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Bookkeepers anticipate growth in the next one to two years and are turning to the cloud in droves, according to the State of Bookkeeping Practices 2016 Survey, sponsored by Bill.com and released today. The survey also reveals that despite

offering a standard set of services, many professionals alter their workflows for each

A special report covering the full results of the survey is available at http://cashflow.bill.com/2016-State_of_Bookkeeping_Report.html.

Traits of Successful Firms

According to the survey, 67% of the respondents agreed that their firms will grow significantly in the next one to two years. Firms with 51 or more employees showed the highest level of enthusiasm, with 80% expecting significant growth in the next one to two years.

The survey shows that professionals who anticipate this growth share a proclivity for cloud technology, value-based pricing and adding new services. Seventy-eight percent use one or more cloud-based solutions, and 47% said their clients are open to their technology recommendations. Thirty-two percent said they spend no time at their clients' offices. Likewise, 58% provide client bill pay and 39% offer value-based pricing.

"Technology innovations are at the core of some very positive short-term growth projections by bookkeeping firms," commented Joe Woodard, CEO of Woodard Consulting. "Optimizing cloud technology leads to advanced levels of digitization, automation and collaboration, which in turn result in more efficient processes and decreases time spent on low-yield, manual tasks. Not only does this increase efficiency and produce greater profits, it also frees up the firm's resources – and the clients' budgets – to focus on proactive, forward-looking advisory services."

Bookkeepers as Technology Leaders

Accounting professionals have reached the tipping point for adopting cloud-based technologies, with 50% overall saying they use multiple cloud solutions in their firms and an additional 21% saying they use at least one cloud solution.

Likewise, clients on a whole tend to be more adept with technology. Sixty-two

"Bookkeepers are taking the lead as true technology advisors with clients, and delivering high value in the process with big results for their firms," stated Bob Lewis, director of channels and alliances for Bill.com. "The advanced adoption of the cloud, precedes the next technology challenge for bookkeeping – integrations. Allowing multiple cloud-based solutions to sync relevant and authorized client information will dispel silos of information and enable a higher level of operational efficiency. For example, Bill.com syncs seamlessly with QuickBooks Online, Xero, Netsuite and Intacct. Users never have to enter data twice, and often, not even once."

The adoption of technology contributes to an additional efficiency benefit for respondents. Thirty-five percent of those surveyed said they spend no time working at their clients' offices. That percentage spikes to 44% for firms with 1-10 employees. Likewise, only 43% indicated that while they do spend time at their clients' offices, it ranges between only one and 15 hours a month.

A majority of respondents indicated a common set of offered services which include bank statement reconciliation (98%), sales tax filings and payments (83%), payroll (80%), A/P (71%), A/R (65%) and bill payment (51%). While the services offered are consistently represented, varying workflows continue to be a challenge for many respondents. Eighty-five percent said that they change their workflows depending on each client – meaning the workflow for an everyday task could have numerous iterations across a client base.

"The variance in client workflows is troubling. It's like making 100 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches a different way for 100 different people. Over a century ago, Henry Ford demonstrated with the assembly line that having a set process leads to more efficient and higher-quality results. The accounting industry still hasn't caught on. When accountants vary their workflows on a client-by-client basis, they open the door to more labor-intensive processes and the potential for fraud or errors. It takes

extra time and effort to train staff on the variances of every client. This area is ripe for

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