

## A guide to finding an online accountant

Starting out in business with a new venture is an exciting time for anyone. Taking your ideas from a few notes on a pad to an actual physical business is an achievement in itself.

Although once you have setup your business, it's only really then that the hard work starts.

An essential to have on board from the start is an accountant. Even if you're operating as a Sole Trader and not a Limited Company, it's important to know what you can claim for and to keep within HMRC deadlines (avoid those late payment fines). But with so many accounting options around, where do you start?



### Cost of accounting? The online option wins.

Budgets are always tight when starting up or even operating an established small business. Top of the list for many when selecting an accountant is cost, and it's here where an online option often beats a high street accountancy.

With lower overheads, an online accountant can offer their services at a much lower rate than a 'bricks & mortar' option. You are of course not limited to location. If your business is based in London, you could potentially look at an online accountant based up in Manchester, which would bring in a very competitive rate.

Most online accountants deal with their clients over phone, Email and live chat. They often offer a free secure postal service - so everything is easy to use, quick and importantly competitively priced.

### A checklist for online accountants.

If you run a search in Google for online accountants you will see there is a number of choices to choose from. With that in mind, we have put together the below checklist to help you refine your search and find the right one for you:

- **References and reviews** from previous clients are a great way to see how good an online accountant service is, check out the review websites. Run a search in Google for the accountants company name and take time to visit reviews - see what people who have used their service think about the company.

- **Socially connected?** A good online accountancy will have at least one active social network, which will help spread news to clients but also will be used as a way of quickly contacting them on the go.
- **Do they offer an accounting software package?** Some online accountants have their own cloud accounting software which will either come as free to use to clients or a minimal charge. It's still possible to use the old way with spreadsheets, but that is being phased out, so jump onboard a cloud accounting software quickly. You can check out our reviews on the packages [here](#)
- **How accessible are they?** You can still find online accountants who have no phone number listed on their website and the only way to contact them is via a contact form! Make sure your online accountant has a phone number, office address, email contact and either a live chat option or active social networks.
- **Do they work with businesses like yours?** Getting on-board with an online accountant that knows your business sector or one who is experienced with start-ups can be very beneficial.
- **Do they offer a free secure postal service** for records to be sent over. Although everything is online and normally done via cloud accounting software, there is still a need for hard copies of records.
- **Do they have a dedicated accountant** or will you be dealing with an account manager? Ideally you will want an online accountancy that offers access to your very own dedicated accountant and not an accountant manager who deals with lots of clients and gives you no ability to speak direct with an accountant.
- **Finally**, are you able to have a face to face meeting with your accountant should the need arise. Although an online service, they should be able to offer you meeting options if you ever needed to head in and talk with your accountant.