

Accounting Firms Notch 4th Year of Workforce Gains

Employment Up 4.4%,
Top Spots Unchanged

By JANE YU

Orange County's largest accounting firms combined to grow the sector's local workforce by about 4% over the past year, marking the fourth straight year of modest gains.

This week's Special Report includes a list of the largest accounting firms with operations in the county. The list is ranked by local employees.

The 53 firms have a combined 4,630 local workers, up by 197, or 4.4%, from a year earlier. That followed previous annual gains of 4%, 2% and 5%. Job totals fell each year between mid-2008 and mid-2011.



The firms have 1,507 certified public accountants here, about 32% of their local workforce.

The list includes other information, such as the number of jobs firmwide and the number of partners, though those don't affect the rankings. The firms' job growth in Orange County lagged their



Wright: Wright Ford Young in third year of double-digit growth



Pinnell: Haskell & White had increased transactional work

firms accounted for 45% of the employee total in Orange County and for 90% of the firmwide totals.

■ **Deloitte LLP** maintains the No. 1 spot with 782 employees in OC, up by 3%. The firm is also the biggest in terms of the overall number of employees, with 210,400.

■ **KPMG LLP** is No. 2, with 460 employees. That was up by 41, or nearly 10%. The local increase was part of its overall net hire of 25,455 for a total of 180,635.

■ **Ernst & Young LLP** is No. 3, with 419 employees here, up nearly 3%. The firmwide total was up 14% to 190,000.

■ The OC workforce for **PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP**, No. 4, grew 2% to 392. Its overall employee base grew 11% to top

increase firmwide to 40,197.

■ Irvine-based **Wright Ford Young & Co.** moved up four spots to No. 13 with 75 employees, up by 11 over the past year, the biggest raw-number increase among firms with headquarters in OC.

"We are now into our third year of double-digit growth," Managing Director **Robert Wright** said. "In order to reduce the strain on our team and to accommodate our growing client base, we have hired and/or promoted people at every level in the firm. We feel this is a required investment for the long-term values we hold for ourselves and our clients. We believe great client service cannot be generated by a tired, over-taxed team."

■ Irvine-based **Haskell & White LLP** moved up one spot to No. 19 with a 9% increase here to 61. Five others work in its San Diego office.

Managing Partner **Wayne Pinnell** said increased activity in transactional work, such as initial public offerings and secondary offerings, has been a strong driver of business growth, helping the firm recently wrap up its "third straight year of growth after the recession in terms of revenues and profits."

"We like to be involved in transactional work whether it's public or private," Pinnell said. "There's an advantage in the public company due to the recurring nature, like the quarterly reporting. ... Outbound and inbound international work continues to increase, as well. There's a lot of inbound investments due to the strength of the dollar. And there's also clients who have established offices offshore, and we're able to handle those relationships and help with their international business needs."

Firms with decreases in their OC operations included Los Angeles-based **HCVT LLP**,

No. 12, which cut its workforce here by 12% to 92. Its firmwide employee total grew 10% to 412.

■ **CBIZ/Mayer Hoffman McCann PC**, No. 27, saw its workforce drop from 79 to 36 here over the past year, primarily due to the recent sale of part of its local practice, according to the firm. The Cleveland-based firm, in the meantime, added 195 workers overall for a total of 4,332.

This year's list has three newcomers:

■ **Davis Farr LLP** in Irvine was established when 35 accountants left CBIZ to form the firm, which focuses on nonprofit and government work.

■ Anaheim-based **Benjamin & Young LLP** debuted at No. 47 with 17 employees here, up by seven.

■ **Andersen Tax LLC**, which landed at No. 48, is a newly formed tax specialist with a corporate office in San Francisco. It has 16 employees in its Irvine office, part of a workforce of 1,050.

Andersen Tax, previously known as **WTAS**, was founded in 2002 by 23 former **Arthur Andersen** partners.

It had grown internationally and last year acquired the rights to the brand name Andersen and decided to rename the firm to Andersen Tax.

The Orange County office opened in January, and **Chad Thiel** joined as managing director of the local operations.

"The OC office is very fast growing," Thiel said. "We have exceeded our growth plan both in revenue and in people already this year. One of the key factors to our success is our focus on the family office niche, wealthy individuals, and middle-market companies." ■

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ACCOUNTING FIRMS

Rank	Company	Headquarters	OC employees	Firmwide employees	OC CPAs	OC partners	OC management consultants	Percent breakdown of accounting			Primary industries served	Top local official(s)
Prev. Rank	Address	Website Email	yearly % change	yearly % change	yearly % change	yearly % change	yearly % change	Audit	Tax	Other		Title Phone/fax
19 (20)	Haskell & White LLP 300 Spectrum Center Drive, Ste. 300 Irvine 92618-4987	Irvine hwcpa.com inquiries@hwcpa.com	61 9%	66 6%	30 0%	7 0%	0 NA	52%	48%	0%	Real estate, manufacturing/distribution, technology, medical/biopharmaceuticals, nonprofit, mergers/acquisitions, SEC	Wayne Pinnell managing partner (949) 450-6200/(949) 450-6201