

Key Steps to finding the best bookkeeper for you and your business.

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Choosing a bookkeeper is an important decision. Because your bookkeeper will have access to your private records or business data, you need to know you are hiring someone you can trust and have confidence that they are accounting for your business accurately. Small mistakes can cause big problems in bookkeeping, so attention to detail is important.

Here are the key steps to finding the best bookkeeper for you and your business:

Step 1. Define your expectations.

Before you start speaking with bookkeepers, determine the scope of work that you want a bookkeeper to provide you or your business.

Here are some of the things to consider:

- day to day recording of general account transactions
- reconciliation and balancing general bank accounts
- preparing and posting statement of accounts
- maintaining accounts receivable and accounts payable accounts
- preparing payroll
- preparing government remittances such as GST, BAS, PAYG, Superannuation
- preparing periodic financial statements
- organising and maintaining accurate records
- year-end accounts for tax purposes

Step 2. Look for a bookkeeper or bookkeeping service.

Once you have made a realistic assessment of your needs and defined your expectations, you will need to find a bookkeeping service:

Ask family or friends for a recommendation. Remember to be objective though and interview all prospects thoroughly. Just because a bookkeeper is right for your neighbour's lawn mowing business, doesn't mean they will have the right skills or experience to assist your architectural business.

Step 3. Interview potential candidates

It is crucial to interview potential bookkeepers and ask hard questions. This establishes that you are serious about your business and your personal finances. Keep the interview focused on its purpose. The aim of the interview is not to get free advice but to establish whether you will be comfortable and have confidence in them as your bookkeeper.

Here is a list of question that should be covered in the interview process:

- How long have you been in business?
- Do you have membership with any professional bookkeeping body?
- What are your qualifications?
- Do you specialise in any particular area? What types of client have they worked with?
- Do you participate in ongoing education courses?

- How do you charge?
- Can you provide me with names and contact number of three clients I can call for a testimonial?
- Who will be handling my work?
- What software do you use? Are you accredited in the accounting software?
- How will you be able to help my business or me as my needs change? Do you offer training?

Step 4. Selecting a bookkeeper

After the interview, you should have all the information needed to make a decision. As with other purchasing decisions, do not always go with the cheapest option. Pay for the service that best meets your needs at a price you can afford. Rates should be competitive and include quality-controlled, value-added service.

You might be able to cut down on bookkeeping costs by doing some of the work yourself. Ask if your bookkeeper will train you in software or simple bookkeeping tasks.

It is a good idea to have your external accountant interview your bookkeeper to assess understanding of basic accounting principles and knowledge of the software or systems already put in place by your accountant.

A final note:

While switching bookkeepers might seem like a hassle don't be afraid to make a change. Whether it's simply a case of bad chemistry or incompetence, don't stay with a supplier if you don't think they are doing a good job for you. Your success or the success of your business is too important to compromise!