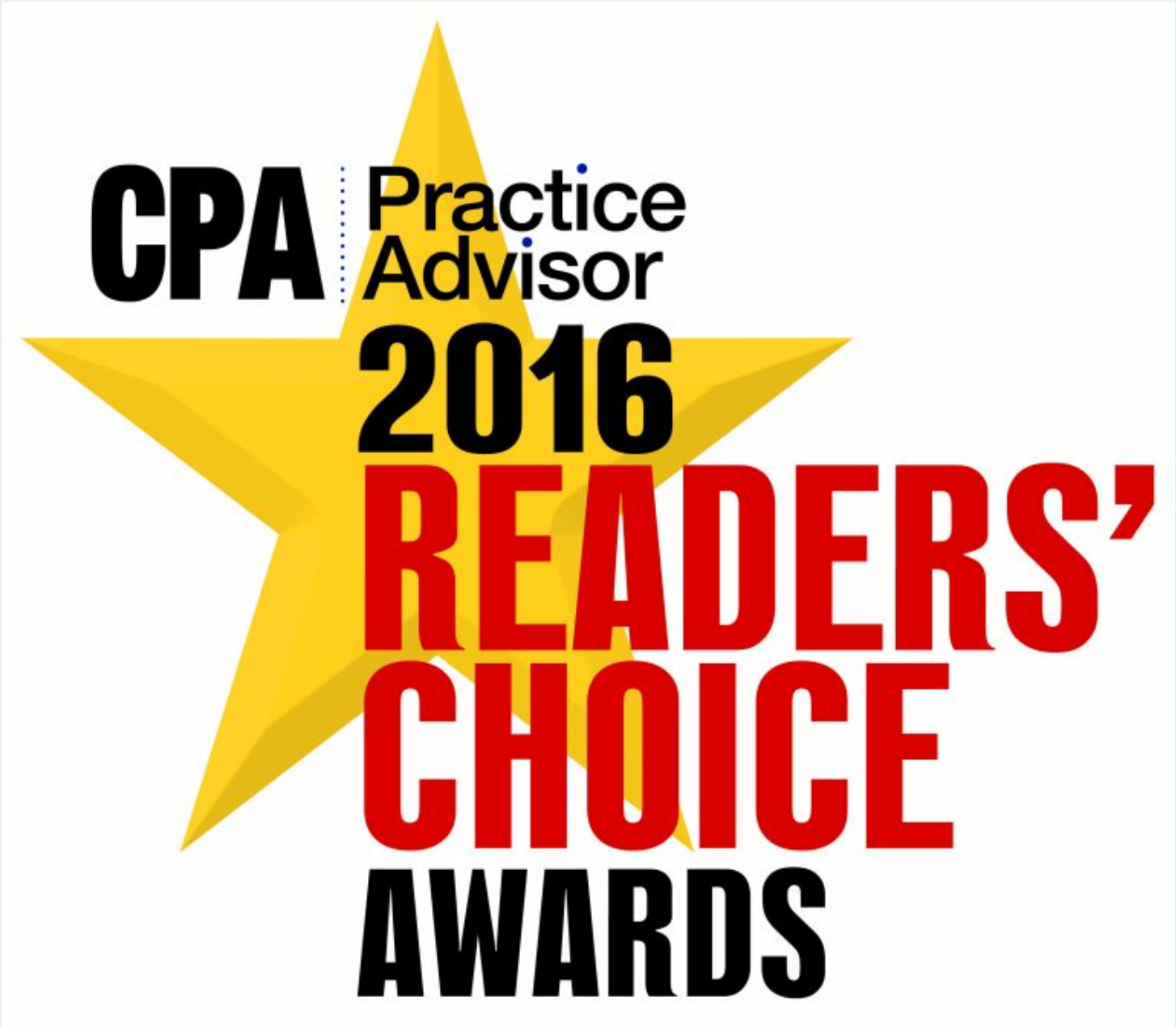
Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

dramatic changes in workflow processes and productivity.

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Feb. 19, 2016



Technology is at the core of professional accounting firms, and since 1990, this publication has covered the evolution of not only technology, but also the dramatic changes in workflow processes and productivity.

In this, the 13th annual edition of the Readers Choice Awards, we invited our readers

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

Federal/State Income Tax Preparation

Insight: More than 88 percent of our Readers Choice voters claimed a preference in professional tax systems, which reflects our readership: tax and accounting professionals. As such, the tax question is always the most anticipated. For 2016, the most popular systems were:

WINNER: Drake Software (49%)

Runners Up:

- Intuit Lacerte, ProSeries, TaxOnline (19%)
- Thomson Reuters UltraTax or GoSystem RS (13%)
- Wolters Kluwer CCH Small Firm Services ATX or TaxWise (7%)
- Wolters Kluwer CCH Axcess or ProSystem fx (5%)
- TaxAct Preparers' Editions (3%)
- RCS TaxSlayer Pro (3%)

Other (1%)

———————–

Specialty Systems & Tax Prep Tools

Insight: Some professionals need advanced tools that may not be available (or as in-depth) in standard professional tax prep programs, particularly when it comes to state and local taxes, estate and gift taxation, and other specialties. About 25 percent of the nearly 7,000 total voters in had a preference among specialty tax tools.

WINNER: GruntWorx (63%)

Runners Up:

- Bloomberg BNA 709 & 706 Preparer (19%)
- SurePrep (11%)
- DynaTax (6%)

Other (1%)

———————–

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

With greater control over variables about 88 percent of our voters this year selected a product in this category

WINNER: Drake Tax Planner (57%)

Runners Up:

- Intuit Lacerte Tax Planner (15%)
- Thomson Reuters Planner CS (13%)
- Bloomberg BNA Income Tax Planner (6%)
- Wolters Kluwer CCH ProSystem fx Planning (5%)
- PPC Individual Business Tax Planning Libraries (4%)

———————–

Tax & Accounting Research Systems

Insight: The new PATH Act (which made more than a dozen "extenders" permanent) and the ongoing effects of the ACA/ObamaCare has required new forms and reporting by both businesses and individuals. Tax research systems are an integral component of any tax-focused firm, particularly those with diverse and complex clients. While some of these systems integrate directly with preparation systems, others are stand-alone models. Just over 85 percent of our voters this year selected a preference in this category, with the top votes going to:

WINNER: TheTaxBook (40%)

Runners Up:

- QuickFinder Tax Handbooks (17%)
- Thomson Reuters Checkpoint (RIA) (16%)
- Wolters Kluwer CCH Accounting Research Manager (6%)
- Intuit Tax Research & TaxAlmanac.org (6%)
- Parker Tax Pro Library (5%)
- Tax Talk Today (4.5%)
- Bloomberg BNA Financial (3%)

- TaxSpeaker (3.5%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

automate not only printing, but also mailing and electronic submission to federal and state entities. About half of this year's voters selected a preference in this category.

WINNER: Drake Client Write-Up (43%)

Runners Up:

- AMS 1099-ETC (22%)
- Wolters Kluwer CCH SFS ATX and TaxWise (11%)
- 1099 Pro (6%)
- Tenenz Laser Link or TFP (5%)
- AccountantsWorld (4.5%)
- Greatland Yearli (4.5%)
- Real Business Solutions W2 Mate (2%)

Other (2%)

————————–

Sales & Use Tax

Insight: Keeping up with state and local taxes can be simple for the smallest of businesses, but can also quickly grow cumbersome and complex, depending on nexus and many other factors, including sales tax holidays. For businesses that sell to customers across many states, the challenge can be too much to keep up with manually. That's where sales tax compliance systems come in, helping track and manage compliance on a state-by-state basis, or for all of the 8,000 or so taxing jurisdictions across the country. About 40 percent of this year's voters had a preference in this category, with the majority saying they use the websites of state taxing authorities to report sales taxes. For those who use a technology solution, the following products ranked best:

WINNER: CFS Tax Software (30.5%)

Runners Up:

• Thomson Reuters ONESource Indirect Tax (24.5%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

Insight: While this is somewhat of a specialty too, it is critical for wholesalers or other businesses that sell for resale or to organizations that are tax exempt. About eight percent of our voters claimed a preference among these systems for their clients with exemption certificate management needs.
WINNER: Thomson Reuters ONESource Exemption Certificate Mgmt. (50%)
Runners Up:

• Avalara AvaTax CertCapture (34%)
• Vertex Inc. Exemption Certificate Manager (12%)
• Sovos (formerly Imaging Science Services) TaxWare Certificate Management (4%)
————————–

Write-Up
Insight: As more businesses and their accountants move to the cloud, write-up continues to evolve into a more proactive client service that keeps accountants more engaged in client accounting processes. (Note, cloud-based small business accounting systems are in a separate category below.) The most popular among this year's voters:
WINNER: Intuit QuickBooks Accountant (50%)
Runners Up:

• Drake Client Write-Up (23%)
• Thomson Reuters Accounting CS (10%)
• PC Software Accounting Inc. (6%)
• Sage One (4%)
• AccountantsWorld Accounting Power (2%)

Other (5%)

————————–

Audit Engagement Tools

Insight: While A&A stereotype is of large businesses, even small organizations and

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

- CaseWare IDEA (10%)
- Capital Confirmation (10%)

_____ _

Payroll

Insight: Payroll is the largest category in each year's Readers' Choice Awards, and in our annual review of payroll systems. As many firms have taken back their clients' payroll functions from third-party companies, they turn to professional systems that help them manage multiple business entities with any number of employees. Most payroll systems have moved to the cloud in recent years, which means they are always up-to-date and the processes are very streamlined. The most popular programs this year were:

WINNER: Intuit QuickBooks Payroll, Enhanced Payroll & Full Service Payroll (39%)

Runners Up:

- Paychex (10%)
- Thomson Reuters Accounting CS Payroll or myPay (10%)
- Run Payroll Powered by ADP (9%)
- AMS 1099-Etc A-T-F Payroll (9%)
- Gusto (formerly ZenPayroll) (7%)
- PC Software Accounting Inc. (6%)
- AccountantsWorld Payroll Relief (4%)

Other (6%)

_____ _

Business Valuation

Insight: Professionals offer valuation services to clients when preparing for the sale

or transfer of a business, for litigation, lending and other purposes. A specialty niche,

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

Practice Management/Time & Billing Systems
Insight: Practice management and billing systems is the second largest category in the awards, with many products offering a range of capabilities for managing modern tax and accounting firms. These range from systems with extensive tools for digging deep into firm productivity and analytics, to basic time-keeping functions. As with our reviews of these systems, we've divided them into two categories this year.
Practice Management:
WINNER: Thomson Reuters Practice CS (38%)
Runners Up:

- Wolters Kluwer CCH Axcess or CCH ProSystem fx Practice Mgmt. (27%)
- TaxWorkFlow (10%)
- AccountantsWorld Practice Relief (9%)
- Commercial Logic (7%)

Other (9%)

Time & Billing:
WINNER: Office Tools WorkSpace (35%)
Runners Up:

- Sage Timeslips (27%)
- TSheets (14%)
- TPS Software Time & Billing (10%)
- ImagineTime (7%)
- BQE BillQuick (5%)

Other (2%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

- PayPal (31%)
- Bill.com (13%)
- Xero (5.5%)
- Sage Payments (5%)
- Bill&Pay (4.5%)
- FreshBooks (4.5%)
- ReceiptBank (2.5%)
- Zoho Books (1%)

——————— –

Client Portals

Insight: We have come a long way since the days when clients brought in shoeboxes of receipts and a floppy disk with their data files on it. (Hopefully you aren't experiencing this anymore.) Modern client communication is all electronic, and it makes sense that sharing data and files is, too.

WINNER: eFileCabinet Secure Drawer (24%)

Runners Up:

- Thomson Reuters NetClient CS Portals (21%)
- Citrix ShareFile (20%)
- SmartVault (12%)
- Office Tools (8%)
- Wolters Kluwer CCH Axcess Portal or ProSystem *fx* (6%)
- AccountantsWorld Cloud Cabinet (5%)

Other (4%)

——————— –

Document Management & Document Storage

Insight: Document management and storage systems range from basic electronic file

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

• Office Tools Practice Management WorkSpace (4.5%)

Other (3.5%)

———————–

Document Management Utilities
Insight: Modern professionals also need specific document hardware for scanning and optical character recognition functions, fax capabilities and other features. These systems complement document management systems.
WINNER: Fujitsu (40%)
Runners Up:

• HP (25%)
• Canon (13%)
• Nuance (8%)
• cPaperless Tic-Tie-Calculate (7%)
• ABBYY (5%)

Other (2%)

———————–

Tax Document Automation
Insight: Twenty years ago, a seasoned tax professional could maybe handle 100 returns during the entire tax season, but with automation, some individual tax pros handle several hundred. The key productivity benefits of tax automation systems is getting a client's engagement materials into an electronic version, then being able to manage the workpapers, import it into tax forms, and collaborate with the client throughout their engagements. No more cumbersome file cabinets with client documents.

WINNER: Intuit Tax Import for Lacerte & ProSeries (32%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

———————–

Workflow Management Systems

Insight: Every firm operates differently, but they can all benefit from some best practices that help streamline internal processes. This can help tax and accounting firms realize greater productivity and profitability. We divide this workflow management category into two groups: Comprehensive Workflow and Other Workflow Tools, which are designed for aiding in specific tasks and engagements and for smaller firms.

Comprehensive Workflow

WINNER: Office Tools Workspace (38%)

Runners Up:

- Thomson Reuters FirmFlow (37%)
- XCM Workflow (12%)
- TaxWorkFlow (7%)
- Wolters Kluwer CCH Axcess Workflow (5%)
- Autonomy iManage Workflow Manager (1%)

Other Workflow Tools:

WINNER: GruntWorx (16%)

Runners Up:

- eFileCabinet (13%)
- Thomson Reuters GoFileRoom/Practice CS (12%)
- Intuit Tax Import for Lacerte and ProSeries (9%)
- Citrix ShareFile (8%)
- Office Tools (7%)
- SmartVault (6%)

• Intuit Lacerte and Proseries DMS System (5%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

tools that are designed for accounting firms and may include small business, tax and financial content for visitors, as well as various calculators and email marketing functions.

WINNER: Drake 1040.com Preparer Sites (37%)

Runners Up:

• Thomson Reuters Web Builder CS (18.5%)
• CPASite Solutions (12%)
• GetNetSet (10%)
• Wolters Kluwer CCH ProSystem fx SiteBuilder (5.5%)
• AccountantsWorld Website Relief (5.5%)
• Tenenz AFSB (3.5%)
• Rootworks (2.5%)
• Build Your Firm (2.5%)
• CPASites.com (2%)
• NMGI WebCare (1%)

——————–

SMALL BUSINESS ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

Insight: While many accounting firms are recommending clients move to the cloud, there is still a strong market for installed accounting systems, as well. These programs offer an array of business financial management tools, including bookkeeping, inventory, payables and other functions. There are several sub-categories in this group: Below are the top vote-getters in each category.

Small Business Accounting – Installed Programs

WINNER: Intuit QuickBooks Desktop (80%)

Runners Up:

• Sage One, Sage 50 or Sage ERP (9%)
• PC Software Accounting Inc. (7%)

Other (4%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

- FreshBooks (2%)

Other (5%)

Retail Accounting/Point-of-Sale
WINNER: Intuit QuickBooks Point-of-Sale (77%)
Runners Up:

- NetSuite OnSite POS (5%)
- AccuPOS Retail POS (4%)
- Vend POS (4%)
- Wasp Barcode (3%)

Other (7%)

Not-for-Profit Accounting
WINNER: Intuit QuickBooks Premier Nonprofit (82%)

Runners Up:
- Blackbaud Financial Edge or Fundware (3%)
- Open Systems TRAVERSE (2.5%)
- Abila MIP Fund Accouning (2%)
- Fund E-Z Fund Accounting (2%)
- Aplos Sofwtare (1.5%)
- AccuFund Accounting Suite (1.5%)

Other (4.5%)

Fixed Asset Management

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

Other (8%)

_____ _

GENERAL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGIES

ASP/Hosted Solution Providers
Insight: Most CD-based software programs can be hosted, which gives users the convenience of web-based anytime/anywhere access just like a cloud-based system. These vendors offer software hosting services to accounting firms.
WINNER: Thomson Reuters Virtual Office CS (41%)

Runners Up:
• Cloud9 Real Time (26%)
• Right Networks (19%)
• Xcentric (8%)
• CPAASP/InsynQ (6%)

_____

Outsourced Technology Services
Insight: Similar to a firm partnering with a local attorney or investment advisor for client services, some turn to specialty vendors who provide services that range ASPs to virtual servers, digital fax systems, email management and even tax form preparation. The most popular this year:
WINNER: Cloud9 Real Time (36%)

Runners Up:
• Right Networks (23%)
• Xcentric (12%)
• Network Management Group Inc. (8%)

• CPAASP/InsynQ (7%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

Runners Up:
• HP
• Lenovo
• Apple
• Toshiba
• Acer

————————–

Smart Phone
Insight: Somehow, there are still a few Blackberrys out there. However, most accounting professionals seem to follow national trends when it comes to their mobile devices.
• Android 53%
• Apple 41%
• Windows Phone 3%
• Others 3%

————————–

Tablet Computers/Devices
• Apple iPad 41%
• Samsung 15%
• Kindle 10%
• Microsoft Surface 7.5%
• Dell 6.5%
• HP 5.5%
• Google 4.5%
• Others 10%

———————–

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

• IBM 3%
• Xerox 1%
• Others 8%

———————–

Office Supply Store
Insight: Where do you go for office supplies? Out of the more than 5,300 professionals who responded to this question, it was a photo finish, with Staples edging out OfficeMax by a couple dozen votes.
• Staples 25.62%
• Office Max/Depot 25.26%
• Costco 11%
• Sam's 9%
• Best Buy 9%
• Wal-Mart 8%
• Others 12.12%

———————–———————–

OUT-OF-OFFICE
Favorite Form of Physical Exercise During Tax Season
Insight: Most of us know that we could lose a few pounds or get into better shape in other aspects. During the 12+ hour days of tax season, though, how do professionals find the time? The top responses:
WINNER: "Who has time to exercise?" (42%)

• Jogging/Running (12%)
• Weightlifting (9%)
• Jumping to Conclusions (9%)
• Bicycling (8%)
• Aerobics (7%)

• Team Sports (3%)

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

• No 79%

How "remote" are you? How many hours per week do you work on client engagements or firm business while away from the office (at a client, at home or anywhere else)?

1. "My office is my home:" 33%
2. Less than 1 hour: 21%
3. Between 1-4 hours: 16%
4. Between 5-9 hours: 10%
5. Between 10-14 hours: 6%
6. 15+ hours per week: 14%

How "social" are you? Which social media tools do you use in conjunction with your work?

- LinkedIn 30%
- Facebook 28%
- Twitter 10.2%
- Google+ 10%
- YouTube 8%
- Instagram 4.5%
- Pinterest 3.7%
- Yelp 3.5%
- Other 2%

Follow us on Twitter (@CPAPracadvisor) and Facebook (/cpapracticeadvisor)!

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us