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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

Making a Career Jump During COVID-19

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You've heard the stories. Colleagues or other acquaintances were recently furloughed because of the COVID-19 lockdown. Some have been welcomed back as their offices begin to reopen. Others have not been so lucky. Fear and uncertainty continue to hang over the entire global job market, and the accounting industry is no different.

Like professionals in many other industries, CPAs may not be happy at their current organization, but they feel trapped because they don't want to be without employment during these tumultuous days. It's easy to feel guilty for wanting a change because many think they should be grateful for the current job they have.

With any professional career, it's easy to feel stagnant, insignificant, and unfulfilled. As have many accounting professionals that have recently worked from home, you've likely also pondered life at your current firm and maybe, think it is time for a change. The good news is there are currently plenty of CPA jobs out there at various levels. However, depending on a few key factors on your resume, you may not be the best candidate. How do you know? Here are four ways to know if you have what it takes to land your CPA dream job.

1. Don't Be "Jumpy"

Maybe you were hired at one of the "Big 4" out of college and found out the large pond isn't the best place for you. Since then, you've jumped around several small firms, not staying at the same place longer than a year or two. No matter the size, CPA firms aren't fans of hiring someone that has bounced around so much, especially if you are looking to land a senior-level position or partner. Of course, the longer the better, but count on at least 3-5 years' experience at your current firm before moving on to another steady situation.

2. Embrace Skills for That Future Job, Now

If you're looking to move to a firm where you have a better chance at landing a senior position or partner, you're going to need to show how you've demonstrated those skills in the recent past, or at the very least, sought education or mentorship to grow them. Partners at hiring firms prefer candidates with a clearly visualized career path, and they want to know that you are actively trying to better yourself to achieve those goals.

For example, say you are interested in leaving a national CPA firm to work for a regional one in Atlanta, Ga. to have a better chance to make partner. The founding partner has no problem hiring someone that has aspirations to one day move

through the ranks. However, if it is a partner position you have your eyes on, the partner is going to want to make sure you have experience in business development, or at the very least, have the drive to learn how to bring in business on top of your daily duties. Many CPAs don't like business development, but those that embrace it are perceived as "unicorns" and command the best salaries and the best jobs at the most prestigious firms.

3. Stay Public

If you are in a private company and want to go back to public accounting, make sure to make the move back sooner than later. After about two years in a private company, public companies may think you've lost touch with many of the complexities that evolve in public accounting. Tax laws change from year-to-year, sometimes in drastic ways. If you've worked at an in-house position for a period of time, partners at public firms might think you've lost touch. Note, there is nothing wrong with working for a private company doing in-house accounting or audit work if that is truly your passion. However, just make sure if you want to make the jump back to public accounting, it needs to happen sooner than later.

4. Find a Credible CPA Headhunter

Many think CPAs are usually in high demand and accounting firms usually don't have a problem finding a qualified candidate. They do, however, want to find the best candidate. If you think you're ready to make a move, one of the best things you can do is find a CPA Placement firm that focuses on the relationship with quality candidates first before they ever present them to an accounting firm who is hiring. VALiNTRYfinancial is one of the only CPA Placement firms in the country to recruit in this manner.

A headhunter like [VALiNTRYfinancial](#) will find a quality candidate, get to know them, and then present them to a firm at the candidate's request. It is at that time the placement agency enters a contract with the accounting firm. This recruitment experience differs greatly from the traditional recruiting model, where the CPA firm enters a contract with an agency in the beginning to find a candidate to fill position X and then the agency goes hunting for a candidate. Normally, there's no cost to the candidate for either model, yet the VALiNTRYfinancial method offers more value to both sides such as resume preparation, interview coaching, and hiring package negotiation.

Don't let the perceived economic situation with COVID-19 prevent you from achieving your career goals. If you aren't prepared to make a move today, there are still steps you can take to make sure you are ready to continue your journey when the time is right. Remember, you have a lot to offer the world. By doing nothing, you are not only hurting yourself, you are preventing a potential CPA firm from making maximum impact. What are you waiting for? Take the first step and contact a qualified placement executive today!

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