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Everyone knows the old adage, "Location, Location, Location." These are the three most important words in real estate. In the tax and accounting profession, I believe the adage should be, "Workflow, Workflow, Workflow." Just last month, Randy Johnston and I completed a two-hour workflow webcast for more than 600 attendees ("What Does Workflow Automation Mean to Your Firm?" www.CPATechAdvisor.com/webcasts/archives).

One of our polling questions asked whether firms had a written workflow plan for each of their services. Less than 18 percent of the attendees answered "Yes" to having a plan in place.

It is my belief that there are few things firms can do more important than developing and documenting a workflow plan. Such a plan should include a list of each of the services provided, a detailed description of each service and the workflow process the firm plans to implement to support each service. Take note that I state, "plans to implement." Many firms think they have processes in place, but a process isn't a process until it is documented and communicated to all staff.

As you start to document processes, it is important to investigate available technologies that can help your firm implement the most efficient workflow procedures.

I have had many firms ask me over the years how I acquired a vast knowledge of the many solutions available in the marketplace. The answer is simple, and yet it requires a great deal of effort.

Over my many years in practice, I have consistently read *The CPA Technology Advisor*, attended multiple conferences around the country, and talked to

numerous practitioners to progressively build a sound understanding of available

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Another key component to workflow efficiency is to annually revisit your existing workflow processes to ensure they are still relevant. Remember, any given process, no matter how advanced, is only one technology cycle away from becoming irrelevant.

As such, firm leaders need to consistently research new technologies and ask the following questions: Should I implement this new technology? Will this new technology improve my existing processes? If the answer to either question is “Yes,” then the time has come for a workflow upgrade.

If you wish to increase profits and maintain a better work/life balance, it is imperative that you take the time to review and improve your workflow processes. This requires an ample level of dedication and effort, but ultimately the result is an enormous return on investment. I continue to spend a lot of time working on my firm's workflow. In fact, I recently spent three days working on an improved workflow plan for RootWorks, the consulting arm of my firm that is focused on increasing profitability and enhancing work/life balance for tax and accounting firms.

The bottom line is that if I expect to achieve an acceptable balance between my personal life and work, I must refine my firm's workflow on an ongoing basis. I've heard it said that a firm (or a team) is only as strong as its weakest link. I believe that a firm is only as strong as the workflow processes that support it.

Technology

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