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embracing technology and better aligning their services to meet the needs of today's business owners and personal clients, a Thomson Reuters executive told 1,300 tax ...

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Accounting firms elevate their relevance and provide more value to their clients by embracing technology and better aligning their services to meet the needs of today's business owners and personal clients, a Thomson Reuters executive told 1,300 tax and accounting professionals at the company's annual users' conference last week.

These business owners and personal clients have been significantly influenced by

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“Overall client experience matters more today than it has before,” Baron said. “It’s no longer enough to provide after-the-fact reporting and compliance work. Clients expect to benefit from the expertise and experience of the firm in the form of driving improved business and financial results, better tax planning programs, and more proactive, strategic direction and advice. They have been influenced by phenomenal changes in technology as consumers and want to interact with their service providers in a manner consistent with today’s digital, mobile, always connected world. They want communication and collaboration with their accounting firm to be seamless, accessible 24×7, and delivered in a convenient, simple, accessible, and secure format, with an easy-to-understand design interface across a myriad of devices.”

Baron provided data on technology trends, adoption patterns, and profession economic indicators, each providing insight as to where the profession is enjoying success, and where the pace of change of practitioners needs to increase. In addition to providing external profession data, Baron reported the results from a Thomson Reuters survey of accounting firms that found:

- Nearly 40% reported not offering a firm website.
- More than one-third are not leveraging a document management system and thus not taking advantage of paperless workflow efficiencies and the elevated client service delivered with client portals.
- Only 16% reported the use of cloud applications in the firm.
- Almost three-fourths reported that the primary method of delivering completed tax returns to the client is paper copy.

Clients are consumers. As such, they are bringing current consumer technology experiences — sometimes subconsciously — into their workplaces, including mobile devices, smart apps, cloud capabilities, and new consumer-oriented technology. This

creates a very different expectation of how professionals serve them, Baron said,

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