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Brian Tankersley • Jan. 05, 2012



Available on the
App Store

The software market has undergone a quiet change over the last five years. The mature market of desktop computer applications which are installed from CDs and DVDs has been supplemented by two new business models. This publication has discussed the evolution of Software as a Service for many years, and our roster of thought leaders includes some bright minds who are helping firms implement the related opportunities. These opportunities include collaborative models of client bookkeeping, no client application, and anytime, anywhere access to information.

A second software revolution taking place around us is the mobile revolution, which is changing the way we work, live, and communicate with everyone in our lives. Just twenty years ago, a cell phone was a costly status symbol possessed by a few senior executives, and these tiny devices are now in the hands of almost every man, woman, and teenager in the developed world. In July 2008, the Apple App Store opened for business, and made it possible for iPhone users to access hundreds of thousands of small, downloadable mobile software programs to meet every imaginable need. While the early solutions primarily met primarily personal needs, this business

model has changed the way many of us work with software. Just as our magazine has

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from Apple, Amazon, and Google. CCH has even announced a rapid development prototype team which is tasked with responding quickly to the emerging opportunities in this space, and one can only assume that similar initiatives exist within other major publishers serving the tax and accounting professions.

The first apps to be featured in this new column are focused on the basic needs of practitioners. They are:

- PDF Scanner for Android
- BNA Quick Tax Reference for Android, iOS, and BlackBerry
- Roboform for Android, iOS, and BlackBerry

Future columns will focus on offerings from industry publishers such as CCH, Thomson Reuters, Intuit, and Sage, as well as independent applications used by your industry peers.

We are very interested in learning more about how you are using apps in your practice and your personal life. Please send me a message (brian@bftcpa.com) and let me know how you use this technology to solve client and practice issues in your work. Your submission may earn you a mention in the publication, or possibly even some swag from our stash of CPA Practice Advisor merchandise.

App Profile: PDF Scanner

Summary: A “must have” utility for any professional with a smartphone who needs to capture images of documents.

While there are many competitors which will let you capture pictures of documents using your phone, PDF Scanner from Melon Mobile provides a comprehensive

solution for business users who want to be able to scan a page or two without

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- Makes it possible for employees to have a document capture device in the field without carrying any extra hardware.

Potential Limitations:

- Graphics captured are not as sharp as those captured by PC-based portable document scanners such as a Fujitsu ScanSnap S1100 or S1300.
- Users who do not have a steady hand may have to take multiple pictures to replace blurry images.
- Firms will need to make sure that their staff policies and procedures address the security and confidentiality of client data captured with these devices.
- Melon does not currently offer a version of this app for devices running Apple's iOS (iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad). iOS users may want to consider apps such as Scan2PDF, CamScanner+, or DocScanner.

Operating Systems: Android, BlackBerry, Symbian, Windows Mobile

Publisher: Melon Mobile

Publisher's Website: www.melonmobile.com

Price: \$7.99

App Profile: BNA Quick Tax Reference App

Summary: A great tool for the practitioner who needs to have key tax rates and figures with them at all times.

We've all been there – you're at a party, and a client (or prospective client) corners

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Benefits:

- Free, and includes information for tax years 2007-2011, and frequent updates are issued by BNA at no charge.
- Includes key information such as mileage rates, tax rates (corporate, personal, and estate), standard deductions, personal exemption amounts, pension, retirement plan, and IRA limitations.
- Has enough content to answer basic questions and takes up very little storage on your device.
- Works on both smartphones and tablets running supported mobile operating systems.

Potential Limitations:

- Does not provide information on IRS cases and policy releases other than updates to the basic rules, rates, and limits. There is no integration with BNA's online tax research service for subscribers.
- The app could be made more useful by providing linkage to detailed content for BNA subscribers, the ability to e-mail or post status updates with current news and developments.
- Windows Mobile devices are not supported.

Operating Systems: iOS, Android, BlackBerry (no Windows Mobile)

Publisher: BNA/Bloomberg

Publisher's Website: www.bna.com/quick-tax-reference-app/

Price: Free to all users

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One of the challenges for every accounting professional is keeping up with all of the usernames and passwords used to access confidential information. RoboForm is a secure database (with a single, master password) for storing and entering these logins. The application's automated data entry saves time and also protects users against malware such as keystroke loggers. The tool can also store a number of user profiles so that users can automatically fill data such as name, address, etc. into web forms. Rather than relying on memory or slips of paper, this tool provides better organization and enhances security at the same time.

Benefits:

- Stores all of your usernames and passwords in an encrypted database.
- Integration with PC and mobile browsers goes directly to login screens and automatically enters your stored credentials.
- RoboForm Everywhere service (\$19.95/year) includes an annual license for the smartphone, PC, and Mac client applications, as well as synchronization of data between computer, mobile device, and web.

Potential Limitations:

- Automatic password entry is not supported for all interfaces, including many network logins.

Operating Systems: iOS, Android, BlackBerry, Windows Mobile, Symbian, PalmOS, Windows PC, and MacOS. Browser extensions are available for Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Opera.

Publisher: Siber Systems, Inc.

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