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Jan. 01, 2008

For tax-focused practices, whether run by experienced CPAs, EAs or other professionals, the coming few months are obviously the most important time of year, with much of their revenue coming from providing tax compliance services to individuals. But the 1040 season can be critical even for practices that offer a broad array of services, from write-up to retirement planning, payroll, business consulting and compliance services for all taxable entities.

In addition to the primary tasks involved with client tax preparation clients at this time of year, full-service accounting firms also have the opportunity to strengthen their client relationships by recommending other services, especially tax planning, that can provide options to help mitigate some of their tax burden. Strategizing investments, charitable giving and generational wealth transfer services also fit nicely into a client's tax-focused state of mind.

Of course, time is often a limited asset during this time of year, so schedule these engagements well into the future. This helps bring clients into your office when they are a little more level-headed and perhaps receptive to additional services that can help them financially or with their businesses.

But back to the task at hand: Tax Season. It will get busy, and it will probably get hectic. You will probably work late and may see less of your family for the next few months. But keep in mind what you're working for: A successful practice that helps individuals and business owners, and that helps you enjoy your life away from work with your family and friends.

The technology you use during the year, both to directly provide service to

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about the free Productivity Survey, visit (www.CPATechAdvisor.com/productivity).

Tax season tips from some of the professionals recently profiled in our Productivity in Practice series:

Ryan
McCowan, CPA.CITP
Partner, Green & McCowan CPAs
www.gmccpa.com
London, Kentucky
Productivity Score: 430

- **E-file.** Not much is said about the efficiencies and workflow productivity that can be gained by changing to all e-filed returns. We e-file every eligible return, and the processing efficiencies are tremendous. You can eliminate numerous processes in the tax return workflow by e-filing.
 - **Go paperless.** Ahhh, the world of paperless. Need I say more?
 - **Change 10 processes in your workflow.** In other words kick SALY (same as last year) out the door. I adapt new processes or change existing processes every single year.
 - **Go home.** Tax season is busy, and I work as hard as anyone ... but tax season is not my life. With today's technologies, there is absolutely no reason why professional team members and partners shouldn't go home at reasonable hours and work from home during the busy season. Last year, I left at 5:00 and finished up working at home after I enjoyed dinner with my family. I feel more relaxed at home and, thus, more productive.
-

Tim

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- Tout firm improvements on your website and/or newsletter (clients will never know unless we tell them).
- Advise clients of the consequences for missing deadlines, etc.

Christian

Brim, CPA

Principal, Fiducial-OK

www.fiducialok.com

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Productivity Score: 385

- It may not help this late, but preparing the tax return is the last step. In reality, it should be no more stressful than putting the finishing touches on a cake. If you've done your job beforehand in a timely manner, you already know what the cake is going to generally look like, and you know how it's going to taste. Putting some frosting on it and putting it in a box is easy. My point is that the bulk of work should already be done by tax season.
 - Manage your clients (schedule appointments, etc.); don't let them manage you. You can learn a lot about how to run an efficient service business from a visit to the doctor's or dentist's office.
 - Relax. Your inbox was full when you started working; it will be full when you leave.
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best

they can be.

- Keep a cot in the back room for those evenings you just can't make it home. I have a couch in my office that comes in real handy the final week of the season.
- Keep smiling, no matter what. Your outside appearance forces an inner appearance to appear. If you appear happy, you will be.
- Take a breath and continue, it will all be over soon. Keep in contact with your family even if it's just to say goodnight to the kids and spouse. If you forget your priorities, that call will bring it all into perspective. Schedule a massage therapist to the office at least once a week. Again, a healthy and rejuvenated body will be better at keeping the stress out than one that is worn down.

Kevin

McGillivray, CPA

Principal, The K.E.M. Group

www.kemcpa.com

Danvers, Massachusetts

Productivity Score: 364

To minimize the hours in tax season, maximize the use of technology. Consider the following:

- Dual monitors, for on-screen tax review and easier viewing of multiple programs.
- Document management software to organize and store documents.
- Tax flow software to move and monitor jobs. We use FirmFlow from GoFileRoom.

- Scan and organize client source documents. We use Copanion's GruntWorx.

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Automate your financial statements preparation and integrate software as much as possible. We use GoAudit, Excel and Word.

Nancy

Koonce, CPA, CVA, CFE

Co-Principal, Ataraxis Accounting & Advisory Services, Inc.

www.idahocpa.com

Twin Falls, Idaho

Productivity Score: 270

- Take at least one full day off a week. And that doesn't mean taking the work home instead of doing it at the office, or checking your e-mail from your BlackBerry while out with your family. That means clearing it from your mind completely. Even if it means you stay an extra hour or so on other days, it is important to have "away time."
- Utilize the technology available to you. Get a small scanner for your desk and store documents digitally instead of getting up and walking to the copier every time you want to keep a copy. Use multiple monitors to provide simultaneous access to different sources of information.
- Interact with co-workers once a week in a fun environment. Every Friday afternoon, our entire office takes a break to enjoy snacks and fun activities, such as playing Toss Across or Bowling for Bunnies. It does wonders to relieve stress and promote team building.

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