What My First Busy Season Was Really Like

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My name is Jonny Roth, and I started working at Kernutt Stokes (KS) in January of 2026, having just graduated from Oregon State University in December. I come from a small farming town in central Oregon and never imagined working at a desk because I couldn't imagine what people did in front of a computer for 40 hours a week. Having started in January, right before busy season, I quickly learned that it is very easy to fill 40 hours and much more.

I was warned by many people about what busy season was like. I was told that it is miserable, exciting, exhausting, the best time of the year, and the worst time of the year. I want to share my experience and some advice I would give myself if I were doing it again for the first time.

Expectations vs. Reality
To start, busy season was not nearly as hard as I thought it was going to be. Between my own worries about having to stare at a computer all week and others warning me about how hard the long hours are, I thought it was going to be mainly bad and maybe some good. In reality, my experience was very enjoyable, and I am honestly excited for the next one.

The People Make a Difference
While enjoyable, the hours were quite long and there were a handful of things that helped me get through it. The number one thing that helped me was the people. Everyone around me had to do the same long hours which led to a sense of camaraderie and joint endurance. Furthermore, with several people in their first year as well, I had plenty of people to relate to when it came to having to work long hours but also needing help all the time.

That leads me to the next thing that helped me through busy season - asking for help. The culture here at KS is incredibly welcoming and understanding, and I have never felt like someone was frustrated when I asked them for help. I encourage everyone to seek help frequently and quickly, as it is easy to spin your wheels and lose a lot of time. Building on this, I expected to have a lot of pressure on me to perform perfectly and quickly. This was not the case at all; everyone was encouraging when I made lots of mistakes or took a long time to complete a project.

Find Ways to Recharge
Taking strategic breaks was the next biggest help for me and there were several ways I did this. The simplest was just to walk away from my screen and go to the puzzle table or go outside to see the sun. I did this randomly whenever I felt myself getting into a rut or my eyes needed a break. The most effective way to take a break for me was when the breaks were planned and consistent. In our Corvallis office, we would learn a line dance every Tuesday night at 5:00. On Thursdays, most of us would go for a 10-minute walk. Every day at noon, we would play the New York Times game *Connections* and discuss the puzzle of the day. I looked forward to all these things, and they gave me renewed energy and mental capacity to perform better.

Realizing that sitting still for 12 hours a day hurt my body was an interesting discovery for me. I had never experienced this before. There were two ways that I could deal with this every day. First off, I utilized my standing desk as much as I could. One of the weekly challenges we had was "Standing Hour" every Wednesday and all of us in the cubes/office would raise our desks and often stay standing for longer than an hour. Apart from this, I would be raising and lowering my desk many times a day giving my feet a rest when needed, while also giving my body a break from sitting.

The other physical remedy I had was doing push-ups. Prior to starting at KS, I was already doing a push-up challenge with friends from college where we would do push-ups every day for a year. Coming to the office, I feared that it would be seen as strange and I would struggle to get my daily push-ups done. Much to my surprise, there were two guys in the office that did push-ups every day already and it was perfectly normal. Again, this got my body out of my chair, took my eyes off the screen, and got my blood pumping. This often cleared my head and took less than a minute to do. I highly recommend having a challenge that involves physical activity and encouraging others to join you as this will help with accountability.

A Few Final Pieces of Advice

While I had a very good time in busy season, it is important to prepare yourself mentally for the difficult days and weeks. For many, working over 60 hours in a week is new and it is hard to adjust to. For some, working 60+ hours is quite normal and this was what I was used to, except I had always done manual labor jobs. Learning, thinking, and staring at a screen for this long was hard for me and it helped me to know that coming into busy season so I could prepare for it.

The other thing that I learned to prepare myself for was not having much time for anything other than work, chores, food, sleep, and driving. That was fairly unique to my experience as I have about a two-hour commute every day. This meant that I did not have much time for hobbies or frequent dates with my wife. I know many have the same experience here at KS, but others managed to make time for things outside of work. This will be something that everyone will have to figure out but be ready for much less time than normal for the "fun" things.

To wrap up, I have a few extra pieces of advice that I picked up in my first busy season. As I said before, ask questions as much as you can and do not be afraid of upsetting people. However, I encourage you to pay attention to how everyone helps you. I found that most of the time, the people I asked for help did not have the answer off the top of their head; instead they had a way to figure out the answer. Build yourself a toolbox of techniques to find answers and do this by observing those that have done that through years of problem solving.

Making mistakes is an inevitable part of our job. We try to avoid them, but they will happen anyways. It is important to realize that the system here at KS is to build you up and make you a better accountant. When you receive feedback or a list of things that you did wrong when a manager reviewed your work, this is not done to point out your mistakes and make you feel bad, those comments are there to make you better. Lastly, it is just as important to prepare yourself as it is to prepare your loved ones for what your life is going to be like. Hours are going to be long and can be unpredictable. Let them know that it is for a short time and all these hours are building towards a lot of time off in the rest of the year.

Thank you for reading, and I hope your first busy season is as rewarding as mine was. If you're curious about what a career in public accounting is really like, we'd love to connect. Visit our Careers page to learn more about opportunities at Kernutt Stokes or stop by and talk with us at an upcoming campus event.