

Choosing an accountant

This can be a difficult decision, says **Geoff Long**.

It is often said that good accountants are like good dentists - once you find one you should hold on to him or her. Choosing an accountant for the first time is often difficult for newly qualified dentists.

Many dentists coming out of dental school lack financial or business training, and faced with the responsibilities of an associateship or principalship, flounder with their choice of accountant.

Assembling an effective team of professional advisers is an important step in a young dentist's career. It would be helpful to follow the guidelines below:

A good accountant will always be in strong demand, but should be able to return your call within 24 hours or see you at short notice.

1. Choose an accountant who is relatively near your own age. There is a better chance of you establishing a good working relationship. Communication is important and you won't feel bad about telephoning them with minor matters to which you should really know the answer.
2. To facilitate better communication, ensure that your accountant is someone with whom you can establish a sound working relationship.
3. Your accountant should be relatively easy to get hold of. A good accountant will always be in strong



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• Choose your team of advisers with care so you can have a good working relationship with them.

demand, but should be able to return your call within 24 hours or see you at short notice. You should ask how many large clients they have. If it is too many this may mean they will be too busy to deal with you personally and your accounts will be passed to someone more junior.

4. Given the complexities of dentists' tax and financial affairs, you would be well advised to choose an accountant who specialises in dentists' accounts. Advantages include an in-depth knowledge of all expenses that can be claimed specifically by dentists, sound financial advice from specialist accountants who understand the needs of the dental profession. Economies of scale and experience in preparing accounts for dentists often means they are able to reduce their fee.

5. Check to ensure your accountant

is a member of a recognised professional body, possibly Chartered or Certified. They perform work to the highest professional standard and the Inland Revenue acknowledges that it more readily accepts accounts prepared by a properly qualified accountant.

6. Finally, it is well worth checking to see if your accountant is on the British Dental Association's list of approved accountants. To be placed on this list the firm must first be meticulously vetted by the BDA as one with a proven track record of servicing dentists over a long period. Accountants are rigorously checked with references taken from dentists who are existing clients. ■

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