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For more than a decade, accounting professionals have been advised to get their practice online, that it was imperative for them to be competitive in the future. “Productivity-enhancing technologies” and “workflow optimization” became keywords for the movement, the continuing technological evolution of accounting firms. And there's no doubt that these innovations have greatly improved the modern practice, resulting in new technologies that help professionals work smarter, take on more and higher value clients and engagements, be more responsive to client needs and, ultimately, realize greater revenue and profits.

There's another factor, however, that's often left unmentioned.

Your clients, unfortunately, might be the weakest link. Whether they are mostly business entities, individual tax engagements, non-profits, high net worth individuals, or a diverse mix, your clients are one of the major influencers on whether you are able to reap the full benefits of those technologies.

In short, a professional practice is only as technologically adept as its clients allow. Offering client portals, for example, can greatly streamline collaboration between the client and accounting firm, but if only a few clients are using the technology, the firm isn't going to realize the true benefit. The same goes for the other major productivity-boosting technologies such as ASPs (hosted desktop applications), online bill payment solutions, online invoicing, and online document management tools. All these solutions help small businesses be more efficient, while also facilitating a more productive relationship with their professional accountant.

Sounds like an obvious win-win, but for many accounting practices, even some

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So, how can you persuade a technology-doubter to follow your firm into a more digital and collaborative environment? The first step is to learn more about the technologies available. Of course, there are countless small business technologies on the market, and keeping up with the ones best suited to certain client industries isn't a simple task. And while there are webcasts offered by many of the vendors, they are often a waste of time because each vendor focuses on their own product rather than on the broader needs of clients and accountants.

Fortunately, a new seminar is being offered this summer that specifically looks at a several web-based technologies that are beneficial to the small business, but also benefit the accounting practice, by providing enhanced collaboration, workflow and remote access.

The seminar, which is being offered in the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, Dallas, Atlanta and Los Angeles, is called "Taking Your Clients Online: How to Transform Your Client Relationships Using Cloud Computing."

The key focus is on helping professional accountants realize greater benefit from web-based technologies by helping get more of their clients to see the benefits for their own businesses, according to noted technology expert Doug Sleeter, president of The Sleeter Group, the largest network of small business technology consultants in the nation.

The seminar also offers practical advice that attendees can start using on day one, including best practices, industry-specific tools, and advice on:

- Using portals for sharing data and files between consultant and client
- Offering successful remote consulting services
- Helping clients leverage online invoicing and payment systems

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Darren Root, CPA.CITP, executive editor of *The CPA Technology Advisor*, will join Sleeter in presenting the seminar. Root is the managing partner of Root & Associates, a 14-person accountancy in Bloomington, Indiana. He is also the co-founder of RootWorks, LLC, a technology consultancy that helps small and mid-sized accounting practices better utilize technologies and optimize their internal workflow processes, and he also serves on the board of the AICPA's CITP Credential Committee and is a guest lecturer at Indiana University's Kelly School of Business.

Registration for the full-day event, which lasts from 7:30-5:00 at each city location, starts at \$159, and includes a continental breakfast and refreshment breaks. CPAs can also receive 8 hours of accredited continuing professional education (CPE) for attending the seminar.

“Web-based programs and online technologies that enhance collaboration are becoming more and more important to the success of accounting practices and business consultants, but keeping up with the latest solutions can be challenging for these professionals because they're primarily focused on running their own practices and other client issues,” Sleeter said.

“This new one-day seminar is tailored to the information needs of accounting pros, letting them which solutions are the best-of-breed, how to use them, how to encourage and support their clients' use of the technologies, and how moving more clients into a cloud computing environment can help them improve the productivity, efficiency and profitability of their clients and their practice.”

More details about the “Taking Your Clients Online” seminar are available at www.sleeter.com/online, including conference venues, dates and additional materials.

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