

Have the big firms changed their tax avoiding spots?

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The [FT has reported this morning](#) that:

Bookmaker Ladbrokes has been blocked from reclaiming £54m of tax, after a tribunal ruled that an avoidance scheme used in 2008 breached rules.

The case relates to a tax planning scheme that was promoted by Deloitte, the professional services firm, which exploited a perceived loophole in part of the tax code that dealt with the taxation of loans.

It's probably a little too obvious to say that Ladbrokes was chancing it with this scheme. What I am as interested in is who promoted it: big four firm of accountants Deloitte created the scheme.

We keep being told that after the highpoint in tax abuse at around the turn of the century the big firms learned their lessons and changed their behaviour. The evidence is that they had not by the time of the recession, which is the era now being litigated. In that case why believe that they still have? I think it's a wholly appropriate question to ask.