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always have. Beyond the aversion to change is the deep-rooted belief that if they don't send out a tangible stack of paper, the client will question the value they ...

Jim Boomer • Dec. 13, 2016



Whether we like it or not, technology impacts everything we do in our daily lives. Today, our smartphones have more computing power than all of NASA when it first put a man on the moon. And with this increased power comes expectations for greater automation of routine tasks and instant access the information we want. Is your firm's technology keeping up with these changing expectations?

Does Paper Really Show Value?

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We no longer have to go to the bank to deposit a check, wait for a monthly or quarterly mailing of our bank or brokerage statements or talk to a call center to determine when our package will arrive. We've become so accustomed to using technology to access real-time information and execute our daily tasks that self-service is now expected. It is actually viewed as a value add rather than a value detractor.

Why Not?

We hear it time and time again, "we are a CPA firm and have unique needs – we're different." In some ways this is true, but more often than not it's a fallacy that's holding your firm back. The fact is, CPA firms are just like any other business in more ways than they are different. So why can't we have the same types of tools available to collaborate with our clients? We should.

Where to Start?

While many feel that our profession is held back by the tools that address the unique aspects of our businesses that I mentioned earlier, there are still initial steps you can take to start to meet the ever-evolving expectations of clients.

- **Collaboration & Accessibility** – When selecting the technology and processes for interacting with your clients, look for solutions where you and your clients can easily exchange digital documents. Whether it's a client portal or a secure document exchange solution, more and more clients are going to have their information in electronic format rather than paper. They expect to have an easy way to provide and retrieve that information.
- **Save the Trees** – Most firms always have and still do provide a stack of paper which they ask the clients to fill out every year. In reality, few clients actually complete the tax organizer beyond the basic information, and many just ignore it.

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meet client expectations and also those of your team.

Change Your Mindset

The first step you must take to truly meet your clients' expectations today and into the future is to change your mindset. You won't embrace change and fully leverage the capabilities of improved technology and processes if you don't start by changing your mindset. You must rethink the ways you've always interacted with your clients and look for technologies that are cloud-based and mobile first. It won't be long before your clients are demanding the capabilities they benefit from with their banks, online retailers and others with which they do business.

Getting ahead of those changing expectations will be the difference between a growing client base and one that quickly shrinks as they move on to competitors. As Henry Ford is credited with saying, "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right!"

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