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Seniority carries benefits. Among them is the wealth of experience gained over the years, both from good decisions and the other kind, as well as the general building of professional knowledge and business relationships. With 42 years as an accountant, Bob Waldrop is certainly the beneficiary of all of these.

From his practice in the Denver suburb of Thornton, Colorado, the CPA can look out at the snow-dusted front range of the Rocky Mountains above Denver, a view he's appreciated since starting his current practice in 1981. In years prior, he had been in partnerships with other professionals and had worked for Peat, Marwick & Mitchell, predecessor to KPMG. But his current practice has been the most rewarding.

During his years serving clients, Bob has seen companies come and go, but some have now been with him for more than 30 years, including the first, a local manufacturer. A few of these mostly family owned businesses are now on their third generation of owners, with Bob servicing the grandchildren of his original clients.

He was drawn to math and business early, so when the college years came, accounting was a natural fit. After graduating from Florida State University, Bob's accounting experience started in the U.S. Air Force where he served as an auditor and attained the rank of Captain. He was also able to earn his MBA from the University of Colorado while in the service and had hoped to become a professor at the Air Force Academy, but circumstances would guide him into client-focused public accounting instead.

Bob's firm has about 500 clients and specializes in tax compliance for

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keeps a production-level printer on each desk, and has a total of four scanners: a unit at both workstations and two workgroup models.

The multi-screen monitors are a part of the practice's movement toward a paperless (or at least less-paper) process over the past couple of years. They use the Zen View Manager from [www.DigitalTigers.com](http://www.DigitalTigers.com), which provides taskbars on each monitor and other features. The office also uses paperless FAX and digital PDF file storage for all workpapers, client e-mails and documents.

"Multi-screen monitors have really increased our efficiency," Bob said. "We're not completely paperless and probably won't be. We still keep anything with a signature, like engagement documents and Form 8879 authorizing e-filing. Otherwise, we scan and return source documents to our clients."

Other technologies have also enabled the small practice to thrive, including remotely hosted programs and remote access capabilities that let Marsha and Bob work from home when necessary, and to use remote temporary workers during tax season.

"Online programs and access just make sense, especially during tax season because we don't have to perform any program updates and we can work from anywhere. We tested outsourcing years ago, but it wasn't cost-effective for us, so we turned to people we know who live in other states but act as employees of our firm." Bob keeps in touch with his remote seasonal staff by e-mail and phone and works with an IT professional to ensure the security of all data and computer systems. The small practice's advanced use of technology earned it a score of 233, which is impressive when considering its size and service focus.

Another benefit to running your own practice is that your life doesn't

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in Denver this year, including the families of his son and daughter, and his wife Fran, who prefers to winter at the couple's house in Venice, Florida. Bob frequently joins her, especially after tax season, but says he prefers the drier and cooler summers in Colorado to the humidity of the Gulf Coast.

Marsha manages the practice during his away time, but because of the firm's remote access technologies, he is able to keep up with work and client communications.

He prefers to spend most of his Florida time with his wife, or out fishing and golfing, and the couple maintains a membership at the Capri Isles Golf Club in Venice. Bob and Fran are also occasionally able to visit a client's hotel in Mazatlan, Mexico.

He stays active while in Colorado, too, hitting the gym a few times a week with a trainer and golfing at the Fox Hill Country Club in Longmont. And when FSU comes to play at CU's Folsom Field as they did this past fall, he is probably one of the few who has to decide which team to support, since he has degrees from each school.

Like many professionals today, Bob doesn't necessarily see full retirement in the picture, although he has decided to transition his practice within the next couple of years. A self-proclaimed workaholic, the idea of semi-retirement is more to his liking, so he plans to work for a colleague's practice in Venice so he can spend more time in Florida. He's also going to keep a home in Colorado so he can enjoy watching his granddaughters grow up.

Yes, Bob Waldrop is their Papa, and he wears that title proudly.

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