



## ACCOUNTING CAREERS IN FOCUS

**KEVIN HART**  
Controller  
Pittsburgh Penguins

**Q: What are some of the special concerns of a controller for a hockey team?**

**A:** You have to handle personnel with more care than you would in another organization. You have young fellows making a lot of money and their superstar status creates some problems. You have to have superb people skills.

**Q: What kinds of reporting do you do?**

**A:** We have the regular reporting requirements everyone has: state, local, federal, and the reports to our lending institution. We also make reports to the National Hockey League. We let them know what's happened after each game and after each payroll.

**Q: Do you enjoy your work?**

**A:** It's a lot of fun. I enjoy talking to the league or to players or to their agents. I can walk into the locker room when I want and talk to players and coaches about questions I have for them or questions they have for me.

**Q: How did you get this job?**

**A:** I joined a big six firm out of college. I worked on the acquisition of the Penguin franchise from its previous owners. It took about four months. During that time I got familiar with the organization and they got familiar with me. They offered me the position.



### Tips from . . .

 Robert Half International Inc.

Communication is very important in a team-oriented work environment. Learn to communicate your ideas to others through written memos or verbal updates. Always keep your supervisor updated on the status of your projects.

## CAREER FACTS

**Nature of the Work:** Supervise accounting and finance, motivate and oversee staff, oversee accounts receivable, accounts payable and payroll, and meet reporting deadlines.

**Training or Education Needed:** A bachelor's degree in accounting.

**Aptitudes, Abilities, and Skills:** Accounting, time management skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills.

**Salary Range:** \$50,000 to \$100,000 depending on the team's city.

**Career Path:** Work for an accounting firm and become familiar with a variety of organizations, and then move to the right job when it becomes available.

**Thinking Critically:** In what ways could a sports team player's "superstar status" create problems for a controller?



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**MITCHELL D. SIMON, CPA**  
Partner, Arthur Andersen, LLP

**Q: Why did you focus your career on financial computer systems?**

**A:** I thought about where the market was going. In 1979, I could not have known the way the industry would take off. I just knew it would continue to evolve. The accounting profession was doing well and the computer side was in its infancy. It was a relatively simple decision.

**Q: At this point in your career, what do you enjoy most about your work?**

**A:** I do a lot of mentoring. It's fun to see people who work for me grow up.

**Q: What skills are most important?**


**A:** People skills. You have to understand the clients' needs, frustrations, and fears about all the changes they're dealing with. I'm a part-time psychologist, part-time friend, part-time advisor, part-time systems expert. None of that has anything to do with understanding a PC.

**Q: What training do you recommend for students?**

**A:** Those who progress fastest in this field already have a somewhat extensive technical background when they go to work. Students can get grassroots skills by learning programs such as JAVA. To get the basics, you need to have access to a PC, with all the traditional tools, and access to the Internet. That opens doors to get involved with current technology.



**Tips from . . .**

 **Robert Half International Inc.**

Many companies look for leadership potential in new employees. Look beyond your immediate area of responsibility. Help your colleagues, learn what motivates and inspires people, and take on new challenges.

## CAREER FACTS

**Nature of the Work:** Counsel clients on financial systems, oversee implementation, and troubleshoot.

**Training or Education Needed:** Experience in technology during school, accounting or business degree, experience in a variety of accounting situations, and continuing education.

**Aptitudes, Abilities, and Skills:** People skills, computer skills, communication skills, organizational skills, and math.

**Salary Range:** \$500,000 to \$1,000,000

**Career Path:** Gather experience in a variety of computer systems, experience in sales, and then work into supervisory capacity.

**Thinking Critically:** What kind of advice would you ask of a mentor?



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**MARC LEGETTE**  
Business Development Manager  
Kensington Technology Group

**Q: What is your job like?**

**A:** My role is to help the company grow by 200 million dollars over the next three years. We plan to do that by introducing new products and by acquisitions. I analyze the potential of products and new companies for profitability, revenue growth, and market growth.

**Q: What is your typical day like?**

**A:** I start by finding out what's going on in the market I'm interested in. If we are acquiring a new company or entering into a strategic alliance or partnership, we want to understand that company. I look at how top companies in that market are performing. I read the news releases and I get in touch with what the trends are, the new products, who's hot, and who's doing what. I look at the company's financials, find key contacts, make phone calls, and get information from the Internet.

**Q: It sounds like you need investigative skills.**

**A:** That's half the fun of it, understanding the market, where everyone is, and where they are going.

**Q: Do you really need accounting?**

**A:** I do a lot of financial analysis where my accounting background is key. In all aspects of business, you have to be able to read the numbers and make sense of them. Accounting gives you the background, information, and skills to help you go forward in your career.



**Tips from . . .**



**Robert Half International Inc.**

Business people waste about five weeks a year looking for misplaced files, addresses, memos, and reports. To reduce lost time, purge files regularly by keeping only what you need. It's also a good idea to clear your desk each evening.

### CAREER FACTS

**Nature of the Work:** Analyze in-house products for profitability, analyze companies prior to acquisition, gather information, and advise management.

**Training or Education Needed:** A bachelor's degree in accounting, an MBA, and work experience.

**Aptitudes, Abilities, and Skills:** Accounting, problem-solving skills, analytical skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills.

**Salary Range:** \$45,000 to \$150,000 depending on location, company, and industry.

**Career Path:** Gain experience in a variety of accounting areas, network into an entry-level position such as assistant product manager, and then move up into higher positions.

**Thinking Critically:** Why would you need to study the company you're going to partner with or acquire?

## ACCOUNTING CAREERS IN FOCUS

**SUSAN GORE, CPA**  
Partner, Price Waterhouse

**Q: What does your work include as a partner?**

**A:** I help companies solve complex business problems. The group I work with performs audit tests so that we can render an opinion on the financial statement of the company. We help with mergers and acquisitions, and help develop strategies to account for those mergers and acquisitions.

**Q: Did you plan to become a partner when you joined the firm out of college?**

**A:** No. I intended to get some work experience and then start teaching accounting.

**Q: What made you stay with the firm?**

**A:** I knew nothing about public accounting when I joined Price Waterhouse, but I quickly realized that there was a career progression within the firm. I always knew where the next level of promotion and responsibility was, and there were people here who could explain how to get to each level.

**Q: What are the most important attributes of a public accountant?**

**A:** A commitment to client service, quality, and integrity. You cannot be in a public accounting firm without wanting to be in a service industry, liking people, and being committed to integrity.



**Tips from . . .**



**Robert Half International Inc.**

Ethical behavior and integrity are as important in business as they are in personal relationships. Ethical behavior includes being honest with others, respecting privacy, keeping confidentiality, helping others, and treating people fairly.

## CAREER FACTS

**Nature of the Work:** Advise clients on complex accounting issues, assist with mergers and acquisitions, and audit financial statements.

**Training or Education Needed:** A bachelor's degree in accounting, and the CPA exam.

**Aptitudes, Abilities, and Skills:** Accounting, time management skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills.

**Salary Range:** \$200,000 as a new partner, and \$500,000 plus with more experience, based on shares in the company.

**Career Path:** Work for a major public accounting firm right after graduating from college. Then work as a staff accountant, senior accountant, manager, senior manager, and eventually a partner. This usually takes about 12 to 14 years.

**Thinking Critically:** How could experience in a public accounting firm help in your career?



## ACCOUNTING CAREERS IN FOCUS

### RICHARD HUISINGA

Fixed Asset Accountant/Inventory Manager  
Paging Network of St. Louis

#### Q: What's exciting about accounting?

**A:** Accounting gives me a lot of opportunities to go into other areas if I want to. For anyone who wants to move up in a company, I recommend accounting. Everything that comes into a company comes to accounting first. Whatever needs to be done in the company, they call us first. You learn about everything in the company faster than anyone. Accounting is not a dead-end job. Companies will always need people to do the numbers. That's what attracted me to accounting in the first place.

#### Q: What do you like about this particular position?

**A:** One of the fallacies of accounting is that you do a lot of repetitive number tasks. I do something different every day, from buying cars to working with financial information. There is no set pattern.

#### Q: What are your career goals?

**A:** I want to get into the buying and selling of the large assets of a company, such as vehicles, buildings, equipment and machinery, even the whole business. To be in a position to do that, you have to have control of the company. President or CEO is where I'd like to get.



#### Tips from . . .

 Robert Half International Inc.

With the growing number of small businesses, chances are good that you'll work for one. Take advantage of the opportunity at a small firm to learn about marketing, sales, public relations, and computers.

## CAREER FACTS

**Nature of the Work:** Oversee inventory, verify logs and reports, supervise other employees, participate in acquisition of assets, and keep track of assets.

**Training or Education Needed:** A bachelor's degree in accounting.

**Aptitudes, Abilities, and Skills:** Time management skills, computer skills, ten-key skills, math ability, problem-solving skills, and communication skills.

**Salary Range:** \$25,000 to \$30,000 depending on the company.

**Career Path:** Start as a staff accountant, then move up through specialized accounting positions into management.

**Thinking Critically:** Why can it be important to have information about what's happening in a company?



## ACCOUNTING CAREERS IN FOCUS

**KRIS NESLUND, CPA, LL.M.**

Tax Attorney/Director of Graduate Tax Program  
St. John Fisher College

**Q: What is your background?**

**A:** I started as a statistics professor. When I wanted a change, I looked for something that would be interesting and in wide demand. I jumped into financial accounting, got my CPA, then moved into tax. I discovered that to do first-class tax work, you had to have a law degree. So I went on to law school, but you learn next to nothing about tax law. Then the next step was to get an LL.M., a master of laws, to get the tax training.

**Q: Is it worth eight years of school and two years in public accounting?**

**A:** With all the ways you can sell your skills, it is. There are probably only one out of ten or twenty tax attorneys who have a CPA. That makes it easier to get into the top of the field. A CPA with a law degree is in a stronger position than a CPA who doesn't have one when it comes to dealing with the tax authorities. You have the lawyer's argument skills as well as the law knowledge. As an attorney, having the CPA license makes it easier to talk to your client's CPA as an equal when you are called in to consult on tax issues.

**Q: What does a tax attorney do?**

**A:** They help businesses design comprehensive tax strategies, such as deciding what kind of business to operate. They prepare the legal documents necessary to implement those strategies, and they handle high-end disputes with the IRS and state tax authorities.



**Tips from . . .**

**RHI Robert Half International Inc.**

Many companies offer educational reimbursement. Take advantage of your company's program to learn while you work. Take classes in speaking and writing, and learn more about computers or tax laws.

### CAREER FACTS

**Nature of the Work:** Advise client on tax strategies; prepare legal documents; represent the client in disputes with the IRS or state tax authorities.

**Training or Education Needed:** A bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, or economics; the CPA exam; and a law degree.

**Aptitudes, Abilities, and Skills:** Time management skills, analytical skills, decision-making skills, logic, accounting, problem-solving skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills.

**Salary Range:** \$60,000 to \$200,000 average, depending on the company, and up to \$300,000 to \$700,000 with experience.

**Career Path:** Most tax attorneys with a CPA and a law degree find work right out of college.

**Thinking Critically:** Why might it be worth more schooling to move into a high-level accounting position?