

# The Countdown Has Begun...

Getting through year end can be a stress-filled, time-pressured, and overall chaotic effort for controllers and accounting teams.

Alleviate the madness with a proactive process.

Based on years of helping clients power through the close and preparing for the audit, our handy checklist will set you up for a smoother experience.



## Plan It Out

- Gather the Team**  
Pull together the right team. Remember to include both internal and external constituents and stakeholders (including legal counsel).
- Factor in Flexibility**  
Something always goes wrong – from late adjusting journal entries to unexpected audit requests. Factor in extra time to deal with surprises.
- Build a Calendar**  
Plot out deliverables and share the expectations and deadlines with the rest of the team. Include other key dates (such as company meetings and holidays) to identify and resolve bottlenecks before they arise.
- Look Over Last Year's Audit**  
What worked well and what wasn't so great? Check in with last year's team and get their perspective on what went well and what caught them off guard. Craft your plan around what you discover – build on your successes and avoid repeating missteps.
- Address the Auditors**  
Minimize the surprises. Bring up significant changes and risks with your audit partner. Discuss areas of concern your auditor may have with your company, including past results and any changes in audit focus. Air out the trouble spots ASAP.

## Define Roles & Responsibilities

- Break It Out**  
List every deliverable and schedule used in compiling the financial statements, footnotes and audit requests (PBCs).
- Assign Responsibility at All Levels**  
Name who will own each deliverable (preparer and approver) and due date.
- Add Key Items to Close Checklist**  
Capture key year-end items in December and January month end close check lists. The same team is completing much of the work and seeing them together allows for clearer alignment.
- Review Team Capacity**  
Take a hard look at the calendar and checklists compared to team capacity (e.g. What work can be moved around; Where are bottlenecks likely; Is there a need for short term support staff?).
- Review the Auditor PBC List with the Auditor**  
Make sure you clearly understand what is required -don't assume (e.g., does "listing of all journal entries" mean all non-automated journal entries or all journal entries including system-generated entries? Is there a specific format required for any deliverable?).
- Track Progress**  
Schedule and conduct regular status meetings with all key stakeholders. Make sure the deliverables are on schedule, or reassign resources if a gap opens up.

# 2024 Year End Checklist

## Conduct These Reviews Before Year End

### Review the Prior Year's SAB 99

Have you dealt with all the underlying issues?

### Review SOX Deficiencies

Were last year's problem areas addressed?

### Ascertain If You Are Subject to Any New ASUs

Have you reviewed and formally documented why you're not subject to any new ASUs?

### Review Reconciliations

We often find companies performing roll-forwards rather than true account reconciliations. Roll-forwards make footnote disclosures and audit schedules a challenge if you have to chase down underlying transactional data and supporting documentation.

### Taxes

Connect with your tax provider to understand significant changes in 2024 that may impact your business to ensure you are prepared and can respond to information requests.

### Review Large/Unusual Transactions

Do you have a properly-prepared technical accounting memo to support the transaction's accounting entries? Does it cite the appropriate authoritative guidance? Where's the supporting documentation?

### Review High-risk Areas

Ensure your accounting is accurate and properly supported for the tricky spots like debt (changes in debt, restructuring), equity (including options, RSUs, repricings, modifications, stock-based compensation), revenue and valuation of financial and nonfinancial assets, to name just a few.

### Going Concern Analysis

Preparing this in advance gives you more time to take action (i.e. obtain financing) to alleviate an issue.

## Communicate Well

### Keep Everyone Informed

Have a plan for updating the team throughout the process. Schedule regular status meetings with key stakeholders ahead of time.

### Prepare for Problems

Who needs to be updated ASAP when you're thrown a curve ball, and what's the best way to share the information?

Align on what would be considered a problem (e.g. what aggregated dollar amount, same root causes, etc.).

## Stay Calm & Support the Team

### Be Creative

Teams are more stressed and tired than ever – overstressed and overtired people are more prone to burnout and making mistakes. Find ways to ease the stress for you and the team. Every culture is different and you know your team best – find what works for you.

Here are some ideas to think about

- Hold a contest for the oddest audit questions.
- Send notes of appreciation, gift cards, treats, or another tangible sign that you noticed the hard work – and that you care.
- Hold office hours for your team to come to you with any concerns they may have or just to chat.
- Treat the team to a lunch/dinner outing once the audit is completed.



## Special Areas for Consideration

Due to regulatory changes and the volatile economic environment, supply chain challenges, and geopolitical uncertainty and conflict, there are a few areas that may need extra attention:

### Cybersecurity

In 2023, the SEC put in place new rules requiring disclosure of assessment, identification and management of cybersecurity risks, including management's role in assessing and managing and the Board's oversight. This process requires cross functional communication with Legal, INFOSEC and beyond. It's a lot to disclose and there is usually very little time to pull all the relevant information together after an incident has occurred. Don't get caught out: be prepared.

### Impairment Testing

Build a flexible model to stress test your assumptions, especially regarding demand for product/services and disruptions to supply chain.

### Reduction in Force (RIF)

If you've had a RIF, remember to reassess overhead allocations and expected term assumptions on equity awards. International post-employment benefit plans may have different recognition timing than US plans.

### Accounting Estimates

Review and update assumptions for accounting estimates, such as revenue reserves, variable revenue consideration, inventory assumptions in current market conditions, impairment of right of use assets and intangible assets, etc.

### Contract Modifications

Review your accounting treatment for any contract modifications such as negotiated lease concessions, extended payment terms granted to customers or modifications to equity awards, just to name a few.

### Update Disclosures

Consider if the company is affected by recent accounting and regulatory pronouncements including those related to accounting and disclosures for crypto assets, income tax disclosures, reportable segments disclosures, alignment of FASB disclosure requirements with SEC disclosure requirements, and new SPAC disclosures and reporting requirements for shell companies.

# Need to calm the chaos for your year end close?

## We're here to help.

Connect with Dave Roberson,  
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