Every Certified public accountant who has lived through January knows the year-end close is less a date and more a season. It is a sequence of checkpoints, document hunts, reconciliations, tax elections, and a dozen small choices that ultimately determine whether an Accounting firm glides into filing season or staggers. The best timelines acknowledge that reality. They start early, stack dependencies in the right order, and use the quiet weeks to solve the loud problems.

I have run year-end closes for companies with five employees and companies with five thousand. The mistakes repeat at any scale: deferred reconciliations, undocumented accruals, and a January scramble for vendor W-9s that should have been in the folder months earlier. With a realistic timeline and a few guardrails, a CPA or Tax accountant can shrink close time by 20 to 40 percent. The trick is pairing calendar rigor with client coaching, and not treating every task as a January problem.

What year-end close actually covers

Clients often hear “close the books” and picture a magic button in the accounting software. What we mean, in practice, is a coordinated set of accounting services that pull the financial story tight enough to support audits, tax preparation, and lender conversations. Your firm’s flavor may vary, but for most CPAs the scope includes:

- General ledger finalization, including a clean trial balance and documented adjustments.
- Subledger reconciliations for cash, receivables, payables, inventory, fixed assets, and payroll.
- Compliance deliverables: W-2 and W-3 filings, 1099 series, state payroll reconciliations, sales and use tax true-ups, and franchise or gross receipts filings as relevant.
- Tax preparation handoff: fixed asset rollforwards, book-to-tax schedules, M-1 support, equity rollforwards, and partner or shareholder basis tracking.
- Advisory touches that clients expect from a Tax consultant: estimated tax recalculation, safe harbor assessments, bonus and distribution planning, and cash flow mapping for the first quarter.

If you deliver a full bookkeeping service or outsourced controller package, layer in monthly close routines and consolidation if the client has multiple entities. When Payroll service is in scope, it becomes the heartbeat of early January.

The calendar rhythm that works

Every Accounting firm adapts to its client mix, but a shared structure helps. The table below maps a practical sequence, one I use for most small to midsize businesses. I anchor prep work in September and October, hold a soft close in December, and push the hard close into the first ten business days of January. From there, the Tax preparation service sprints begin.

| Period | Focus | Examples of Anchors | |---|---|---| | September | Readiness and cleanup plan | W-9 chase list, revenue recognition review, inventory methods, open items report | | October | Subledger reconciliation cycle 1 | Bank and credit cards through September, AR/AP aging scrub, fixed asset tagging | | November | Pre-close trial balance | Clear suspense, write-off decisions, revenue cutoffs, AP completeness tests | | December 1 - 20 | Soft close and accruals | Bonus accrual estimates, vendor PO review, prepaid schedules updated | | December 21 - 31 | Year-end execution | Physical inventory counts, last payroll timing, 401(k) remittance checks | | First 10 business days of January | Hard close mechanics | Final bank feeds and statements, W-2/1099 preparation, year-end journal entries | ***CPA*** | January 11 - 31 | Compliance and QA | Distribute W-2s and 1099-NEC, state reconciliations, sales tax true-up | | February | Tax-ready packages | Book-to-tax tie-outs, depreciation, return organizers, K-1 data collection | | March | Pass-through filings and extensions | S corp and partnership returns or extensions, basis statements, 754 analysis if needed | | April | Individuals and C corps | Final returns or extensions, Q1 estimates recalibrated based on actuals |

I prefer concrete dates to vague windows. If you run a team, publish a weekly dashboard that shows what is complete, what is blocked, and which client decisions you are waiting on. The timeline is a living plan, but it should not be a mystery.

September: get the house in order

By September, the year’s patterns are set. You can see where the accounting is lean and where it is messy. This is the time to diagnose and resolve chronic issues that would otherwise land in the January pile.

Start with vendor compliance. If you issue more than a few 1099s, build the W-9 chase list now. In my experience, a missing W-9 in January takes three emails and a phone call to fix. In September, it usually takes one email because no one is buried yet. For client bases with dozens of contractors, consider a small incentive, like paying the next invoice net 7 upon receipt of the form. That usually moves the needle.

Inventory-heavy clients deserve extra attention in this month. Confirm the counting method, unit of measure, and cost layers. If the client has grown from a spreadsheet to a real system mid-year, you will need to reconcile the opening balance in that new system before year-end. I have seen a single unaddressed system migration cost 40 hours in January.

Revenue recognition belongs on the September agenda as well. For SaaS or prepaid services, review deferrals and milestones. The sooner you find a misapplied recognition rule, the less you will need to reclassify during the close. This is where a Tax consultant’s advisory hat helps, since book and tax timing may align or diverge depending on elections and past positions.

October: run the first reconciliation cycle

October creates your baseline. Reconcile cash, credit cards, AR, AP, and any clearing accounts through September month-end. If the client operates multiple bank accounts, verify that every feed is active and that any manual uploads are complete. I prefer to print or save PDF statements for the last day of September, since those pages become exhibits in audit or lender packages.

Scrub the aging reports. For receivables, identify balances older than 90 days and propose write-offs or adjustments to the allowance. For payables, look for stale credits and vendors that should have been marked inactive months ago. Clients often appreciate the optics of a clean vendor list heading into the new year.

Fixed assets need a light touch here. Compare the subledger or rollforward to the general ledger. If capitalization policies shifted during the year or Section 179 thresholds will affect tax posture, capture those notes now for the tax preparation phase. Tag any assets that should be retired, particularly if a facility move or major equipment upgrade occurred.

November: the pre-close trial balance

A strong November makes December feel calm. Assemble a full trial balance and annotate every material variance year over year. You are not closing yet, but you should be able to explain movements in revenue, gross margin, operating expenses, and other income without guesswork.

This is where completeness tests earn their keep. Scan for large vendors not appearing in the AP detail and search the bank activity for payments to unfamiliar payees. I once found a client paying IT expenses out of a personal card with monthly reimbursements coded to Miscellaneous. That misclassification hid nearly 100,000 dollars in spend and distorted the margin trend. Fixes like that are painful in January, simple in November.

On the revenue side, trace a sample of shipments or service deliverables across the last two weeks of November into the ledger. Confirm that cutoffs make sense. If your Accounting services agreement includes internal controls, test approval thresholds now. You want to correct process gaps before volume spikes at year-end.

December: soft close and year-end execution

From December 1 to the week before the holidays, you should act as if you are closing. Capture accruals for known bonuses, commissions, and annual contracts. Refresh prepaid and deferred revenue schedules. If you run Payroll service for the client, model the final payroll calendar against banking holidays and set clear deadlines for any off-cycle checks. Avoid running a bonus check on December 31 if cash is tight and the client will need to reverse it on January 2.

The last ten days of the month belong to execution. Inventory counts should be scheduled, with clear instructions on count sheets, tagging, cutoff, and documentation. Manufacturing clients often Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates benefit from a two-team approach, with one team counting and another auditing high-value items. For retail or distribution, ask for photos of high-density areas and sealed cage counts. Documentation beats memory every time.

Cash is another December priority. Bank reconciliations can be ready for final tie-out by confirming the last in-transit items and addressing any duplicated or uncleared transactions. For clients moving to a new treasury structure in January, lock down approvals for new bank accounts so January statements arrive without delay.

Finally, agree with the client on the rules of last-minute spend. Many owners see December as a time for equipment buys and charitable giving. A five-minute call on capitalization thresholds, bonus depreciation expectations, and reasonable substantiation can save hours of rework later. As a Tax accountant, you are balancing tax benefit with audit trail quality.

The first ten business days of January: the hard close

These days set the tone for the whole season. They are busy, but predictable if you did your September through December work.

W-2 preparation and filing kick off the compliance race. Remember the deadlines: furnish Forms W-2 to employees by January 31 and file with the Social Security Administration by January 31 as well. Many states mirror that deadline. When you control Payroll service, map your cutoffs so you can finalize year-to-date totals and fringe benefits like group term life, personal use of company vehicles, and S-corporation health insurance for shareholders. Do not forget third-party sick pay adjustments if applicable.

On the 1099 side, two dates matter. Furnish 1099s to recipients by January 31. File Form 1099-NEC with the IRS by January 31 as well. For Form 1099-MISC, you typically have until late February for paper or March 31 for e-file. States vary, and combined reporting systems can be your friend or your headache. If your Accounting firm handles 1099s, build a staging report from AP with year-to-date totals, vendor types, and TIN match results. When a vendor insists on being paid through a platform that issues its own 1099-K, retain the platform statement for the workpapers and avoid duplicate reporting.

With statements in hand, reconcile cash through December 31, post final interest and bank fees, and confirm that any outstanding checks listed at year-end are legitimate. Clear credit card feeds and lock December activity. A short, clear email to the client helps: we are closing December, please hold any additional 2024 coding in separate batches.

This window also handles accruals and estimates that depend on final numbers. True-up payroll accruals, inventory adjustments from counts, sales tax payable for year-end periods, and any revenue deferrals based on final deliveries. Document your judgment areas. A concise memo on a significant estimate can save you from relitigating the logic in March.

January 11 to month-end: compliance and quality assurance

Compliance filings go out the door, and quality control catches anything that fell through cracks while you were moving fast. I block time for a second-preparer or manager review on high-volume clients, especially those with multiple locations or complex benefits. A standardized checklist is helpful, but attention to how the client changed in the last twelve months is what actually catches errors.

State payroll reconciliations require patience. Annual recaps have a way of exposing midyear registration changes, merged FEINs, or prior quarter amendments. Build a simple tracker of each state’s annual reconciliation form, due date, and portal login, and do not be shy about asking clients for screenshots when credentials fail. The reality of multi-state compliance is messy. Your professionalism shows in how you communicate through those snags.

Sales and use tax true-ups also live here. If the client crossed nexus thresholds or began using a marketplace facilitator, confirm that the year-end returns or annual reconciliations reflect that. For clients without automated calculation tools, a sampling approach with reasonableness checks is better than pretending perfect precision is feasible.

February: tax-ready, not just closed

A closed ledger is not the same as a tax-ready ledger. February’s work shapes the speed of Tax services and Tax preparation. You want a package that a preparer can pick up and move quickly through with minimal back-and-forth.

Start with depreciation. Lock the fixed asset rollforward, agree on Section 179 usage and bonus depreciation posture, and document any partial dispositions. If a cost segregation study is on the table for recent building improvements, decide now how that study affects the return and whether a Form 3115 is required. Even small projects can swing taxable income by meaningful amounts.

Then produce the book-to-tax tie-out. Schedule M-1 items should not surprise anyone in March. Common items include meals disallowance, penalties, officer life insurance, and changes in allowance for doubtful accounts. If you are the Accountant responsible for both books and returns, write a short narrative explaining each reconciling item and reference it to the workpapers. That discipline pays off when the partner reviews the file.

Finally, assemble data for ownership schedules. Partnerships and S corporations depend on accurate basis and distribution records. If equity transactions occurred, close the loop with legal counsel for documents. For partnerships, review whether a Section 754 election is in place or appropriate, particularly if ownership changes occurred. If not, document why you are not recommending it.

March: pass-through finish line and extension discipline

March 15 comes quickly. For S corporations and partnerships, decide early whether to file or extend. I prefer to extend more often than not, for two reasons. First, K-1 recipients appreciate thoroughness over speed when their other returns are waiting on those forms. Second, extensions protect against late-arriving information that would otherwise trigger amendments. They are not excuses to procrastinate. They are tools to control risk.

For returns you do file, match cash distributions and guaranteed payments to the economic deal. I have seen K-1s go out with guaranteed payments booked as distributions, which distorted self-employment tax and created awkward phone calls. Tie the allocations and special items back to the operating agreement or shareholder minutes. If the client uses a Tax preparation service separate from your bookkeeping team, hold a short handoff call. Five minutes of context can save two hours of back-and-forth.

For complex partnerships, prepare a short “what changed this year” memo for the reviewer. It should cover owner changes, new lines of business, state footprint changes, new loans, and any tax elections. Reviewers move faster when they are not guessing.

April: individuals and C corporations, with no panic

Once March is clear, focus on individual and C corporation returns due April 15. Most firms extend a meaningful share of individual returns, and that is sensible. The goal is to lock in accurate estimates and avoid penalties. If you manage estimates, recalc Q1 based on the closed books and expected 2025 cash flows for the client. Owners often overpay in April because no one surfaced a better estimate based on final figures.

For C corporations, refresh NOL positions, interest limitation calculations, and credit carryforwards. If you handle Accounting services for a corporate client with R&D credits, gather substantiation early rather than waiting for a credit study to land in your inbox on April 10. I have learned to ask, in early February, whether any advisor is claiming an unexpected credit on the return. Surprises late in the game rarely help.

The five documents to lock down before December

A short checklist helps clients and internal staff focus. These five save the most time later.

- Current vendor W-9s for all reportable payees, with a completed TIN match where possible.
- Executed loan statements and covenant letters through year-end, including any deferral or modification agreements.
- Payroll registers with year-to-date detail for taxable fringe benefits, plus retirement plan remittance confirmations.
- Fixed asset support: invoices, in-service dates, cost breakdowns for projects, and disposition evidence.
- Details of ownership changes, equity grants, or redemptions, including executed agreements and cap tables.

Red flags that slow a close

Even with a good plan, some patterns always extend the timeline. Catch them early and you win back days.

- Suspense or clearing accounts holding balances older than 60 days.
- A growing stack of vendor credits or unapplied cash in AR that no one owns.
- Inconsistent naming or SKU practices that make inventory counts unreliable.
- Missing support for large December entries, especially bonuses, management fees, or intercompany charges.
- A single person who “knows the numbers” without written procedures or backups.

How an Accounting firm protects capacity during close

Firms that thrive in January are boring in the best way. They publish expectations, automate the routine, and talk to clients before the fire. A few habits help.

Set document deadlines with social proof. If you tell a client that 80 percent of your roster uploads bank statements by the 5th, most will not want to be in the slow 20 percent. Use your client portal analytics to back that up. When clients miss dates, reply with new, specific dates and what the delay affects, not vague reminders.

Centralize exception handling. If a preparer cannot obtain a vendor W-9 by January 20, they should escalate once, not thrice, and the escalation should carry options: file with backup withholding, delay issuance, or hold the payment run. Decision trees speed work more than pep talks.

Invest in templates that carry judgment, not just boxes. Your 1099 staging workbook should flag likely NEC vs MISC categories, not only list payments. Your inventory count instructions should show examples of acceptable photos and annotations. Clients cannot follow what they cannot visualize.

Finally, treat the year-end close as a separate engagement within your Accounting services. Scope it, price it, and staff it with intent. Too many firms hide close work inside monthly bookkeeping or Payroll service retainers, then absorb the January spike as a cost of doing business. That sets the wrong expectation and burns out good people.

A short story from the field

A few years ago, we took over an e-commerce client in October. Sales were doubling quarter over quarter, but the books lagged. The prior Accountant had never reconciled the payment processor settlements to the bank activity. Chargebacks, fees, and refunds were netted haphazardly, and sales tax was accruing at a flat 7 percent because someone liked round numbers.

We built a lightweight bridge in three weeks. First, we matched daily settlements to the bank, then created journal entries to isolate fees and chargebacks. Second, we retrofitted a sales tax mapping by state using their cart data and flagged four states where they had crossed economic nexus. Third, we rebuilt the returns and allowances account using refund data exported from the platform. By December 15, they had a real gross margin and a clean liability register. January still felt busy, but it was controlled. Their tax preparation moved through in February without late-night emails. The client never noticed the drama we avoided, which is the best compliment a CPA can receive.

Practical cutoffs and small decisions that matter

Close discipline often lives in small choices. Choose cash cutoff at noon on the last business day, not midnight. Mark December 28 as the last day to commit to large year-end purchases that affect tax posture. Require a second set of eyes on any December 31 journal entry over a set dollar threshold. Convince clients that the phrase “we will true it up later” is expensive.

Keep an eye on state differences. A client may file W-2s and the federal 1099-NEC by January 31, then discover a state portal that wants 1099s uploaded with a state-specific layout or a different combined filing deadline. Build a one-page state matrix for your common jurisdictions, and update it every November. It saves more time than most software features.

Document policy choices. If you adjusted capitalization thresholds midyear to reflect materiality, save the memo. If you chose to accrue a bonus pool based on a board resolution dated January 5, capture whether the obligation existed at year-end. Auditors and tax authorities care about documentation because it demonstrates intent and method, not perfection.

Bringing it together

A year-end close cannot be perfect, but it can be predictable. The calendar above is not about cramming more into January. It is about moving decisions forward so that January carries execution rather than surprise. A CPA who treats September through December as the front half of the game earns calmer weeks when it matters.

Clients notice the calm. When their W-2s arrive on time, when their 1099 questions receive clear answers, when their tax estimates reflect the final numbers rather than last year plus a guess, they see the value of your Accounting services. Whether you are the in-house Accountant, the outside Tax preparation service, or the full-service Accounting firm, the same truth applies: a good year-end close is built month by month, not found on January 31.

Use the timeline, adapt it to your practice, and give your team room to do their best work. That is the quiet, professional craft of a Tax accountant at year-end.

Name: Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates

Address: 7015 Beracasa Way, #208A, Boca Raton, FL 33433

Phone: 561-237-5264

Website: https://jrcpa.net

Email: info@jrcpa.net

Hours:
Monday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Thursday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Friday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Saturday: Closed
Sunday: Closed

Open-location code (plus code): 9R2W+F4 Boca Raton, Florida

Map/listing URL:
https://www.google.com/maps/place/Jeffrey+D.+Ressler,+CPA+%26+Associates/@26.3511537,-80.1572092,17z/data=!3m2!4b1!5s0x88d91c2552fa29cb:0x488a9e68fe36c415!4m6!3m
80.1546343!16s%2Fg%2F11cfhrpqg

<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?pb=!1m18!1m12!1m3!1d3575.238289470072!2d-
80.1546343!3d26.351153699999998!2m3!1f0!2f0!3f0!3m2!1i1024!2i768!4f13.1!3m3!1m2!1s0x88d91c25468f0c15%3A0xd7ef388b58bc2201!2sJeffrey%20D.%20Ressler%2C%20CP
width="600" height="450" style="border:0;" allowfullscreen="" loading="lazy" referrerpolicy="no-referrer-when-downgrade"></iframe>

Socials:
https://www.facebook.com/jeffresslercpa/

"@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "AccountingService", "name": "Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates", "url": "https://jrcpa.net", "telephone": "+1-561-237-5264", "email": "info@jrcpa.net", "address": "@type": "PostalAddress", "streetAddress": "7015 Beracasa Way, #208A", "addressLocality": "Boca Raton", "addressRegion": "FL",

"postalCode": "33433", "addressCountry": "US" , "openingHoursSpecification": ["@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification", "dayOfWeek": "Monday", "opens": "09:00", "closes": "17:00" , "@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification", "dayOfWeek": "Tuesday", "opens": "09:00", "closes": "17:00" , "@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification", "dayOfWeek": "Wednesday", "opens": "09:00", "closes": "17:00" , "@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification", "dayOfWeek": "Thursday", "opens": "09:00", "closes": "17:00" , "@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification", "dayOfWeek": "Friday", "opens": "09:00", "closes": "17:00"], "sameAs": ["https://www.facebook.com/jeffresslercpa/", "https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sIPhXiCDa9-LvElTRSfz8MAGo-nrrNwhOgptS6xyZlM/edit?usp=sharing"], "geo": "@type": "GeoCoordinates", "latitude": 26.3511537, "longitude": -80.1546343 , "hasMap":
"https://www.google.com/maps/place/Jeffrey+D.+Ressler,+CPA+%26+Associates/@26.3511537,-80.1572092,17z/data=!3m2!4b1!5s0x88d91c2552fa29cb:0x488a9e68fe36c415!4m6!3
80.1546343!16s%2Fg%2F11cfhrpqg", "identifier": "9R2W+F4 Boca Raton, Florida"

Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates provides accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, payroll, and business formation support for clients in Boca Raton and surrounding areas.

The firm works with individuals, entrepreneurs, and small to midsize businesses that need practical financial guidance and dependable tax support.

Located in Boca Raton, the office serves clients locally across Palm Beach County and also works with many Florida and U.S. clients remotely.

Clients looking for help with tax planning, IRS matters, bookkeeping, or payroll can contact the office for direct support from an experienced CPA team.

Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates emphasizes personalized service, clear communication, and long-term client relationships built around accuracy and trust.

Businesses in Boca Raton, Deerfield Beach, Delray Beach, Coral Springs, Margate, Pompano Beach, and Boynton Beach can turn to the firm for day-to-day accounting and tax-related needs.

For questions about services or appointments, call 561-237-5264 or visit https://jrcpa.net.

Customers who want directions or location details can also view the firm on its public Google Maps listing.

Popular Questions About Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates

What services does Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates offer?

The firm offers accounting services, tax preparation, bookkeeping, payroll, company formation support, and help with IRS-related matters.

Where is Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates located?

The office is located at 7015 Beracasa Way, #208A, Boca Raton, FL 33433.

Who does the firm typically serve?

The firm serves individuals, entrepreneurs, and small to midsize businesses that need accounting, tax, and financial support.

Does the firm only work with clients in Boca Raton?

No. The website says the firm serves Boca Raton and surrounding South Florida communities, and also works with clients across Florida and nationwide.

Can the firm help with bookkeeping and payroll?

Yes. Bookkeeping and payroll are listed among the firm's core services.

Does the firm offer tax planning and tax return preparation?

Yes. The firm lists tax planning and income tax preparation for individuals and businesses among its core services.

Can clients get help with IRS problems?

Yes. The website lists IRS representation, audit defense, and help getting up to date on unfiled tax returns.

What are the office hours?

The published hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, with Saturday and Sunday closed.

How can I contact Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates?

Call 561-237-5264, visit https://jrcpa.net, or follow https://www.facebook.com/jeffresslercpa/.

Landmarks Near Boca Raton, FL

Boca Town Center / Town Center at Boca Raton - A major retail destination often used as a reference point for nearby businesses and offices. If you are in this part of Boca Raton, Jeffrey D. Ressler, CPA & Associates is a practical local option for accounting and tax help.

Florida Atlantic University - A well-known Boca Raton landmark and campus area that helps define the city’s central business and residential activity. Clients across the Boca Raton area can contact the firm for accounting and tax support.

Mizner Park - One of Boca Raton’s most recognizable mixed-use destinations for dining, shopping, and events. Individuals and business owners throughout the city can reach out for CPA and bookkeeping services.

Glades Road - A major east-west corridor in Boca Raton and a common route for residents and local businesses. If you are working or living near Glades Road, the firm is positioned to serve the area.

Palmetto Park Road - Another key Boca Raton thoroughfare that connects residential, retail, and business districts. The office serves clients throughout Boca Raton and nearby communities.

Deerfield Beach - A nearby service area mentioned on the website for clients seeking tax and accounting help close to Boca Raton.

Delray Beach - A neighboring city the firm lists among its South Florida service areas. Local residents and business owners can contact the office for bookkeeping, payroll, and tax services.

Boynton Beach - Another nearby community referenced by the business as part of its broader service coverage in Palm Beach County.

Coral Springs - Clients in Coral Springs can also use the firm for accounting and tax-related support according to the service area information on the site.

Pompano Beach - The firm’s website also mentions Pompano Beach among the South Florida communities it serves.