

BUSINESS ENGLISH

Running a firm of certified public accountants in the United States

di **Enrico Zappa, Justin Rainey**

Richard runs his own CPA (Certified Public Accountant) firm in the United States. He has been a CPA since 1985 and started his firm in 1989. His company emphasizes helping small and mid-sized companies to grow and establish themselves in the market. He has also helped start-ups with business plans, loan applications and venture capital funding. Along with business tax planning, financial planning and income-tax preparation, his firm offers business training, consulting services and computer security assessments. He also teaches and speaks about personal money management. He earned bachelor's degrees in management and accounting and holds an MBA.

Richard typically works from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m, Monday through Friday, except during tax season when he also works on Saturdays. But as a business owner and someone who has reached an advanced level in his field, each day is different.

"Most people think that accountants perform the same activities every day in the office," he says. "This can be true for entry-level positions and for paraprofessional positions." Repetition builds experience, skill and efficiency in new employees, he says. But once an employee becomes experienced, their daily skills become more diverse as they develop skills to address their clients' needs.

Practitioners who develop a strong focus on tax planning will become the first resource for clients with tax challenges, Richard says. "Other CPAs in the industry will develop skills in the area of management consulting, fraud investigation, litigation support or financial auditing.

Within each of these disciplines, the daily activities will be dictated first by the tickler system [\[1\]](#) in place at that firm and then by the telephone calls received from clients each day," he says.

Richard's daily activities include answering numerous phone calls from clients, salespeople, prospects, peers and other people in the community. He always makes time for these calls because they either lead directly to more paid work or they lead to greater community involvement, which may lead to more paid work in the future. He also tries to stay on top of the 100-plus emails he receives each day. In addition, some days he will attend a meeting for one of the outside organizations he is involved with, such as the local chamber of commerce, a trade organization or a community nonprofit. These meetings might extend his workday past 5 p.m.

Once a week he processes payroll[2], and monthly he closes payroll and prepares sales tax returns[3]. When clients submit financial documents to his firm, he performs bookkeeping services for them within two days of receipt. Another recurring, but not necessarily daily, activity is business development, also known as sales. He also has quarterly and annual tasks related to payroll.

"No CPA will become an expert in all areas, so each practitioner will develop a unique practice in the market," Richard says. A firm can offer a range of skills in several industries by adding partners with different areas of expertise and each firm will be unique because of its skills, size, location and target market, he says.

"For those who are considering a career in public accounting, I strongly believe that the industry holds an opportunity for almost any area of interest that you may have. There are CPA experts in any industry that you can name," he says. One should not assume that accounting is limited to adding numbers and compiling tax returns, he adds. "CPAs are often requested to perform services that are not readily associated with accounting." These include verifying research results, confirming product quality standards, substantiating historical renovation compliance and assessing computer security risk. "While each engagement is unique and may require different procedures, the profession provides a standard environment and approach to ensure the quality of the finished product," he says.

Comprehension Questions

1. What services does his firm offer and for whom?
2. What qualifications has Richard got?
3. What is the connection between work experience and diversity of activities?
4. What does he do every day?
5. ...and why?
6. What does he do once a week?
7. How, according to Richard, can a firm offer a range of services in several industries?
8. What makes each CPA firm unique?
9. Which services performed by CPAs are not necessarily associated with accounting?
10. How is your situation similar or dissimilar to the one described by Richard?

Answers

1. Business plans, loan applications and venture capital funding for start-ups; business tax planning, financial planning and income-tax preparation, business training, consulting services and computer security assessments for small and mid-sized companies.
2. He has bachelor's degrees in management and accounting and holds an MBA.
3. Repetition builds experience, which in turn enables a practitioner to diversify skills.
4. He answers phone calls
5. Answering the phone either leads to more paid work or greater involvement in the community.
6. He processes payrolls.
7. By adding partners with different areas of expertise.
8. The firm's skills, size, location and target market.
9. Verifying research results, confirming product quality standards, substantiating historical renovation compliance and assessing computer security risk

[1] sistema dello scadenzario spesso presente su computer, tablet e smart phone.

[2] paghe e contributi.

[3] in Italia, dichiarazione IVA.