

MEMBER PROFILE

DAVID PESTRAK, CPA, CA

CONTROLLER

AUDI WINNIPEG / ST. JAMES VOLKSWAGEN



CPA

CHARTERED
PROFESSIONAL
ACCOUNTANTS
MANITOBA



As controller on the senior management team at Audi Winnipeg and St. James Volkswagen, David Pestrak, CPA, CA has an office that overlooks the showroom floor. During business hours, customers can be seen walking around brand-new vehicles that sparkle under the bright, white lights from above. After hours, bright lights often shine down on Pestrak and his guitar in venues across Manitoba and beyond as he performs with his country music band.

“Ever since I can remember, I’ve played guitar - it’s really become a part of my identity. I took lessons for a number of years, taught myself to play certain styles, and constantly worked at it. Music is something I’ve just always had a passion for,” explains Pestrak.

Pestrak grew up in West St. Paul and attended St. Paul’s High School. The son (and brother) of a designated accountant, he had a first-hand perspective on what he could expect from a career in accounting and the flexibility it could offer.

“My dad was one of my biggest role models, but as far as my career was concerned, I wasn’t sure what exactly I wanted to do. I was always interested in business and I also knew I wanted to pursue music as well.”

After high school, Pestrak enrolled in classes at the University of Manitoba with an eye on accomplishing both of his goals.

“During my second year of university, the Asper School of Business launched its co-op program; I enrolled and landed a job with Deloitte. It was a really great experience with a great group of people, and it felt like I was in the right place. At that point, I knew that I would follow in my dad’s footsteps and pursue an accounting designation.”

At the same time though, he was writing and performing his music whenever he could.

“It was definitely a busy time,” explains Pestrak with a laugh. “I was actually playing in a wedding band at the time, but was also writing and playing my own original music for friends, family, and pretty well any place I could find where people wanted to listen.”

Before long, friends, family and fans were encouraging him to take the next step in his musical career.

“I believe that you should find a way and the time to do the things you

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want to do in life, because you never really know if those opportunities will always be there,” he explains.

Following his own advice, he loaded his guitar in the trunk of his car, and drove down to Nashville, Tennessee—the epicenter of country music.

“I met so many great people down there and had a lot of amazing experiences, but I was also still committed to my accounting education and continued to pursue both. Over the next couple of years, I would do a school semester, then a co-op work term, and then head back to Nashville for a few months.”

Along the way, Pestrak recorded an album on the famed Music Row, earned his accounting designation, and performed at a wide-range of venues, including the world-famous Bluebird Café in Nashville, a venue that has played host to country superstar Garth Brooks before anyone knew who he was. More recently, the venue was featured in ABC's hit TV drama Nashville.

"Deloitte was very supportive of both passions, but were especially supportive in providing the training and opportunities required to take those first steps toward my accounting career. The people there were amazing and I got to work on a number of very interesting projects over the years."

All told, Pestrak spent more than eight years working at Deloitte, concluding his time there in the role of manager.

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"I definitely remember some especially unique projects, like being part of the audit team during the transition of the Canadian Wheat Board from a single desk to a private grain company, now under a different name. I also had the opportunity to work on a number of public company audits, and experienced one in particular go through a number of major acquisitions."

Earlier this year, Pestrak took on his current role at Audi Winnipeg and St. James Volkswagen. The company is in the middle of building a state-of-the-art over 70,000 square-foot, multi-million dollar Audi dealership at Seasons of Tuxedo, across from IKEA on Sterling Lyon Parkway.

"During my first week in the new position back in February, the dealer principal took me down to the new location construction site, and at that point it was just a big hole in the ground. It's amazing how quickly that changed; it's been a really fascinating project to be a part of. I've essentially been quarterbacking a number of aspects of the project to ensure no detail is overlooked. This ranges from tracking timelines of special tools and other items that need to be ordered and shipped from Germany, to developing the organizational charts, helping with the split of the company both from a legal and accounting perspective, right down to decisions on what kind of coffee we will provide to guests. When we open, we will have a world-class experience for our guests."

Pesttrak is thankful that his accounting designation has provided the tools to thrive in his new role.

"One of the biggest things my accounting designation taught me was time management and the art of prioritizing. That's a constant consideration now more than ever, being in such a fast-paced environment and always juggling deadlines. There is a balance of projects from our home office here locally, as well as specific reporting deadlines from AutoCanada, our head office in Edmonton. It is a multifaceted role and I'm really enjoying it. I've always had a passion for cars and the car industry so it's a perfect fit."

Pesttrak has some advice for those considering an accounting designation.

"Do it. It's amazing how big and long the program can seem at first, but trust me—once you get through it, it seems like you blink and it's done. Plus, there are so many different opportunities and areas that your accounting designation can help you with. For me, it helped me understand the music business. At the end of the day, if you want

to sing professionally, it's important to understand the finances and business side of it. As an example, the costs of producing an album and all the different ways to approach it, to me, make more sense when you look at them with an accounting-based approach."

Pesttrak's time in the music industry has also enabled him to have some unique experiences.

"Through a chance encounter I got to meet country singer Brad Paisley. We talked about guitars a bit and he eventually invited me backstage. During his sound check he handed me his guitar and let me play. He was so down to earth and it was just such an amazing experience to meet someone who has influenced my musical career like he has."

Although accountants have all kinds of passions and interests, some people find it surprising that the entertainer they see during the weekend on stage is also an accountant during the week.

"After a show, I'm sometimes asked if I am doing music full time and when I tell them I'm an accountant they're completely shocked. I always tell people that even though both passions seem very different on the surface, they do share a number of similar aspects. As an accountant, you need to be creative and consider different alternatives to make business goals and ideas successful. In music, I find different ways to make the notes and lyrics work together so that songs can be successful. Each has helped me be successful in the other, and at the end of the day, the common denominator of both is their relation to

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business and financial success."

As for if he would ever consider a country music song about accounting:

"I actually have thought about doing that," Pestrak says with a laugh, "it hasn't happened yet but one day it will, I'm sure! That would definitely bring it full circle for me."

