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**ADVISORY**

# Vendors Offer Assistance With Firm Branding

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The following products and services can help you as you strive to brand your firm's image at every touch point.

## **Bind-It** ([www.BindIt.com](http://www.BindIt.com))

When providing clients with copies of their returns and other documents, accountants

have long turned to Bind-It for professional document finishing systems. The company offers a wide array of products that professionals can use in their practice, as well as full binding and other services offered through more than 350 dealers and the company's direct offices. Among the most popular products from Bind-It is the Desktop Perfect Binding System, which is ideal for financial statements, client proposals, audit reports, reviews and compilations.

The Desktop Perfect Binding System allows users to perfectly bind documents with no hole punching, clips or staples, providing a client-ready deliverable in about one minute! Bind-It also offers tax folders specially designed for corporate, individual and fiduciary returns. The folders provide index dividers for quick reference and include a unique Bind-It flap that conceals staples, thus creating a professional quality folder for clients. Folders can include pockets and business card slits, and are available in several varieties that

can be customized with offset printing, embossing or foil stamping for a more prestigious appearance.

Bind-It's selection of document binding systems includes options for ring wire, strip, plastic coil, plastic comb and adhesive binding, and the company also offers laminating systems, polyethylene products, printing services, book binding and other products and services.

### **BizActions ([www.BizActions.com](http://www.BizActions.com))**

Marketing to clients and prospects is about more than just communication, it's about the message and content sent to each of the recipients. Send valuable content, and your communications will be valued ... send nothing, and clients will wonder if you value them. While the information age has ushered in many new communications tools for businesses to reach their clients, time constraints often make it difficult for accounting and tax professionals to get the most out of their client communications. But now there is an easy solution.

BizActions has developed a suite of professional communication tools specifically for professional accounting and tax firms that includes pre-written news content and gives firms the option to easily customize and personalize the templates. The cornerstone of the BizActions suite is the BizPro e-newsletter, which provides 100 percent original financial content, with multiple layout templates, the ability to add links within the newsletter, custom announcements for reminders, firm news or service offerings, automated opt-out for recipients, and reporting tools for measuring the success of the newsletter. Because the online BizActions system is easy to use and requires no knowledge of website development, it gives firms a client deliverable that clients will appreciate, without overtaxing the professional's time.

### **The Brand Network ([www.universal-inkjet.com](http://www.universal-inkjet.com))**

Printers and copiers are workhorses for accountants and tax professionals; if the printer or copier goes down or runs out of ink or toner, it often means a dramatically less productive day or a very costly "emergency" replacement toner or ink cartridge. But The Brand Network is making toner and ink replacement a lot easier and much less painful on the wallet through its Universal and Colorfast product lines.

These inkjet and printer toner refill kits and compatible cartridges are made with calibrated inks and an advanced filtering system to ensure quality equal to or better than the original equipment manufacturer. The systems are simple to use, with clear and concise instructions that guide the user through each step and support staff that can give personalized assistance or answer questions.

But the biggest bang is in the cost savings! Companies can save hundreds, even several thousand dollars per year depending upon their print demands, because the replacement cartridges cost about half what the name brand vendors charge, and the DIY refill kits save users even more. The kits and replacement cartridges are available at most major electronics retailers, including CompUSA, Staples, Fry's, Wal-Mart and Sam's Club, as well as through the company's website and a variety of online retailers.

### **ClientWhys ([www.ClientWhys.com](http://www.ClientWhys.com))**

With more than 25 years experience helping tax and accounting professionals, ClientWhys assists practices that are looking for ways to attract and retain more qualified, affluent clients. A recent study by Standard and Poor's showed that more than 85 percent of financial-related newsletters get read. This means that frequent client communications are vital to the health of your practice and stimulate more off-season consultations and referrals. Your clients feel more valued, leading to longer relationships and greater practice value. "As a professional providing a valuable service, accountants and tax professionals must make themselves familiar to clients and prospects, and they need to stay in the mind of their clients by sharing their expertise," said Lee Reams, president of ClientWhys.

"The more you communicate and provide solid advice, the stronger the ties with your clients and prospects. ClientWhys client newsletters give people a reason to talk about your service while making it easier for that conversation to take place."

ClientWhys offers a line of personalized client newsletters that help firms communicate with their clients, while saving the time and headaches often involved with creating valuable content. For firms with more tech-savvy client bases, ClientWhys now offers e-mail newsletters that are personalized to every client. ClientWhys also publishes all of its newsletter articles in HTML format, making

it easy for a firm to add it to their website or e-mail to additional clients and prospects.

### **Dell ([www.Dell.com](http://www.Dell.com))**

Accountants and tax professionals send out volumes of documents to their clients, and virtually every piece of it comes from their desktop or workstation printers. As such, the printer has become a crucial component of client communication. And just as a slow printer that can't keep up with the workflow is a drain on productivity, one that produces low-quality charts, graphs or images can be a drain on the firm's image.

Laser is a necessity for most firms, and color greatly enhances visual reports. But the combination can be expensive. Even with hundreds of printers on the market, it hasn't been easy to find one that meets the needs of a professional practice, both in terms of capabilities and price. That is, until the new Dell 3110CN. This next generation Dell color laser printer delivers enterprise-level performance for only \$499 — about half the price of comparable models from other manufacturers.

The Dell 3110CN is also three times faster than its predecessor, with print speeds of up to 31 pages per minute (ppm) for black-only, and 17 ppm in full color, in a single pass. The printer offers 600×600 dpi resolution, advanced color and toner management tools to manage per-page costs, optional wireless network support, optional duplex printing, and one year of service and support standard.

### **Endicia ([www.PictureItPostage.com](http://www.PictureItPostage.com))**

Picture it: Your firm's logo becomes the postage stamp you use every day. The U.S. Postal Service recently entered into licensing agreements that allow several companies to create customized postage over the Internet. The largest by volume is Endicia, who's PictureItPostage for Business system allows any company to easily create postage depicting their logo, new product or any other advertising message.

“We are pleased that the USPS has authorized us to sell customized postage to businesses,” states Mark Delman, Vice President of Marketing for PictureItPostage.

“We have a long-standing, award-winning relationship with the USPS and are excited that our service now offers companies a powerful new way to increase their brand awareness, capture the mail recipient’s attention, and help differentiate the company from its competitors.”

The system allows creation of postage featuring a logo, business photo or other advertising graphic using the online service or desktop design tool to rotate, crop, zoom and adjust the design. Users can choose the color of the border and text to complement their postage and can select the denominations of postage.

**Lockhart Industries, Inc. ([www.LockhartIndustries.com](http://www.LockhartIndustries.com))**

More than ever before, clients and prospects are looking for tangible signs of a firm’s credibility. How your work is presented to them and the impression it creates provides a competitive edge that helps your firm win and keep key clients. Since 1981, Lockhart has helped thousands of prominent firms enhance and maintain a highly professional image. Lockhart’s world-class presentation and report covers help them stand above the crowd.

“At Lockhart, our mission is to make our clients look the best they can through our patented and unique presentation covers,” said company president Greg Lockhart. “As we continue to help firms brand an image of excellence, we’ve continued to develop and implement new products and services. Our goal is to provide the marketing tools that help accounting and tax firms win and keep new clients.”

One of the most impressive new additions is the recently introduced Platinum Presentation Collection, which features innovative presentation and report covers with unique binding systems to conceal conventional hole punching, staples and exposed plastic binding strips. The Collection takes Lockhart’s exclusive line of presentation products to a new level of excellence. Additional features also give clients the ability to prepare a tax return, report or proposal to meet each specific need. The company also offers the Lockhart Firm Image Guide, a new tool to help firms through the process of branding their firm with an identity that resonates with clients and prospects.

## **Office Depot ([www.OfficeDepot.com](http://www.OfficeDepot.com))**

Yes, Office Depot, the store. There may be others in this market, but Office Depot is the king, with more than 1,000 stores in the United States providing more office products and services to more customers in more countries than any other company. From labels and label makers, binders and report covers to printers, software and computers, and reams and reams of virtually every kind of paper, Office Depot is basically the one-stop shop for most business needs, and thereby helps firms maintain a professional outward appearance to their clients.

And over the past 20 years, the company has grown to offer a variety of sales options from its clients, from the traditional visit to the local store, catalog ordering, online sales and even personalized business services that feature dedicated sales support staff and delivery of business supplies. In addition to the vast array of professional supplies (including office furniture and office beverages), Office Depot also offers a variety of professional services, from custom engraving of stamps and seals, to personalized printing of business stationery,

business cards and envelopes. Most locations also offer in-store business copying and printing centers.

## **Personal Branding Group ([www.thepersonalbrandinggroup.com](http://www.thepersonalbrandinggroup.com))**

In an age when many traditional accounting and tax services have become commoditized,

a firm's branding can make the difference between success and failure.

Yes, the skills, experience and credentials behind a practice are essential, but so is the image that the firm projects through its personal "brand."

This brand is often the only thing that prospects rely on to differentiate between firms, and that raises some above the rest of the pack. Every business and individual already has one, whether they help shape it or not. A practice's current personal brand is either positive, negative or neutral, and without actively managing that brand, the result is a brand selected by peers and customers, which is not always the best strategy. This is where The Personal Branding Group comes in.

The Personal Branding Group's focus is singular: They are experts at helping business clients identify and crystallize their personal brands and market those personal brands better than their competition, so that they become

“The Person to See” in their respective professions. Personal branding expert and president of The Personal Branding Group, Timothy P. O’Brien, created Rainmaker U., a coaching program that teaches business principals and executives how to create compelling brands and market themselves better than their competition. Tim offers his coaching, seminars and advisory services to a wide range of professionals, from small professional practices to Fortune 500 companies such as Citibank, UBS Financial and Bank of America.

### **Spot Runner ([www.SpotRunner.com](http://www.SpotRunner.com))**

Advertising on television has been shown to be the most effective way to reach the largest audience, but pricing has often left smaller businesses out of the TV loop. That’s where Spot Runner comes in. The company is the first ad agency that makes it easy and affordable for local businesses to advertise on TV by putting the entire process on the Internet. And since they also made the process easier than ever, business owners don’t need to learn the media business.

Through Spot Runner’s revolutionary approach, advertisers can choose from a comprehensive library of professionally pre-produced ads that can be viewed, purchased and personalized in a simple process online. With its proprietary media planning engine, Spot Runner also creates customized media plans by using some basic information entered by the advertiser, such as their industry, target demographics and budget.

From start to finish, the process, which can traditionally take months and hundreds of thousands of dollars, now takes just days at a fraction of the cost. Complete packages cost as little as \$500 per month, and all three services can be easily accessed online. Spot Runner manages each account by securing the ad buy, placing and tracking the ads, and analyzing viewership and demographic information.

### **Toner Quest ([www.TonerQuestInc.com](http://www.TonerQuestInc.com))**

When toner, laser cartridges, ink or ribbons are in short supply, TonerQuest offers a vast selection of replacement options, both from the brand name original manufacturer of the device as well as from after-market manufacturers of high quality compatible ink and toner supplies. The company also offers labels and

paper products, as well as hardware and peripherals, such as digital cameras, workgroup printers, scanners, memory devices, video conferencing systems and presentation products.

TonerQuest offers personal service handled by a dedicated account representative who works with the business to manage toner and ink supplies, thereby reducing inventory and helping to eliminate downtime, and providing pro-active ongoing cost-saving strategies. TonerQuest's multinational warehousing facilities, including 16 regional warehouses in the United States, allow the company to offer free overnight shipping from coast to coast.

### **UniBind ([www.UniBind.com](http://www.UniBind.com))**

With a presence in over 100 countries, UniBind is one of the largest “image building” companies in the world, helping businesses of all sizes present documents in a professional manner. The company provides professionals with its one-of-a-kind revolutionary binding system as well as a complete range of accessories for presentation needs. The company's binding, laminating and presentation products are the result of more than 25 years of research, development and client feedback.

UniBind offers comb, wire and steel binding machines, and its lamination hardware includes options for pouch and large-format laminating. The new XU series binder was recently released, offering a redesigned machine that gives users greater ease-of-use and flexibility. UniBind complements its binding and lamination systems with a range of presentation materials, including customizable portfolios and duo-binders. □

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