

# Inside Accounting: 'There's Room among the Pencil Pushers for Creative Types Like Me'

Date : June 27, 2011



*JB King is a director at Ernst & Young, one of the world's largest professional services firms and one of the Big Four accounting firms, along with Deloitte, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers. The Big Four handle most of the financial audits for publicly traded companies. But don't expect to see King accessorizing with a pencil and green plastic visor anytime soon. In this essay, King describes a very different view of life as an employee at a Big Four accounting firm.*

One minute thirty seconds 'till show time. Everyone's on the set except me, the host. I need to find my marked-up script, to be "miked", ear piece inserted, lipstick applied. I slide into the seat, the stylist trailing behind, a tube of scarlet color in hand. Thirty seconds to go. The intro music is running now. The director asks me to nod if I can hear her. The floor manager directs my attention now to camera one, his fingers counting down: five, four, three, two, one. The red light illuminates and we're live.

Sound like a typical morning for the Today Show's Ann Curry in the studio at 30 Rockefeller Center? If it were, I'd have been driven there in a chauffeured limousine and be pulling down seven figures a year. As it is, I traveled by tube through the underground to a less renowned studio in London to moderate this gig for — would you believe it — Ernst & Young. Yes, the accounting firm, with which I've been employed as a director for the past five years.

## **The Next Barbara Walters?**

When we think of accounting, most of us picture a pencil, green plastic visor, and an Excel spreadsheet. While all the fundamentals of accounting are at the core of our business, not all of Ernst & Young's 140,000 employees around the globe make their living reviewing the books and records of other companies, large and small. A big part of our business is in what we call advisory services.

Our advisory practice works with large enterprises and government institutions on their most pressing issues such as managing risk, protecting their business and improving performance — finding ways to cut costs, for example, to enhance profits. Many times the answers involve changing the way things get done or using new and different information

---

technology.

That's where I come in. As executive director of marketing for global banking and capital markets, my job is to make bankers more aware of our expertise in addressing these issues. Others at Ernst & Young have jobs like mine except they deal with issues in different industries such as life sciences, consumer products, or oil and gas.

I confess I started out with aspirations of becoming the next Barbara Walters, but not all of us are destined for the big time and the big bucks. I worked in radio and television in small markets, both behind the scenes and as on-air "talent." After five years, I achieved the distinction of being the highest paid radio news director of an AM/FM station outside of Richmond, Va: a whopping \$13,000 a year. I soon parlayed my communication skills into a job at an advertising and public relations agency.

There I learned how to "pitch" new business as well as create multimedia presentations and ultimately started in bank marketing. Fast forward 15 years — during which I served as head of marketing and operations for a mortgage broker and ran creative services globally for a major New York-based investment bank with a staff of 200 and an operating budget annually of \$30 million — and you can start to see how I ended up in my current position.

### **Confident and Diplomatic**

Along the way, I've gotten my hands dirty in virtually every nook and cranny in marketing and communications: video and audio production; writing and editing — be it billboards or 15,000-word business case studies — high-end four-color brochures, magazines and print production; direct mail, direct marketing and telemarketing; computer-based multimedia sales presentations, and more commonly these days, websites, webcasts, social media releases and search engine marketing. All of those skills come into play in the job I have now, where the salary is way better than being a radio news director but not nearly as lucrative as being Ann Curry.

My schedule — up to 50 hours a week — can be demanding, with regular 7:00 a.m. calls to Australia, Europe and Japan. On any given day, you may find me developing a question guide for a survey of the world's largest banks, coaching our partners on how to tell our story when they're interviewed by reporters (I need to be confident and diplomatic and able to hold my own among senior-level execs), reviewing the layout of a brochure on customer loyalty, writing copy for our website, and yes, stepping in front of the camera to play talk show host.

This is all by way of saying there's room among the pencil pushers for creative types like me. Maybe for you, too. No green plastic visor needed to apply.

### Related Links

- [Ernst & Young](#)
- [Wall Street Journal Accounting News](#)
- [YouTube: Day in the Life of an Accountant](#)
- [Careers in Accounting](#)
- [Webcasts and Podcasts with JB King](#)
- [Big Four Accounting Firms](#)