

## Howie Kutcher, CPA

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*President and Founder  
Kutcher Tax Careers Inc.  
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Howie Kutcher, CPA, owner of a staffing firm based in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., that places tax professionals, goes above and beyond to meet the needs of his clients. It's not enough for him to just play to the crowd. But that's exactly what he does when not recruiting.

Kutcher performs hits on the piano to audiences at local restaurants, holiday parties, and assisted living facilities. From jazz staples such as Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York," to popular TV show theme songs, Kutcher captivates a wide range of audiences when striking the keys. "I was 8 years old when I learned to play," Kutcher says. "50 years. I can't believe it."

A New York native, Kutcher grew up in a family with a heavy musical influence. His grandfather, father, and two uncles were all musicians, though they never wanted him to experience the struggles they had with their musical endeavors. "They discouraged me from doing it for a living because it's very hard to make money," he says. "But at the same time, they encouraged me to never quit."

Kutcher took that advice to heart and has not quit, even though there were moments along the way when he came close. At the age of 11 in 1970, his interest started to wane. He says his experience was "boring" as he practiced sheet music from classical composers such as Frédéric Chopin, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Shortly afterward,

however, his father's piano-playing coworker introduced Kutcher to more contemporary artists, including The Beatles and Elton John. Suddenly, practicing the piano was fun again.

Kutcher's audiences began to grow in his teenage years. He'd play The Beatles and The Rolling Stones in a dark school auditorium with 10 people asking for more. Then it was 20. Things began to take off for him after his first visit to a nursing home as a teenager. "There was a piano there, so I started playing. People crowded around and said, 'Oh, this is great!' Then the director of the nursing home thanked me



*Kutcher plays the hits for the residents of Atria assisted living facility in Westchester County, N.Y.*

and told me how nice it was. I realized that playing for others was fun."

Kutcher soon expanded his performances to restaurants. The Westchester County community buzzed about Kutcher's piano playing, which eventually led to him performing at The Briar's, a local restaurant. He played all kinds of hits, and encouraged the audiences to sing along. This soon grew to performances in dozens of other venues, such as The Water Club in New York City and the South East Consortium for Special Services. More of his journey, along with his set list of songs, can be found at [www.singalongwithhowie.com](http://www.singalongwithhowie.com).

Kutcher says he will occasionally get paid for a gig, but most of the time he plays for no compensation. "I don't care about the money. I just love when people appreciate the music and sing along."

While playing piano certainly seems to occupy a space entirely separate from accounting, the two worlds have worked together for Kutcher. After receiving his bachelor's degree in accounting from Baruch College in 1981, Kutcher would study for the CPA Exam for hours on end while working for a few midsize firms. "I'd study from 8:00 in the morning to 10:00 at night, and I'd take a break and start playing the piano for a half-hour to ease my mind a little," he says. "I wouldn't say that playing made me pass the CPA Exam, but it definitely helped me." Kutcher would eventually receive his master's in taxation from Pace University in 1988, and started Kutcher Tax Careers Inc. in 1990.

Just as he picks the songs for a performance according to his audience, Kutcher is equally as strategic when matching tax accounting candidates with corporate tax departments. "I have an analytical ability for recruiting," he says. "I analyze [candidates'] backgrounds and add value."

Kutcher has joined several state accounting societies, including the PICPA, to not only network with fellow CPAs, but to also learn technical details to freshen and enhance his tax skills. And just as he's working on keeping his tax skills current, he's also looking to continually add contemporary songs to his repertoire. "Recently I heard an Ed Sheeran song on the radio, and I wanted to learn how to play it. So I looked it up online, picked up the chords, and started playing it. You couldn't do that back in my day." 🎸