20 MILE CONSULTING

FREE GUIDE

5 Signs You Need a New Property Accounting Team

A candid checklist for property management companies and real estate investment firms.

Charles Rushman, CPA
Founder, 20 Mile Consulting

CLEAN BOOKS. FASTER SCALE. MORE PROFIT.

Your accounting team should make your job easier. Not harder.

Running real estate is hard enough right now. Higher rates, rising insurance costs, tighter margins, and investors who expect more transparency than ever. Your accounting team should be one of the few things you don't have to worry about.

Yet across the industry, I see the same story over and over: owners and operators putting up with late reports, slow answers, and books that only close when leadership steps in to fix them. It has often been that way for so long that it starts to feel normal.

It isn't. If any of the five signs below sound familiar, it may be time for a change.

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At the end, you'll find a 60-second scorecard to see where your team stands.

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SIGN ONE

01 Month-end financials consistently arrive late

The 15th of the month is the industry standard for preliminary accrual-basis financials. The 10th is the standard for cash-basis owner statements.

In my opinion, those deadlines are already a low floor. Unless your team inherited an ongoing cleanup project, there is no excuse for missing them. Yet in this industry it's common to see reports land on the 17th, the 20th, or later. We recently picked up a client who fired their previous firm because their financials were **five months behind**.

Late reports don't stay contained

A missed close date isn't just an accounting problem. It rolls downhill:

- **Mistakes get fixed a month late.** When issues surface after the books are out, the corrections can't be made until the following month.
- **Distributions get pushed.** Owners and investors wait on cash because no one can confirm what's available.
- **Investor reporting slips.** Quarterly investor updates and lender packages all depend on the monthly close.
- **Decisions get made on stale data.** By the time a problem shows up on the P&L, it may be six weeks old.
- **Investor confidence erodes.** Few things say "we don't have a handle on this deal" like reports that are always late.

> **ASK YOURSELF**
>
> **What day of the month did your last three sets of financials actually arrive?**

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Prelims by the 15th (accrual) and owner statements by the 10th (cash), every month, without anyone having to chase them.

02

SIGN TWO

Every report request or question turns into a scramble

When you request a report or question a number, they have to scramble to find the answer.

A REQUEST THAT SHOULD BE EASY

"Client X's CPA is asking for a breakdown of this year's CAPEX because they're performing a cost segregation study. Can you pull it for them?"

With clean data, that request takes **15 minutes, at most**. CAPEX should already be coded to the right accounts, tied to invoices, and easy to pull by property and period.

I vividly remember an investor at one of our new clients asking us for exactly this, and it turning into a complete fire drill. When the books aren't built right, a simple request becomes days of digging through invoices, bank statements, and old email threads.

Speed is a symptom of quality

How quickly your team answers tells you how well they know your books. A team that truly owns your ledger can explain a variance, pull support, or break down a balance quickly, because they recorded it correctly in the first place. A team that has to scramble is usually discovering the answer at the same time you are.

ASK YOURSELF

When I reach out to accounting for something, do they get me what I need in a reasonable amount of time?

If the answer is no, it might be time to make a change.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Routine requests (CAPEX detail, a GL breakdown, invoice support, a variance explanation) turned around quickly, with backup attached.

03

SIGN THREE

They're oblivious to how real estate works

It amazes me how many people doing property accounting have no idea how the business actually works. That gap has only widened as more of these roles have moved overseas. Can your accountant explain:

- [ ] Why NOI is so important, and what happens to value when it moves?
- [ ] How the loan works: escrows, reserves, and DSCR covenants?
- [ ] How utility billing and RUBS recoveries work?
- [ ] How insurance is paid and accounted for over the policy term?
- [ ] How underwriting and budgets shape the way a deal is run and judged?

~$167K

WHY IT MATTERS

A $10,000 capital improvement booked as an operating expense lowers NOI by $10,000. At a 6% cap rate, that's roughly **$167,000 of value** that disappears on paper.

Get out of the spreadsheet

When I worked at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, our controller had us go out into the field once or twice a quarter to work alongside the local branches. On the surface, sending the bean counters to work at a rental car branch sounds ridiculous. In reality, it was one of the most valuable experiences I've had. I learned the pain points firsthand: why certain expenses were what they were, why emails didn't get answered right away, and how messy it gets in the trenches. **It made me a better accountant.**

I'm pro-offshoring, and I use offshore talent at a high level on my own team. But one of the biggest arguments against going *fully* offshore is that industry nuance is what makes a good property accountant, and that knowledge is very difficult to transfer abroad via SOPs and slide decks. It requires a real US-based presence, and people who have actually worked in the industry.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Accountants who understand the deal, not just the debits and credits, and flag issues because they know what the numbers mean.

04

SIGN FOUR

Closing the books requires heavy input from leadership

PM leadership or asset management has to step in for the books to close accurately.

Some back-and-forth is normal. Requests for basic reclasses and coding changes happen. And there are things the accounting team simply wouldn't know without feedback from the people on the ground. For example: *Unit 4 had $4,000 in turn costs this month, but the bill hasn't been received yet.*

But there's a line. There's a difference between feedback and notes, and hand-holding. And there's a bigger difference when management has to carry their accounting team because the team doesn't know what it's doing.

HEALTHY FEEDBACK

- ✓ Occasional reclass or coding corrections
- ✓ A heads-up on unbilled work so it can be accrued
- ✓ Context on unusual, one-time items
- ✓ Final review and sign-off on the package

RED FLAGS

- ✗ Leadership reviewing coding line by line every month
- ✗ The same mistakes showing up month after month
- ✗ Re-explaining accruals, prepaids, or CAPEX treatment
- ✗ Management fixing reports before they go to owners

> **Managing these deals is hard enough. Doing the accounting at the same time makes it almost impossible to win.**

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE Leadership's role in the close is context and final review, not correction.

05

SIGN FIVE

AI isn't a core part of their daily workflow

Last but not least, everyone's favorite topic: AI.

Most people use AI for basic tasks like proofreading, building decks, and researching topics. Those are useful, but they only scratch the surface of what this technology can do for an accounting team. Ask yours:

- [ ] Are they building a library of **skills** in tools like Claude for repetitive tasks, recurring entries, and reporting?
- [ ] Are they building **agents** that enter AP invoices faster and with higher accuracy?
- [ ] Are they using AI to **review GL detail** and flag potential mistakes before the books go out?
- [ ] Are they actively looking for **new ways to get more efficient** and improve their individual output?

> **THE BOTTOM LINE**
>
> **If the answer isn't an emphatic yes to all or most of these, a huge opportunity is being missed.**

The teams building AI into their everyday work will close faster, catch more errors, and get more done with the same headcount. The teams that don't will keep falling further behind.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

AI built into how invoices are entered, books are reviewed, and reports are produced, with an accountant still responsible for every number.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The 60-second scorecard

Check every statement that's true for your current accounting team.

- [ ] **01** Our prelims regularly arrive after the 15th, or our owner statements after the 10th.
- [ ] **02** Simple requests (CAPEX detail, GL support, variance questions) take days instead of hours.
- [ ] **03** Our accountants couldn't explain why NOI, accruals, or CAPEX treatment matter to our deals.
- [ ] **04** Leadership or asset management spends real time every month correcting the books.
- [ ] **05** Our accounting team can't name specific ways AI makes their work faster or more accurate.

0

You have a keeper

Your team is an asset. Make sure they know it.

1

Have the conversation

Raise it directly and set a clear expectation and deadline.

2+

Time to evaluate a change

These issues rarely fix themselves, and they compound every month.

Did a few of these hit close to home?

We're always happy to talk through what you're seeing with your current team, whether or not we end up working together.

HOW 20 MILE MEASURES UP AGAINST THE 5 SIGNS

01	TIMELY CLOSE	**8-business-day close, guaranteed.** 82% of our portfolio closes by the 8th.
02	FAST ANSWERS	**12-minute median response time** to client emails.
03	INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE	**CPA-led**, with years of hands-on experience in real estate operations.
04	OWNERSHIP	**We own the close.** Your team reviews; we do the heavy lifting.
05	AI-FORWARD	**Skills and agents** built into our daily workflow.

ABOUT 20 MILE CONSULTING

20 Mile Consulting is a CPA-led property bookkeeping and fractional controller firm serving property management companies and real estate investment firms. We pair US-based CPA oversight with a dedicated, highly trained team in Latin America.

Our team ran the accounting together inside a vertically integrated real estate firm before launching 20 Mile in late 2025, with one mission: **to solve the real estate accounting crisis by making world-class accounting accessible to firms of all sizes.**

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