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their clients, the physical location is gradually becoming less important, at least for some practice models.

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How One Firm is Helping Bring Jobs and Money to the U.S.

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years, including in the international taxation department of a 120 member practice, Joey Brannon, CPA, found he had the resources, the opportunity and the courage to open his own practice, Axiom CPA, P.A. (www.axiomcpa.com) in the Gulf Coast city of Bradenton, Florida.

Fortunately, his specialty didn't focus on real estate or construction-focused clients, because within the next year, the mortgage crisis hit Florida with a vengeance. However, the economic downturn did open up opportunities for international businesses exploring opening U.S. locations. Since he had strong experience in this area Joey's, the new firm quickly thrived and he hired his first staff member within weeks, and another less than six months later.

Joey's strategy for the practice started with the name. "Self-naming a firm can limit your growth and eventual exit strategy," he said. "This may or may not be what I do for the rest of my career, so having a distinct name for the practice makes it easier to add additional partners, or to sell it when the time comes."

He initially started with a client that he'd worked with at his previous firm, buying the client from that practice and transitioning from the hourly billing model to a value-based structure. Today, Axiom has a full-time staff of four serving a client base of more than 80 businesses. In addition to Joey, they are business manager, bookkeeping and payroll expert Patty Crunk, financial analyst Mandy Richardson, and Robbie Harvey, a recent graduate of the University of South Florida who will be sitting for the CPA exam soon.

Through mobile and remote access technologies, notably his iPad and laptops, the firm could be completely virtual but does maintain a physical office in Bradenton. Although he notes that he often never meets some of his clients in person and not many clients actually come to the office, "a physical location still adds credibility and permanence in the eyes of both clients and firm staff."

In addition to using remote technologies within the practice, the firm generally

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assessment tool for small firms that helps measure and benchmark their use of technology and workflow processes.

Axiom specializes in business consulting and strategic planning, tax and compliance, and virtual CFO services. These advisory roles are especially valued by the close to one third of the firm's clients that are international concerns, for which Joey and his staff help develop and manage their wholly-owned subsidiaries here in the States, along with tax compliance issues that foreign companies have little experience with.

Among these clients are a Norwegian software company, South American fruit growers and an Italian manufacturing enterprise. He notes, however, that it's not just the business climate that attracts foreign business to Florida, it's also the tropical climate and the quality of life.

"Florida is a magnet for people who want to live in a nice place," he said. "As a result, there are many wealthy entrepreneurs who choose to move or open businesses here, which allows them to move their families to the U.S. and raise their children here." Some of these business principals will even take a slight loss in overall profit in order to make the move.

These are legal immigrants who can immediately contribute significantly to the U.S. and local economies through job creation and commerce, and the State Department offers specialty E5 visas to such persons because it helps to foster new business growth. To qualify, individuals are generally required to create at least 10 new full-time jobs for U.S. citizens and invest between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000, depending upon economic conditions in the area they are locating to.

Axiom CPA works with attorneys specializing in these investor immigrants to provide due diligence for business purposes, vet the viability of ideas presented by business brokers, and advise on other business planning and taxation issues.

U.S.-based businesses still make up most of the firm's clients, but Joey says that they

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The remote technologies he uses for client engagements also has personal benefits for Joey, allowing him to spend more time with his wife Josie, a second grade teacher, and their sons Andrew and Lance. Joey also sits on the board of the Woodland Community Church (www.gowoodland.com) childcare center, is treasurer for the Manatee County YMCA, and is on the board of advisors for the C12 Group (www.c12group.com), a business resource for Christian business owners and CEOs.

Even with two children, a thriving practice and giving time to faith and community groups, Joey still finds the time to kayak, keep up with the Tampa Bay Rays and Buccaneers, and is an avid reader. His focus is primarily on business productivity books, which he reviews on the blog on his website.

Through Axiom, Joey also hosts client-focused book club events, which lets him share key points that his clients can use to strengthen their businesses and personal mindsets. In one of his recent events, they covered "Let's Get Real or Let's Not Play," by Randy Illig and Mahan Khalsa, which focuses on building a sales process around collaboration and trust.

For Joey, these books are not just beneficial to him in his own life and practice. "They give me more arrows in my quiver to help clients."

Infobox

Joey Brannon, CPA

Owner, Axiom CPA, P.C.

www.AxiomCPA.com

Bradenton, Florida

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Most Recent Book Read: "Steve Jobs" by Walter Isaacson.

Hobbies: Kayaking, reading, "Tough Mudder" endurance challenges, time with family.

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