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Gail Perry • Jun. 19, 2015



I'm writing this from the [California Accounting and Business Show and Conference](#) in Los Angeles, where the overwhelming theme of the two-day event is "The Firm of the Future." Three different keynote addresses over the two days focused on this topic.

Future-thinking firms are expected to embrace cloud technology, allow staff to work remotely and on their own schedule, run their business from their smartphone, use social media effectively, be accessible to clients through text messaging and online chat, embrace real-time accounting and forward-thinking advisory services, have an

interactive website where clients can share documents through a secure portal,

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commoditized compliance work is passed off to non-professionals who oversee software programs, and firms that are putting their foot down and taking the position that they've been doing just fine for the past 50+ years, thank you very much, and don't need to change, or at least not very much.

If you're a film buff, you may recall the famous line in Blazing Saddles, "We don't need no stinking badges." Actually, if your film "buffiness" goes back further, you might remember "We don't need no badges" from The Treasure of the Sierra Madre. The line was very funny in Blazing, a bit humorous and slightly worrisome in Treasure, but it's downright scary when you apply it to accounting firms that proclaim, "We don't need no stinking firm of the future."

Careless people joke at the accounting conferences about how the "old school" firms will fade away, younger hip firms will take their business, and good riddance to the old accountants who don't want to change. A lot of younger members of the profession are actually salivating over that scenario. But for the most part, key members of the accounting profession are doing their best to help firms move forward so they can stay competitive and, more importantly, offer the best possible service to their clients.

The tools are available for any accountant or accounting firm that wants to change, grow, and become more like that future firm. Accounting nirvana is not out of reach.

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