**Choosing A Tax Accountant**

**By Julie Heyroth Gasper, SCORE Counselor**

**Q:** I have a new client that asked me how to "shop" for a good accountant to do their taxes. The client formed an LLC and started a general contracting business last year and did pretty well. One has some other interests, including a farm and rental properties. He had worked with an accountant last year, but had nothing to compare. He also asked if he could just use TurboTax for Business and do it himself. I'm reluctant to encourage that approach without knowing more.

**A:** I always recommend that clients go to [www.mncpa.org](http://www.mncpa.org) (the website for the Minnesota Society of CPA's) and click on "Find a CPA." I recommend they select three firms and interview them to see if there is a fit. Each client is going to "click" with a different person and have different needs, and every firm is going to have different specialties, location, etc., so I never recommend any one I know. Obviously, I do recommend a CPA rather than just a tax preparer. It is more expensive, but you get what you pay for!

If it looks like they want to do it themselves, I try to make a judgment based on their skills to see if they can give TurboTax or a similar product a try. TurboTax for Business is about $130, so this is not going to be "cheap" either. If they are a sole proprietorship or single member LLC and will file a Schedule C, then all they need is TurboTax Deluxe ($80) for their Form 1040. If they are a multi-member LLC, partnership, S-Corp, or C Corp., then they will need both TT for Business and TT Deluxe to file their 1040. So, that's a total of $210 already. Then I start talking about the differences between book and taxable income, tax depreciation, etc. It's about at this point in time that the client's eyes roll back in their heads and the $500 or so that they will pay to have their tax return done for them doesn't look so bad................

In other words, I'll help clients if they want to do it themselves, but I really stress the complexity of tax law, how it is constantly changing, etc. that I am NOT A TAX EXPERT and that they probably should go to a professional.

Finally, I think the attached article is a great list of questions that an entrepreneur should ask when they are interviewing CPA's/tax preparers. I'll be giving this to my clients when I recommend that they use "Find a CPA" on the MNCPA website. Maybe your client would get some value out of it, too.