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For businesses on the search for a new accountant, selecting the right one shouldn't be taken lightly. For a small business, an accountant can play a critical role in the company's successes and can lessen an owner's headaches and stresses.

The process in selecting an accountant can be a difficult one, but it can also be a simple one if you take the right steps initially. First, you need to put together an

outline of your accounting needs. Do you have international dealings that

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Then comes the most important stage – the interview process. Below are eight key areas to consider when conducting your accountant interviews:

1. **What “language” do they speak?** You need to be able to be very honest about your level of financial expertise. For some reason, people often feel “embarrassed” if they can’t keep up with an accountant’s financial lingo so they don’t ask questions when they don’t know what they are talking about. It will make for a much better relationship if you are clear up front about your level of financial understanding and ensure the accountant can meet you where you are.
2. **What’s important to you?** Set clear expectations of what you’re looking for. If you want someone to provide ongoing financial guidance and this accountant is a once-a-year tax preparer, then you’ve got the wrong person.
3. **Look for value vs. compliance.** Remember it’s not all about compliance. Sure, an accountant has to be able to ensure you remain compliant with the government, but there is so much more a great accountant can offer. They can offer business and tax advice throughout the year which can save you money, they can help you budget for the future to ensure your business stays profitable, and they can help you navigate your way out of a challenging time. Don’t just think compliance when you’re looking for an accountant – think valuable (and even priceless) advice. When you’re interviewing a potential accountant, make sure you ask what value they bring beyond compliance.
4. **Ask for references.** Don’t be afraid to ask the accountant for some references from other business clients that are happy with their services... and then call them. Ask what they like and don’t like about working with the accountant. Share what you are looking for in an accountant to gauge their reaction on whether or not they think their accountant would be a good fit for you too.
5. **Who will your point of contact be at the firm?** Sometimes the accountant does a great job of getting your business... and then you never talk to them again. It’s just

you and the receptionist sorting out your business finances. If a more junior

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old accounting to the very day. There are so many advantages that new technology, especially cloud technology, brings, and if your accountant is stuck in the old ways of doing business they may not be able to advise you on new technologies you could harness to improve your own workflow. Look for someone progressive that is keeping up with the times.

8. How do they stay current with shifting trends in the market and the accounting profession? You want an accounting firm that is always looking for new ways to do things and is open to change and new ideas. Find a firm that is constantly educating themselves not just on tax, but in ways that they can bring new ideas to your business as well.

Asking these eight questions can help steer you clear of road bumps you may have encountered after selecting an accountant you initially thought was right for your needs. Remember to take your time. You may think you have found the right accountant upon your first interview, only to later find that you like the second or third accountant even better. Getting the accounting results you hope for stems from a solid relationship – starting with the first meeting and clearly establishing your goals together.

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