

Darwinian selection in the Big 4 accountants

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The Guardian's 'Long read' today [features extracts](#) from Richard Brook's new book, *Bean Counters: The Triumph of the Accountants and How They Broke Capitalism*. I admit much is familiar, although welcome: to many it will be news.

I liked this paragraph, which to me summed up the problem with these firms:

A newly qualified accountant in a major firm will generally slip into a career of what the academic Matthew Gill has called “technocratism”, applying standards lawfully but to the advantage of clients, not breaking the rules but not making a stand for truth and objectivity either. Progression to the partner ranks requires “fitting in” above all else. With serious financial incentives to get to the top, the major firms end up run by the more materially rather than ethically motivated bean counters.

In effect, these firms have a Darwinian system that ensures those with ethics don't stay. That resonated very strongly with my own experience. The cost to society of this perverted form of Darwinian selection has been very high indeed.