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TECHNOLOGY

'The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades'

Column: Up Front

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While it's pretty clear that the '80s band Timbuk 3 wasn't really singing about innovation in the lyrics of its popular single, the title itself has been widely quoted and used in a number of references that allude to the promise of what the future holds. Personally, I'm excited about the future. After 12 years with the magazine, I will now have the pleasure of welcoming you into the pages of each issue.

You likely have your own idea of what is truly innovative, and obviously innovation comes in many different forms, shapes and sizes. I'm fairly certain that my seven year-old would tell you that Webkinz and the online world that unlocks with the adoption of each one is at the top of her list of innovative products. And to be perfectly honest, I'd have to agree that someone did something right here, otherwise I wouldn't be buying "the latest and greatest" stuffed animal every week so she could see what the secret code would reveal in her online world. Okay, so I might be slightly exaggerating about the frequency of my purchases, but I think you get the point. And yes, I realize that a stuffed animal is a far cry from innovation and that marketing is probably the real inducement here.

Now back to the adult world of innovation. Wikipedia notes that innovation can “refer to radical and incremental changes in thinking, in things, in processes or in services.” I think it’s probably safe to say that the tax and accounting profession has seen its fair share of changes in recent years — from incremental to what some of you might consider “radical.” Still, the ultimate goal of innovation, no matter the degree, is to bring about a change that has a positive effect on progress, productivity and ultimately profitability. Each year, *The CPA Technology Advisor’s Tax & Accounting Technology Innovation Awards* are presented to a handful of products and services that have the potential to deliver such a change to the profession. And this year’s winners are primarily focused on increasing productivity and efficiency through streamlined workflow processes and management.

American economist and marketing mentor Ted Levitt had a lot to say about innovation and the realm of opportunity that belongs to those “who see possibilities before they become obvious.” The tax and accounting profession is well-served by vendors and thought leaders who have this vision. And in each issue of this magazine, you’ll find many of these thought leaders consistently offer insight and advice on technologies and processes that are both innovative and effective. You’ll also find a number of these innovative vendors highlighted throughout the pages of this magazine, including those listed in the comprehensive categorical directory of products and services that make up our annual Software Selection Guide in the print issue. I challenge you to really digest and assimilate the information in this issue. You’ll find valuable guidance and advice that you can use in your own practice, and you’ll be armed with knowledge that you can pass along to your business clients, as well. Levitt also said, “Just as energy is the basis of life itself, and ideas the source of innovation, so is innovation the vital spark of all human change, improvement and progress.” The products, services and ideas you read about here are most certainly capable of igniting change, improvement and progress if you’ll rise to the challenge and give them a chance.

The future is indeed bright. It’s an excellent time to be in public accounting. “Things are going great, and they’re only getting better.”

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