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Hawkins Cloward & Simister

Hawkins Cloward & Simister adopted front-end scanning of tax documents and paperless tax preparation this tax season. I had a role in re-thinking the entire tax workflow process and restructuring our deliverables. Without paper moving around the office, firm members were forced to become more proficient with our practice management software to track job status. I created a PowerPoint presentation with pictures and animations to document our new workflow and train others at the firm. There was a painful learning curve, but it was worth it. We've enabled our team to work remotely, kept staff who have moved to other states, and our partners spent significantly less administrative time with tax returns.

To what extent have you and your practice/company embraced cloud computing?

I took a great interest in cloud accounting applications when they were first introduced. Currently, I'm a Certified ProAdvisor for QuickBooks Online, a Certified Xero Partner, and also experienced with FreshBooks, Wave Accounting, and other programs. The cloud has helped me develop more collaborative relationships with my clients and enhanced my ability to be a trusted business advisor.

Hawkins Cloward & Simister has fully embraced cloud computing in its outsourced payroll and bookkeeping services. The cloud is the key to it running efficiently and providing high levels of service. We are also always looking for opportunities to help our clients take their businesses to the cloud with accounting software add-ons and mobile apps.

In what ways have you contributed to your firm/company to make it a better place?

I have sought out ways to make the firm more efficient with technology and have

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I have attended many national conferences, including AICPA TECH+ and Sleeter, and took advantage of the opportunities to network with my peers. My involvement in social media has facilitated lasting relationships and collaboration with some of the brightest minds in the profession from all across the country. I've helped a few of them with technical questions; in turn, they've given me great advice and opportunities for which I'm extremely grateful.

Locally, I am involved in many startup and entrepreneurial networking events. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to speak at the Chamber of Commerce Women's Business Network. The topic was how to consume online content and use social media to show your expertise. I'm sure that's not a topic people would expect to hear from a CPA, but it went very well. Several attendees approached me afterwards and told me they learned much from my presentation.

What major changes do you foresee in the accounting profession of the near future (3-5 years)?

I see cloud-based accounting software, add-ons, and mobile apps evolving as clients and accountants exchange information on new levels. While automation and paperless workflows enable (almost) zero data entry bookkeeping, financial reporting and analysis become more of a collaborative effort between business owners and accountants. CPAs can become an integral part of a client's management team.

Tax returns and bookkeeping will be considered a commodity by the rising generation, though there is a tremendous opportunity for accountants who provide value-added advisory services. Technology advancements have quickly changed workflow in CPA firms, but mindsets have changed slowly. Instead of double

checking the numbers in the software and tax forms, effective accountants will use

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However, my goal goes beyond helping colleagues become technically competent. I hope to be influential to my young associates (the future of our profession) by sharing in the enthusiasm and enjoyment that comes from positively changing our clients' financial lives.

What is your career philosophy?

Albert Einstein said, "try not to become a man of success; rather, become a man of value." The titles I've held or compensation I've earned will be a minor factor in my overall career satisfaction. True fulfillment will come from the value I've added to my clients, whether I've made a difference in the world, and balancing work and family time. Another quote I strive to live by is "no other success can compensate for failure in the home." (David McKay).

Not including your current employer, what company do you most admire and why?

I admire companies that offer innovative products and treat their employees well. Throughout my life, I've had opportunities to tour the headquarters of several large companies I respect, but my experience a few years ago when I toured Zappos was unique. I was impressed with their culture and how it promoted creativity and self-expression among those that work there. Everyone I met there loved the company was dedicated to the ultimate customer experience.

Describe one person who has been an important mentor to you and how that person helped change your life.

After I graduated with my Bachelor's degree, I worked for a short time in a temporary position at Brigham Young University-Idaho. My boss and mentor was Bryan

Groom, the director of business services. He genuinely cared about me as a person

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