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Clients often ask their accountant or other financial advisors which software programs or other technologies they should implement to make their business more productive, efficient and profitable. While accountants may not be technology professionals, clients view them as one of their most trusted advisors.

Software vendors have long recognized this close relationship and have developed consultant and reseller programs that help accountants learn more about their software and act as advisors for the software: from educating about program features and training users to installing the systems. These software vendors' motives are certainly not based on altruism; they are looking to increase their user base and profits. But these reseller and consultant programs do provide benefit to the accountant and to business clients.

For the professional accountant or practice, these programs allow the professionals to have a much greater understanding of the capabilities of the software their clients are using. This, in turn, lets them maximize the value of the software to their clients. And getting a majority of business clients to use the same software also makes the transfer of data easier for client write-up, tax preparation and other services, especially if the accountant is using a professional-level system from the same vendor as the software the clients use. Imagine direct integration with no manual data entry! It doesn't have to be just a dream.

Clients also gain from the increased knowledge the accountant has about their

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arrangements, fearing a negative perception. Others provide smaller discounts, essentially allowing the consultant to cover his costs, and clients receive the software and service for about the same price as they would have had to pay for the software alone. Some vendors simply provide the accountant with a free professional version of their software, hoping the accountants will encourage their clients to move to the small business version so they can achieve better data integration and continuity of programs.

There are certainly no one-size-fits-all reseller or consultant programs on the market. Each firm must decide if they want to take on a more defined role in helping their clients select and implement software, and whether this role is intended to generate revenue or simply be an added value to the client. The most important thing is to be completely open with those clients as to the relationship that exists between the accountant and the software vendor. A \$100 to \$200 commission isn't worth a lost client. Most clients will appreciate the candor and will respect your advice with regard to the software.

[Click](#)

[here for a table](#) that offers a brief overview of some of the available programs from providers in the general accounting category. A more comprehensive table, including additional information (like requirements to join the reseller program, initial fees, annual fees, support costs, reseller benefits, and current number of accountants acting as VARs for that company) is available on our web site at www.cpata.com/var05.pdf.

If you have clients in the nonprofit and/or construction industries, the chart on our web site also includes additional vendors from those niche areas. □

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