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Choosing the right digital strategy can improve your bottom line. Thinking through your goals and processes before you start a project can save you time, money and effort. Further, innovation to provide superior client service should drive any strategic or tactical technology initiative.

What is a digital strategy? “A digital strategy is the process of specifying an organization’s vision, goals, opportunities and initiatives in order to maximize the business benefits of digital initiatives to the organization.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_strategy is the source of this definition and gives more background, four steps to conduct a digital strategy and more opportunities. Many of you have a digital strategy and set of processes whether you have thought them through or not.

You can create your strategy and processes or they will be created for you in an adhoc, reactive fashion in order to accomplish tasks that must be done. What is your digital strategy? Here are a few tips on choosing and executing successful digital strategies.

First consider where you can provide a better client experience. What is clumsy,

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often impede true progress.

Third, consider broad initiatives or strategies that you may have heard about, but delayed adoption to let the technology mature. Listed below are five examples of digital strategies that provide deeper interaction with clients. There are dozens more that you could consider.

Collaborative accounting – Interactive accounting can lead to additional service opportunity, better client relationships and proactive assistance to business owners. Outsourced CFO services are far better client experiences with collaborative accounting. Additional opportunities in this area include payroll, business analytics and dashboards, and Human Resource management. Example products: SAP Business by Design, Financial Force, QuickBooks Online, QuickBooks Desktop hosted, Wave, Xero, FreshBooks. More interactive accounting options are listed at: www.accountingsoftwareworld.com/cloud-computing.

Digital signature, encrypted email and authentication – An area of great opportunity that can minimize risk is the area of digital signatures. Simple examples include signing 8879's or engagement letters. The more digital we become, the greater the need to be able to authenticate or certify delivery of documents. Transferring confidential information via a portal may be needed to fully implement this solution, but the right solution here could eliminate your need for a portal. Look for solutions that include encrypted email and certified delivery as well as signature capability. Example products: RPost, Echosign, DocuSign, Secured-Accountant.

Paperless/Document Management – Much has been written about paperless, document management and Electronic Content Management. Rarely do we see an implementation done correctly. In prior columns paperless technology has had extensive coverage. An evolution to "Paperless 2.0" has quietly been occurring making paperless more integrated, OCR capable, and integrated with workflow.

Point solutions such as Concur Small Business for time and expense reporting,

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solutions. There have been notable improvements in offerings by publishers of these products in the last two years. If you have implemented workflow more than two years ago, you should tune up your installation. If you do not have a workflow solution, this may be your best digital strategy initiative. Example products: Firmflow, Orglow, Workstream, XCM.

Portals and file transfer – As in paperless, much has been written in this column and others about the benefits of portals. Integration of portal capability into your web site is a key feature to include since the additional traffic to your web site can help with Search Engine Optimization or SEO, not to mention the opportunity to interact directly with your clients. Some entry level web sites have portal integration. Better designs and strategies have far more seamless integration. Example products: AccountantsWorld Website Relief, CCH Site Builder, Thomson eMochilla, WebCare, ShareFile, Box, Ziptr.

Considering, selecting, and proactively building your digital strategy will provide you a competitive advantage, reduce your workload, increase your profitability and provide a better client experience. And isn't that what computers are supposed to do for us?

Technology

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