*From the August 2008 Issue*

With another busy season behind us, I decided to write about the following topics: the less-paper initiative, multi-function printers, e-filing and a few thoughts for 2008.

**Less Paper is better because**
Not sure how your firms did, but we ended up doing more with less — more returns completed with less personnel and paper. If I'm not mistaken, that's supposed to be the promise of the less-paper initiative. It's not less paper for less paper's sake, but rather it's less paper equals more efficiency. We used the Wolters Kluwer ProSystem fx Scan product for "scan and organize." I personally don't believe this provides a significant advantage while paging through the digital source documents during data input because whatever I'm looking at on a particular source document page, I can quickly move to the appropriate tax input screen. Where the benefit of this type of "scan and organize" is realized is after the fact when I'm on the phone with my client, and they have a question about, say, their K-1. In this case, the bookmarked source document file is a real timesaver. I can link quickly to the K-1 without having to page through the digital document looking for it.

**HP gets back on track**
HP has long been recognized for the best printers, especially laser printers. However, I have been personally disappointed recently with their MFP (Multi-Function Printer) devices. These are the all-in-one devices that not only print, but also fax, copy and scan. Notably, these devices have been ink based and have created lots of connection issues especially with Windows Vista. I know what

you're going to say: "This is Vista's fault." But really,

in a word, breathtaking, matching color laser output from devices much more expensive. It's not a particularly pleasant machine to look at, and it has a hefty footprint that supports the 125-page output bin. The blank paper tray only holds 150 sheets, which is a bit skimpy for my tastes, and the four toner cartridges that cost around $70 each are easily accessed through one door from the front of the device. The device has an Ethernet 10/100 port, but in my testing scanning was next to impossible if connected via this port. With respect to saving time and being more efficient, HP has implemented its new instant-on technology, which gets the job printed much faster than previous models that were without this new technology. As far as scanning goes, the device has a generous 50-page automatic document feeder, but if you want issue-free scanning, plan to connect the device using a high-speed USB 2.0 cable rather than using the 10/100 network port.

Overall, this device passes my "bang for the buck" test with flying colors as a nifty little workgroup multi-function device.

**E-file comes more of age**
We've been e-filing returns for several years, but we've also had some holdouts (both clients and preparers). This year, over 92 percent of our firm's returns were e-filed. I believe this added to our overall efficiency. Apparently, this is the trend profession-wide, and most reports indicate double-digit increases in percent of returns filed electronically. The real advantage of using this method is the immediate discovery of mismatched issues, like a SSN not matching a name or a dependent claimed when the dependent claimed himself. This eliminates dealing with those issues after the fact. Notable this filing season was support for e-filing of partnership returns and some states (California) requiring practitioners to e-file. If you're not currently e-filing returns, you will need to get up to speed quickly.

# Some thoughts on the future

your firm is planning a move to Office 2007, don't forget the most effective learning tools, including the Office Interactive Guides. These handy little flash programs allow a user to select a familiar command using the old interface and then interactively see how the same command is accessed with the new interface.

Fall of 2008 will bring the release of the Windows Server 2008 version of Small Business Server (Code Name Cougar). Many of the firms that have been successfully running Small Business Server (SBS) 2003 are doing so on hardware that is approaching four to five years in age. Since the Windows Server 2008 and Windows Vista code bases are equivalent, investing in a Windows Server 2008 based version of SBS will be attractive to those firms. In addition to Windows Server 2008, the next version of SBS will include Exchange Server 2007, which requires 64-bit hardware. That may prove a deterrent for some, but 64-bit hardware has been around since 2004, and most firms that will want the new version of SBS will be investing in new hardware anyway.

So as you evaluate your 2007 busy season and make plans for next year, remember what Yogi Berra said: "I never blame myself when I'm not hitting. I just blame the bat and if it keeps up, I change bats."

Technology

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