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They say death and taxes are certain, but you can definitely add the complexity of the tax system to the mix. With that in mind, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has launched an income tax infraction assistant for employers. This is a new online assistant to help small businesses calculate income tax advances with greater ease. According to the IRS, the new form has been simplified while increasing the transparency of the retention system. This is made possible by the redesign of the withholding tax system, which is no longer based on retention benefits. This new system will enter into force on 1 January 2020. For small businesses, that means it's easier to figure out the right amount of federal income tax to withhold what their employees earn. All you have to do is fill out the newly redesigned 2020 form W-4, Employee's Withholding Certificate. The IRS says this is the result of collaboration in the private segment, specifically the payroll community. IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig explains how this happened in the press release. Rettig says: We have been working closely with the payroll community and other partners to improve the withholding process. As part of this, and based on feedback from partners, the IRS has created a new spreadsheet-based tool to help small businesses navigate the various situations their employees participate in to help ensure an adequate degree of retention. Income tax performer assistant employers if the employer who guess withholding tax by hand, a worksheet, a percentage method or wage brackets tables, the assistant helps. However, employers using automated payroll systems will not need this new assistant. This is because the system that is in place is not the math for them. With the assistant, you can create a profile for each employee and automatically calculate the correct federal income tax advance source. After you create the profiles, enter the frequency of the payment period (as a weekly, two-week, or monthly example). You can track this by specifying the employee's version of W-4 and entering information about the request. The information must be in the employee's W-4 form. If the data is in place, save a copy of the spreadsheet with the employee's name. All you have to do in each payment period is to open the file and enter the wage or pay amount. The table then displays the corresponding amount of federal income tax withheld. Simplifying the tax code Since 2000, the U.S. tax code has expanded by more than 37,000 words a year, according to the National Taxpayers Union Foundation (NTU). On average, this comes out to 417 changes each year. To keep all the changes you can work on by yourself. And these changes give small businesses the headache by announcing taxes year after year. Despite the fact that the new form and the assistant are a step in the right direction, more needs to be done for small entrepreneurs. Employers' Income Tax Assistant is available free of charge in Microsoft Excel. You can download it here. Picture: Depositphotos.com More: Popular articles november 27, 2006 9 min read reviews expressed by contractor contributors on their own. From guard dogs to Las Vegas-style showgirl costumes, there's no limit to what people will try to write off at tax time for the sake of their business. But where do you draw the line? What descriptions are you trying to describe, going too far? We've assembled a team of three top tax attorneys to get advice on how far it is in the land of tax cuts. Our team of experts includes Cliff Ennico, a Connecticut-based business lawyer who specializes in consulting small businesses and entrepreneurs; Donna LeValley, tax lawyer and editor of J.K. Lasser's annual tax guidance; and Alvin S. Brown, a tax lawyer who previously worked with the IRS's senior counsel's office for more than 25 years. Tax description: Travel expenses Here's a description that can sometimes be difficult to decide where to draw the line. Can you deduct the cost of the Cirque du Soleil show in Las Vegas if you're treating your client? The answer is yes, as long as you can prove that it is a business expense. And what if the spouse goes along the journey? As long as they're a partner or employee of your business and have attended conventions or meetings the trip has taken together, then his travel and 50 percent of his meals are deductible. Expert opinion: You can deduct travel expenses and 50 percent of the related food and entertainment when your trip is reasonably related to your business, explains Cliff Ennico. How to Do It Right: Here's a tip from Donna LeValley that could come in handy for your next business trip: Grab an envelope from the stationary drawer in your hotel room and post all the receipts to make the trip inside. Label the envelope with a name and date to make it easier to remember your trip. The more accurate the records are, the more likely the IRS is to accept and validate them if you are placed in a control position. Tax Description: Cell Phone Bill If you use your cell phone as part of your business, this could be a great deduction for you. So don't make the mistake of mixing business pleasure with sneaking too many personal calls onto your cell phone bill. Expert opinion: Since the way a cell phone can be used, it has come under control, so people need to keep a good record and keep an actual phone bill so they can prove that most calls were for business calls, explains LeValley. How to Do It Right: Take a look at your cell phone bill to make sure you get an itemized report. Because phones are classified as listed property, you need to keep detailed records of their use. In the case of landlines, it's a good idea to have a separate phone number for your business, since the IRS won't let you ingt the cost of a phone in your home to your home office. Tax description: Home Office Home office deductions used to be a big red flag for a check back in the 1990s. These days, you just have to use the deduction carefully. A basic rule of thumb to follow? Anything that is unusual and disproportionate to income levels is something the IRS will control, Alvin Brown says. So how do you define your actual home office space? This is the area of your home dedicated solely to running your business. Once you figure out the percentage of your home office relative to your entire home, you can go back to your heating bills, electricity bills and all the other bills that go to your supportive home and figure out the amount you can deduct from running your business. Expert opinion: Do not measure your home office space. If so, you can almost always shortchange yourself, says Ennico. How to Do It Right: It's a good idea for an entrepreneur to measure the space professionally. They can provide you with a letter covering the exact floor space of your home office space you need to certify it to the IRS. Tax description: Home Office Computer As our experts have previously pointed out, it's not a good idea to mix the business world with your personal life. So they recommend never using your home office computer for personal tasks if you can help it. Expert opinion: If this is the only computer in the house, you should calculate the percentage of total time you use for business purposes, suggests Ennico. How to Do It Right: Ideally, the best option is to purchase a laptop and dedicate it to your personal computer. This way you can avoid messy situations that come with audit time. Tax description: Rent wondering if you can still take a home office deduction if you're a tenant? The answer is yes. But you need to know how to do the right thing. Expert opinion: If the landlord has an individual or unpersonality business, such as a partnership or LLC, says Ennico, they might send IRS form 1099 to the landlord in January each year showing how much of the rent you're deducting. How to do it right: In order to manage this deduction properly, it's a good idea to check with your accountant for details. Tax write-off: Personal expenses This is a category of business owners can easily get into trouble if they are not careful. The point is that it is simply not possible to deduct services of a purely personal nature that are not related to your business. For example, you can't deduct such home services from gardening, landscaping and tree removal simply because you work out of a home Expert Expert People start getting into trouble when they try to make personal expenses for business costs, says LeValley. How to Do It Right: If you have doubts about whether a cost can be deducted from your business, LeValley recommends getting a second opinion. I think that even if you're very capable, and even if you've had some experience of your own, LeValley says, it's always good to be called financial screening every now and then. Tax Description: Guard Dog In order for a dog to qualify for the company guard dog, it helps, says Ennico, if you're a little afraid of the animal yourself (picture of Rottweiler, Pit Bull or German Shepherd). Believe it or not, it's a legal description, if correct. Expert opinion: Ennico points out how to use it: You will only be able to deduct that portion of your entire time dedicated to guard-dog duty. How to do it right: While it may seem rather obvious, the dog is most well guarded by inventory. Another interesting delicacy: Although you can deduct expenses related to the dog, you cannot deduct the dog itself. But you can amortize it over your expected lifespan as defined by a local breeder. Who would have thought? Tax description: Work-related uniform or costume the dos and do not post this tax description is quite simple: If the dress or uniform is something you can wear outside the work, you can not describe it. However, if it is obvious that you can only wear it for the tasks of your specific work, it is a description. So a new suit wouldn't suit you, as you can wear it in places other than your work environment. How about a clown's clown? That's another matter. Expert opinion: LeValley urges taxpayers to go for a write-off if it's a legal cost. If the cost is real, take it, he says. It may be weird, it may be big, but whatever it is, if it's real, be prepared to justify it, but don't be afraid to do it. How to Do It Right: The perfect example of some rather unusual outfits you can describe involves a Las Vegas showgirl who tried to describe the tight, sequined costumes she bought for her performances. LeValley says the showgirl was told she couldn't draw the costumes as they were clothes and could wear them elsewhere. To prove that this theory was wrong, the woman appeared in one of her costumes and said, Where on earth do you think I could wear this? I can't even sit down! Needless to say, he won his case. Audit triggers: The biggest red flags that look here are just a few things you'd like to be careful when taking deductions from business taxes: All in the family. When using a spouse, child or close relative, be careful not to give them special treatment. Make sure that the tasks of their job description are commensurate with their age and experience. Pay the same. You'd pay anyone else doing the same job. In the money. Compared to previous years, excessively high incomes stand out and can cause control. And high-income taxpayers are more likely to be audited as they're more likely to be involved in complex deals and partnerships, trusts or businesses. Consistency is key. The IRS will notice if your federal return is disproportionate to your state return, so be careful to be consistent. Stay up and up. People who have filed frivolous lawsuits in the past are likely to always be audited. Considering you don't collect your tax returns at all? Here's something that could cause you to reconsider your decision: People who haven't filed federal taxes are picking up fraud, hit a felony, and not jail time. Even if you don't have the funds to pay off everything you owe, Brown strongly recommends filing anyway – it's better to file and not pay all you owe, like wait until all the money and risk getting hit with penalties or worse. Meet your maker. More and more, the IRS is using a software to check with tax return preparers. If a high error rate is detected, not only the return maker is checked, but also the individual's customers. So do your homework before choosing a maker. And if you ever have any doubts that they're leading you in the right direction, ask for an outside opinion before proceeding. Self-defense. If selected for an audit, Brown recommends that you stand up to the IRS for getting representation. As a former IRS insider, Brown says that these days, the IRS is a little out of control - they don't enforce the tax code on professionalism.

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