

Checklists for aspiring practitioners

Useful questions to ask if you're considering running an accounting practice



CHARTERED
ACCOUNTANTS
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Think Ahead

About these checklists

Completing the checklists in this guide can help you decide whether running an accounting practice is for you or not. Along the way, you'll get a sense of some of the steps that help nascent accounting businesses to succeed in the short, medium and long term. And you'll have a better idea of the requirements, risks and rewards of running an accounting practice too.

These checklists have been informed by a series of interviews conducted with accountants who have set up thriving accounting practices and/or who advise accountants on how to do so.

Access detailed guidance

For more information, we recommend reading our playbook titled *Look before you leap: Helping you decide whether running an accounting practice is for you* which is available from the ACCA and CA ANZ websites. Both websites also provide a one stop shop for everything members need to promote and elevate their services, manage a practice, recruit and support staff, comply with obligations, and access professional and peer support. For details, visit the [CA ANZ website](#) or [ACCA website](#) (focused on SMPs in the UK) and [Practice connect hub](#).

Work-life balance

Yes	No	Question
		If I ran an accounting practice, do I have strategies to balance my physical and mental wellbeing?
		Am I clear on what lifestyle I want in the future? (Including factors like family, geographic location, residential property, car, travel, etc.)
		If I ran an accounting practice, how could I take extended/annual leave or reduce my hours, if required?
		Do I know where to find other accountants if I need support or advice?
		Have I worked backwards, to understand my end goals and how I would reach them? For example: How much net worth would I need to support my retirement? And how much would my practice need to be valued at when I retire and/or sell, to give me sufficient passive income?
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Business structure alternatives

Yes	No	Question
		Have I decided whether I want sole control or if I want to share control with other accountants?
		Have I spoken with someone who has been down this path before?
		Have I accessed mentor and networking opportunities offered by CA ANZ or ACCA?
		Do I have a network of peers to lean on for support if I become a sole trader?
		Can I manage in periods of high demand?

Starting a new accounting business (clients and marketing)

Yes	No	Question
		Do I have a clear target market in mind? Have I decided whether my practice will serve a small community of high paying clients, or serve many clients for high volume services?
		Can I differentiate my business from competitors with a single statement that captures how I serve my clients?
		Have I considered how much time I will need to allocate away from clients to running my business operations?
		Do I know how I would respond to clients who request services I won't offer?
		Will I need marketing collateral for my business? (Branding, website, signage, advertising, etc.)
		Will I be able to find time to devote to business development, new clients and networking?

People and skills

Yes	No	Question
		Am I going to employ staff? If so, do I know what kind of flexibility I can offer them?
		Have I budgeted for the associated costs of employing staff? (Salaries, bonuses, contracts, professional development, insurance, technology, payroll tax, superannuation, leave accrual, WHS obligations, etc.)
		Will I use digital platforms and/or artificial intelligence to complete repeatable tasks?
		Will my staff require any special licenses? (eg. tax agent license.)
		Would I consider employing someone else to manage the business so I can focus on serving clients?
		Am I fully aware of all the tasks and statutory obligations involved in running an accounting practice?

Technology

Yes	No	Question
		Do I understand the full range of technology I would need to run my business?
		Am I aware of the business technology my prospective clients use, and how I can ensure my practice integrates seamlessly?
		Can I identify the essential features I would require from accounting software?
		Have I fully scoped out the hardware I would need to ensure business continuity? (eg. Desktop computers, mobile phones, printers, monitors, etc.)
		Will I need my data backed up? Do I know where will I store this?
		Do I know how all my software/apps work? How they integrate? Would I be able to teach my clients how to use it, or do I need an independent expert to guide me?
		Have I reviewed and completed the complimentary CA ANZ and ACCA resources for public practices, including the cybersecurity self-assessment, cybersecurity measures checklist, and cyber incident response plan blueprint?
		Do I have a plan for ensuring all technology runs continuously, even when I am away or take a holiday?

Compliance and legal

Yes	No	Question
		Have I sought the advice of a lawyer to draw up my legal documents?
		Do I need a practicing certificate?
		Before I decide to become a partner or director, do I have a clear idea of what certifications and registrations are required by the law and my professional body?
		Before purchasing an existing practice, have I done my due diligence and legal diligence to minimise risks, including (but not limited to) retaining key people and technology rights?
		Am I clear about what my confidentiality requirements are, including (but not limited to) taking on new clients?
		Have I checked there are no trademark or copyright issues with the business name/brand I want to use? And have I read my professional body's rules for accounting practice names?
		When planning the budget for my business, have I factored in the costs of compliance, licensing, quality reviews, insurance, legal advice, etc?
		Have I spoken with a broker regarding relevant insurance requirements, such as public liability, professional indemnity, workers compensation, etc?
		Have I considered who would manage my clients if I was not able to? Have I read my professional body's guidance about Powers of Attorney?

Financial administration

Yes	No	Question
		Do I know where I would secure financial reserves to set up a practice? (Bank, investors, family, etc.)
		Have I got the data and skills to prepare a sustainable budget for my practice, including a five-year financial forecast and a rolling 12-week cash flow forecast?
		Do I know how I might package my fees?
		Do I know how to ensure my billing terms and policies are clear for clients from the start?
		Am I confident I can manage bill disputes? And am I aware of laws and regulations relating to debt collection and following up unpaid bills?
		Would I know how to safeguard my clients' monies in line with professional standards (e.g. APES 310 in Australia; PS-2 in New Zealand)?



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