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Alongside professional tax preparation, write-up has long been a cornerstone client service for many full-service accounting firms, providing monthly, quarterly and annual engagements that equate to a fiscal checkup for client businesses. The core elements of account reconciliation, fixing improperly posted transactions and preparation of financial statements are critical to these entities truly knowing their health, and serve as a firm foundation for ensuring against employee fraud, as well as for planning, budgeting and valuation.

While the end products are generally similar to what they were 20 or even 10 years ago, write-up has changed dramatically over this time, particularly from the accounting professional's perspective. Almost gone are the days of shoebox accounting and physical ledger books, with even the smallest of businesses increasingly relying on off-the-shelf bookkeeping software to manage all, or at least most, aspects of their businesses. These technology tools have generally been great for productivity, but when it comes to fixing the errors that users make, well ... that's where write-up has turned accountants into technological sleuths, poring over hundreds or thousands of transactions for discrepancies.

Fortunately, professional write-up software has also evolved, providing many tools for quickly finding potential transaction errors, missing information and other issues, while also offering advanced features for quickly reconciling bank and credit accounts with the company's books. Recent advances in this area even allow for client financial information to be directly downloaded from their financial

institutions and then viewed on-screen alongside their check registers and

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actually an extension of the professional program.

Clients only have access to their own company files, and can even be restricted to only a few tasks, such as entering sales, check printing or running basic reports. More advanced clients may be granted full access to their payroll, inventory management and payables. The extent of their access can be tailored to their needs as the accounting firm determines them. This allows the firm to stay in total control of a client's data and be more proactive in finding and correcting transactions, performing reconciliations, and providing planning and business consulting services.

Of course, once size does not fit all when it comes to client-side accounting, and many have specialty niches that require specialty programs. So as always, the integration capabilities of a professional write-up program, particularly with regard to importing and exporting data from a client's bookkeeping system to a professional tax compliance or trial balance system is one of the most important elements in determining the program best suited to a professional practice. n

Technology

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