

WORKING WITH YOUR ACCOUNTANT

Switching Accountant Without the Disruption

Why owners move, how a handover works step by step, and how to avoid missed deadlines and lost records along the way.

FOR: ESTABLISHED BUSINESSES • SOME EXPERIENCE

Why people switch

Owners tend to change accountant for the same few reasons: they only hear from the firm at deadlines, advice is thin, replies are slow, fees are unclear or have crept up, the firm does not understand their sector, or the business has outgrown the service. Few switch lightly, because the change feels risky. In practice it is straightforward, and a well-managed handover causes very little disruption.

Pick the right moment

There is rarely a bad time to change, but some times are easier than others. Many owners move just after a year-end has been filed, or at the start of a tax year, so that one firm completes each piece of work. If a deadline is close, say so to the new firm. They can often take over and still file on time, but they will need your records promptly.

How a handover works

1. **Choose the new firm** and agree the scope and fee in an engagement letter.
2. **Identity checks.** The new firm must identify you and your business, as the law requires.
3. **Professional clearance.** The new firm, with your permission, writes to your current accountant to ask whether there is any professional reason not to accept the work. Your current accountant is expected to reply promptly.
4. **You tell your current accountant** that you are moving, and ask them to release your records.
5. **Records transfer.** Your old accountant provides your books and papers, and any working papers you are entitled to. If there are unpaid fees, they may be entitled to hold some items, but they should still give you what you need to meet your tax duties.
6. **Authorisation with HMRC and Companies House.** The new firm is authorised as your agent, and the old firm's authority is ended.
7. **Handover meeting,** to agree what has been filed, what is outstanding, and the calendar for the year ahead.

Who this is for

- Owners unhappy with their current service
- Businesses that have outgrown their accountant
- Anyone worried about the practicalities

Key points

- Switching is routine, and a good new firm manages it for you.
- Time it around a filing, if you can.
- Make sure nothing outstanding is lost between firms.
- Keep copies of your own records.
- Tell your bank and software providers about the change.

What to ask for

- Last year's accounts, tax returns and computations.
- Your tax and VAT references and payment records.
- Nominal ledgers or accounting software files.
- Payroll records and pension details.
- Fixed asset registers and loan schedules.
- Statutory books and company secretarial records, if the firm held them.
- A list of outstanding queries or deadlines.

Avoiding gaps

- **Make a list of deadlines** for the next twelve months and confirm who is responsible for each.
- **Do not cancel the old firm until the new one has accepted**, but also do not leave it so late that a deadline is missed.
- **Check access.** Cloud accounting subscriptions, bank feeds and online tax accounts should be moved or shared, with the right people holding the logins.
- **Pay what is owed.** An unresolved fee dispute can slow down the transfer.

If you are unhappy but not ready to leave

Raise your concerns first, and give your current accountant a chance to put things right. If you decide to go, a polite, clear note saves difficulty later. Be fair and factual.

After you move

Expect a first review with your new firm in the first few months, to confirm the service, the calendar and the quality of the information coming in. Use that to settle expectations on both sides.

Related guides

If this is useful, you may also want:

- Choosing an accountant
- Getting the most from your accountant
- Maintaining records

Handover checklist

- Engagement letter signed
- Identity checks completed
- Clearance letter sent
- Records requested
- HMRC authorisation changed
- Deadlines list agreed
- Software access moved

How King Street can help

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We manage the handover from start to finish: clearance, records, authorisations, and a calendar of every deadline, so there is no gap in service. Many clients tell us the switch was easier than they feared. A first call to discuss your situation costs nothing.

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