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Mary Ellen Biery • Dec. 14, 2015

Accountants preparing for routine meetings with business clients may be focused on communicating a checklist of documents or information that will be needed in order to prepare financial statements or tax returns. Understandably, the accountant's near-term goal is to make the upcoming tax season proceed smoothly. Longer-term priorities related to growing the firm, however, can be addressed if accountants use this unique time with clients to cultivate additional valuation engagements.

Accountants heading into tax season may question the wisdom of trying to generate additional engagements this time of year. However, research has provided some important reasons to combat the "[I'm too busy to change](#)" mentality, especially as it relates to incorporating discussions regarding valuation services.

First, business clients want and expect proactive advice from their accountants, and periodic meetings help focus the client on the long-term strategy and value of the business. Business planning and business strategy are among the top 5 services desired by small and medium-sized business owners already engaging or planning to engage a CPA, according to a survey by technology consultant [Sleeter Group](#). In addition, failing to provide [proactive advice](#) can get accounting firms fired, the survey found.

A second reason to use client meetings to fuel valuation business is that doing so addresses two central concerns of accountants: workload compression and the fear of becoming irrelevant. Addressing workload compression is [a top issue for accounting firms](#) of all sizes, according to the AICPA's Private Companies Practice

Section's annual survey. Even if accountants are too overworked during tax season to

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Source and Pepperdine University's Private Capital Markets Project reported that for owners who might be considering selling their businesses, the pendulum continues to shift to a seller's market across all deal sizes. "Companies with strong earnings and good accounting and management records are wanted," David Ryan, President Upton Financial Group, was quoted as saying in the "Market Pulse" report. "Buyers ... remain patient, but ready to act when a strong company is on the market." Outside of owners considering a sale, opportunities to provide valuations are also on the rise. Demand for valuations related to shareholder/partner disputes, contractual disputes, gifts and estates, and marital dissolution/family law cases are among areas where valuation professionals have recently reported [increased demand](#).

Accountants already help business owners maintain good accounting and management records. When they provide valuation services as well, they ensure business owners know and can bolster the value of their largest asset.

"I talk about valuations and KPIs all the time," said [Focus Group](#) founder Amit Chandel, CPA, CVA. "I tell owners, 'You need to look at your KPIs, you need to do your valuation. You've got to think about it and let us work on building value. If you don't do that, you're not serious about growing your company.'"

Accountants wishing to expand in valuation must first commit to approaching existing clients, and routine meetings including ahead of and during tax season provide excellent opportunities to provide the proactive service business owners say they desire. Clients expect their accountants to be proactive, and these conversations enable firms to stay relevant to their clients while meeting the demand for valuation services.

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