editor. "PwC has long been considered the most prestigious firm, and recently it's made a lot of strides in creating a better workplace for employees. This shows in its rankings this year."

PwC's efforts have also earned praise from survey respondents at peer firms. They note that PwC is "still the gold standard," "the firm to beat," "a good firm for large clients," "highly thought of," a "household name in the accounting world," "top notch," and "the best of the Big 4." Accounting insiders also note that PwC offers "excellent performance" and are "respected competitors" staffed by "nice people" who provide "quality results."

According to one PwC insider, "There's a genuine commitment at the top to encourage people to develop to their full potential and move throughout the firm to find the area of the organization and type of work that will allow them to thrive."

Despite PwC's exceptional performance this year, it was still challenged by a

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“good to their employees,” “impressive,” a “great firm,” with a “strong culture,” “talented and aggressive in tax positions,” “the best for employees and clients,” and the “most competitive firm to PwC.”

“EY is certainly on the right track,” says Loosvelt. “It improved this year and appears to be a solid No. 2 behind PwC. EY's poised to make a run at the top spot next year.”

EY's success came at the small expense of Deloitte, which fell one notch to No. 3 in the Accounting 50 despite a strong performance in its own right. Deloitte repeated as the No. 3 firm in Prestige and saw its raw score in the category rise by 4 percent. In addition, Deloitte went from not being ranked in the Top 20 in compensation last year to scoring a No. 9 ranking for 2014.

One Deloitte insiders tell us, “I appreciate the flexibility that my job offers. I'm not confined to reporting from 8 to 5 every day; rather, my hours are ultimately left in my hands based on how I've assessed the time needed to complete the work. I also have flexibility in determining my travel.”

The 2014 rankings also marked a return to form by KPMG. The firm rose two spots to No. 4 in the Vault Accounting 50 based on its strong prestige showing: its raw prestige score increased by 6 percent despite remaining No. 4 in that category. KPMG also scored the No. 1 spot in formal training, beating out its Big 4 competitors.

“KPMG's rise is somewhat surprising,” says Loosvelt. “For years it's been known as a distant fourth among the Big 4. But its showing this year in our rankings paints a different picture. KPMG might still be in fourth place, but it's no longer a distant fourth.”

**PwC Again Ranks No. 1 Prestige Rankings While Also Taking Top Spots In New Practice Area Rankings**

For the sixth straight year, PwC was voted by its peers as the Most Prestigious

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## **Plante Moran and Friedman Score Big in Vault Accounting Quality of Life Rankings**

While PwC's ability to score high in Quality of Life helped it claim the title of Best Accounting Firm to Work For, the smaller firms were the ones that fared the best in these rankings. Last year, Rothstein Kass was the big winner in our Quality of Life Rankings, taking the top spot in nine categories. This year, however, the firm had the largest slide among the 15 firms in the Vault Accounting 50, dropping from No. 8 to No. 12. The firm's slide came as a result of having to cut a significant portion of its staff due to an overstaffing issue. This led to a drop in employee morale, which showed in the firm's Quality of Life Rankings.

"The company laid off 10 percent of its workplace last summer. Since then, our department has faced staffing shortages and overworked employees due to the extra work added to their already full schedules," noted one employee. "This forced many employees to work quite a bit of overtime in the summer, which historically has been pretty slow."

Whether Rothstein Kass can regain the ground it lost this year remains to be seen, but it does have two new firms to contend with in Michigan-based Plante Moran and New York-based Friedman.

Plante Moran was the big winner in the Quality of Life Rankings this year, ranking No. 1 in numerous categories, including business outlook, culture, firm leadership, informal training, internal mobility, and promotion policies.

According to one Plante Moran employee, "The culture here is very different than at Big 4 firms where 50-plus hour weeks are the norm and are expected. Here, value is

placed on working hard, but also on having family time and doing things you enjoy

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competitive with the market standard, and there are annual bonuses for hardworking, full-time employees.”

Winners in the Vault Accounting Quality of Life Rankings:

- **Work/Life Balance:** [Friedman](#)
- **Firm Culture:** Plante Moran
- **Overall Satisfaction:** Friedman
- **Compensation:** Friedman
- **Benefits:** Baker Tilly Virchow Krause
- **Promotion Policy:** Plante Moran
- **Internal Mobility:** Plante Moran
- **Hours:** [Armanino](#)
- **Travel Requirements:** Armanino
- **Client Interaction:** EY
- **Supervisor Relationships:** Friedman
- **Leadership:** Plante Moran
- **Hiring Process:** PwC
- **Business Outlook:** Plante Moran
- **Formal Training:** KPMG
- **Informal Training:** Plante Moran
- **Diversity (Women):** Raffa, P.C.
- **Diversity (Minorities):** [Raffa, P.C.](#)
- **Diversity (LGBT):** PwC
- **Diversity (Disabilities):** Friedman
- **Diversity (Vets):** PwC
- **Overall Diversity:** PwC
- **Green Initiatives:** EY
- **Philanthropy:** Raffa, P.C.

The rankings are a result of Vault's annual Accounting Survey. Conducted earlier this

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