

UNDECIDED ABOUT YOUR CAREER CHOICE? THINK ABOUT MAKING A COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTING

I am proud to be an accountant and I am thankful for all the opportunities that accounting has made available to me. Accounting was not my first career choice but choosing accounting as my professional career 26 years ago was the best professional career choice that I ever made. As a first year student, entering a major state university thirty-two years ago I was not sure what I wanted to commit to for the next forty or fifty years. I did know that I became bored easily and I liked interacting with people.

In search of the right fit, I switched majors several times. At one time or another during my undergraduate studies I majored in packaging, police administration, wildlife management, building construction and industrial arts before deciding on business administration. I figured business administration was a good choice because it would give me a basis for whatever I finally decide to pursue.

After earning my undergraduate degree I was still uncertain of my true calling. I only realized that I did not want just a "job". I wanted something meaningful and something where I could make a difference. In order to postpone the necessity of choosing a job, which would provide little interest and to explore additional career options, I decided to earn my MBA. Again, because of uncertainty I did not know what emphasis would be best? I settled in on Marketing.

As a student, I had always earned high grades; but I only went through the motions of the academic requirements. I lacked that drive that some of my classmate regularly demonstrated. I had to wait until my second year of graduate school before finally starting on my golden path, accounting. A management class would prove to be my career turning point. In this class, one of the older project team members suggested that I apply for a teaching position at the local community college. Being somewhat interested and intrigued, I stated that I would. After several weeks had passed my project colleague inquired about what I had done about his teaching tip.

Of course, I had not followed up and I informed him of this fact. Upon hearing this he again encouraged me to take control of my career and pursue this option. Even though as an undergraduate, a psychological personality profile test suggested that I would be a natural teacher, I had never given serious thought to pursuing this option. Two days after this last encouragement and thinking about how the extra income would be helpful I was in my car driving to the community college.

With a degree in business administration and being more than half way through a marketing MBA program it was only natural that I apply at the community college's marketing and management department. After a few minutes of discussion with the department chair I was informed they had no openings. However, I was informed the accounting department was always in need of part time teachers. Even though I had taken principles of accounting, managerial accounting and tax as an undergraduate and two additional accounting classes in the MBA program I never dreamed about teaching accounting.

Since I was already at the community college and the accounting department was directly across the hall I found myself exploring the situation. The accounting department chairperson was very encouraging and interested in my background. It was not long before I had my first teaching position. I was truly excited and had approximately eight weeks to prepare before the start of the new semester.

Once class started, I found teaching to be a joy and a very interesting experience. I was satisfied. I discovered that accounting was fun, made sense and I was good at it. Near the end of my first semester of teaching, I decided upon completion of my MBA to enroll in the necessary accounting classes to sit for the CPA exam.

Following graduation, I totally embraced myself in accounting. Along with teaching two sections of accounting principles at the community college I enrolled in three accounting classes at the same state university where I had earned my undergraduate and graduate degree. Although the class work was tough and demanding I knew accounting was for me and it would provide valuable and satisfying rewards.

Upon completion of the accounting course work and passing a three full day CPA exam I sent my resume and letter of introduction to all of the "Big Eight" accounting firms in existence at that time, several regional firms and state government auditing offices. Reviewing several offers, I decided to give back to society by investing my talents in helping the government become more efficient and effective. After three years of developing my skills and maturing I came to the conclusion that I did not want to retire from government.

Knowing that I was young, adventuresome, enthusiastic and work oriented I began searching for a medium size, growth oriented and progressive company. I was looking for a company that would allow me the opportunity to pursue the non-routine. I wanted adventure and challenges. I located such a company and quickly found myself in the midst of a position as controller for an international parent and three subsidiaries. I was truly happy with the new position and with all the responsibilities and challenges. I realized that knowing and understanding accounting had given me the means to excel and accomplish assignments that had never been dreamed of or considered possible for a small farm town kid.

During the time as an auditor and controller I had continued my teaching interests. I continued teaching accounting at the local community college. I always taught at least one accounting or finance class per semester. For some reason I found teaching accounting satisfying and self-fulfilling. After several years as a controller, I became aware of a full time teaching position at a major state university and for some reason I could not let this opportunity go unanswered.

Upon discussing the position with the accounting department's chairperson, I found myself becoming a full time accounting professor. I was sincerely excited and proud about this development. Even though my salary was cut in half and I would lose my company car, generous expense account and personal secretary I could not pass up this opportunity. That was twenty-one years and two colleges ago and I have never regretted my accounting choice or any career move.

My career has been and is successful and rewarding by any measure and I owe it all to accounting. My accounting skills have allowed me the opportunity to pursue a variety of careers and business paths and given me great flexibility. Accounting has given me the foundation to be a sought after teacher and develop a career which spans four continents and scores of countries. Accounting has provided me with the ticket for extensive world travels as a foreign expert and consultant. I have been invited as a foreign expert to teach and make presentations seven times in The People's Republic of China, three times in Japan, and to several countries in Western and Eastern Europe.

Accounting has been good to my family and over the years it has allowed me to give back and help others. Through my consulting practice I have helped over two hundred and fifty companies, in a wide array of industries and sizes, fulfill their accounting reporting, financial and information system responsibilities and to become financial stronger and more viable. I find it extremely gratifying to be called upon for assistance and recognized for my analytical and problem solving skills as well as other professional abilities. I receive several phone calls each week from new and potential clients seeking my counsel and the State of Michigan has recognized me as the accounting advocate of the year.

Accounting has had a bright past but its future is even greater and brighter. Perhaps you are uncertain as to your career and are considering a professional career in accounting. Maybe you have some reservations because of negative impressions about accounting from the media or other well-intentioned people who confuse bookkeeping with accounting or basically do not have a basis for their comments. Accounting is not boring and certainly not for the unimaginative. Accounting will give you the foundation to choose your own career path and go as far as you can dream or imagine. There is a great need in accounting for the best and the brightest.

I am certainly grateful for my accounting experiences and have no regrets concerning my career choice and I always smile when remembering what a "Big Eight" accounting recruiter told me during one of my early interviews. He said "you have your MBA, that means we have to pay you more; you have your CPA, that means you are worth more". Give accounting a try and maybe like this uncertain young student you will find great satisfaction and reward in the profession of accounting.