

# SO YOU WANT TO LEAVE THE BIG FOUR?

*Transformation and Exits in Public Accounting:  
Start Your Dream Career*

**Guide from Professional Success Coaching, by Arun Coumar**

# ***Does this sound like you? This worksheet can help.***

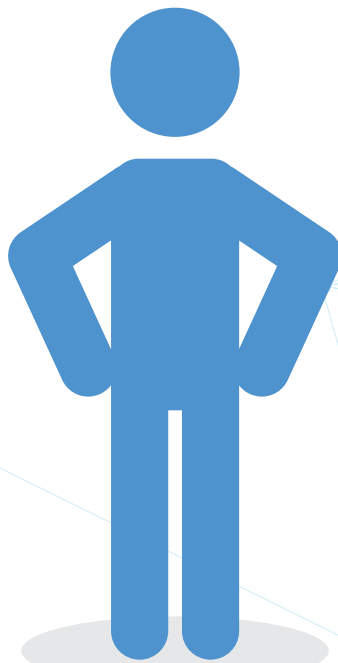
"I don't like my job, but I don't  
know where I'd go"

"I can't decide what industry  
to recruit for"

"I have no idea what I want to  
do if it's not this"

"I don't know if the grass  
just looks greener on the  
other side"

"I'm just going to stay here to manager  
so my exit opportunities are better"



***Don't spend another minute dissatisfied with your job  
until you read this worksheet!***

# Public accounting isn't for everyone.

## I hear you.

In my 3 years in the Big Four, I heard the above quotes from colleagues time and time again.

You dedicated your entire working career since college to public accounting, but you don't envy your managers.

Then, you look outside the firm to people who have left. They must have gotten lucky. Or you aren't jealous of them.

***Your next job  
can be the start of  
your dream career.***

# The options available to you are endless.

You can stay and transform your career in public accounting, or you can exit into a huge array of different industries. Craft your story, leverage your experiences, and most importantly... find what really drives you.

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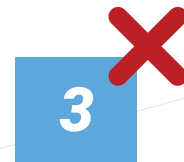
If you are worried your qualifications don't fully match the job you want, you have three options:



Get the qualifications you need.



Convince the hiring manager that you will make up for the lacking qualifications in other ways.



Give up and find another job.

Let me teach you how to do #1 and #2, so you don't have to resort to #3.

**Start your dream career today.**

*Connect with me on LinkedIn and  
send me an email at [arun@findprofessionalsuccess.com](mailto:arun@findprofessionalsuccess.com)*

# Here is a list of possible paths to transform or exit from your current job in public accounting:

## *Consider...*

Staying at your firm, but changing your role.

Staying at your firm and focusing upward.

Staying at your firm and focusing downward.

Staying at your firm, looking around and transferring.

## *If this sounds like you...*

You like your firm, you like your team, you like the working culture, you like your group/line of service, you just don't like the work you're doing right now.

You might thrive in a role where you review the work instead of preparing the work. What about your current work don't you like? Are you excited to fill your manager's shoes? Wait it out. If you're further along and already reviewing, look up further. Do you want to be part of the selling efforts? Would you be interested in an internal subject matter expert or firm management role? Look to grow your current role to accommodate new, higher level responsibilities. Take on a support role in the sales process. Provide assistance on training, recruiting, or thought leadership. These are all responsibilities managed by partners, which gives you a different set of skills and experience to exercise and build.

Do you like managing people? To some people it comes naturally. Think about how you can be a mentor, educator, and manager to those below you. A new batch of interns and associates comes through every year, so there are always plenty of new faces to help out. Sometimes this can give you just the outlet you need to enjoy your job.

So you've decided that you don't want to thrive as a mentor or doing various business development work to split your time away from your day-to-day. Public accounting firms have several other options available to you, depending on the size. The Big Four have everything from corporate finance, to management consulting, to tax, risk assurance, transaction advisory, finance process consulting, and more. Smaller firms have startup CFO placements, client secondments, and business advisory. All firms have recruiting, human resources, and learning & development.

## Consider...

### Doing accounting somewhere else.

Choosing a different accounting firm.

Industry accounting.

Forensic accounting.

Starting your own firm.

## If this sounds like you...

You like accounting, but you don't like your firm, your team, or your specific function.

If your problem is with your employer and the people around you, an easy change is to stick to exactly the same role at a different firm. Do not resort to this option unless you find something fundamentally wrong with your employer or managers, or the firm you're going to work with drastically different clients. There are lots of options to change teams and functions before you full-on change employers to a direct competitor.

Perhaps you don't like the public accounting work culture. Client service can be demanding and complex. Your specific function may not be the same as doing technical accounting assessments and internal financial reports, and you find yourself gravitating to those responsibilities. Find a company that is doing something you care about and support their mission through the accounting function.

Consider yourself detail oriented? Enjoy working with large amounts of data? Jealous of Reid, from the TV show, *Criminal Minds*? Forensic accounting involves combing through large amounts of accounting and corporate data, looking for potentially fraudulent activity.

Have an entrepreneurial desire and want to start your own accounting firm? I recommend checking out Consulting Success to get started. They provide tons of resources to help you start your own independent consulting firm. Remember, don't violate any non-compete agreements after you leave or steal any intellectual property during your departure.

## Consider...

## If this sounds like you...

### Moving into finance.

You like certain financial aspects of your job, just not the accounting, and you don't like your firm, you don't like your team, or you don't like your group.

### Industry finance.

If you don't like the working culture of public accounting, you appreciate the finance side of a company's financial function, and you want to stay within the world of Excel, find a company that is doing something you care about and support their mission through the finance function. You are likely already qualified for a role.

### Investor relations/SEC reporting.

You enjoy talking about accounting and financial results more than working them out? Consider yourself disciplined and process oriented? Are you a good writer? You can focus your career on helping companies (or a single company you care about) develop communications of their financial results.

### Investment management.

Have a passion for investing? Want to focus your career on building and maintaining relationships? Consider yourself highly analytical and quantitatively strong? Depending on the investment firm, you could sign up for a much slower working environment (personal wealth management), or a much more demanding one (private equity).

### Banking.

Dedicated to growing your career as a holistic financial advisor to your clients? There are several different flavors of banking available. If you're looking for lower-intensity, relationship-based, analytical work, look to credit and small business banking. If you're looking for high-intensity, production-rewarding, quantitative work and sales, look to investment banking and sales & trading.

## Consider...

### Other paths.

Management consulting.

Graduate school.

Entrepreneurship.

## If this sounds like you...

A mixed bag of other options available to you if you don't like your firm, you don't like accounting, you don't like finance, or you don't like the working culture.

If you enjoy the client service aspect of public accounting, but want nothing to do with accounting and finance, there are several different consulting options. You could specialize in an industry niche (healthcare consulting), a functional niche (supply chain consulting), or both (automotive sales consulting). You can look at small and large consulting firms and everything in between. Regardless, you must be prepared to pass a rigorous case interview and Airport Test.

Do you want to set your career on a radically different trajectory? Consider going back to school for a degree that will open new career doors for you. Remember, preparing to apply for graduate school is a longer process than changing jobs, and you will likely sacrifice income and increase your expenses via tuition in lieu of organically growing your earnings.

Have an idea for a solution to a problem? That is all you need to start a company. Create an organization that can build and distribute that solution, while educating potential buyers on how that solution will benefit them. Consider who you could partner with, what skills and knowledge you need, and whether you have a financial and life situation that allows for quitting steady income and focusing on your new venture.

This is only the surface of possibilities available to transform or exit your career in public accounting.

**So you want to leave the Big Four? Let's chat.**

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