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Jon Baron • Feb. 12, 2016

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You may have seen recent ads by a major tax preparation provider claiming that, "it doesn't take a genius to do your taxes". Unfortunately, they're right. I'm not a genius. You're probably not a genius. Neither is the mechanic that recently fixed the brakes on my car. But, all of us have one thing in common: we know our trade. It's not only what we've been trained to do, it's what we do every day. That knowledge and experience should not be underestimated.

So, if you caught one of these ads during the Super Bowl and found yourself wondering how to defend your profession, remember these three things.

1. We are strategic advisors.

Our profession is in the midst of radical change, both driven and supported by technology. We are no longer just number crunchers and tax return preparers. We have software that can automate that information for us. Instead, we are moving to advisory-based business models and working as tax strategists who advise businesses and individuals based on our depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise.

Given this sweeping change, businesses are now tapping tax professionals to not only manage taxes, but to help them determine profitable new product lines, diversify investments, and plan for the future. In that same vein, our role is also changing with respect to individual taxpayers as we work to help them understand

new legislation, how it applies to them, and what actions will result in the most

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benefit from do it yourself tax software. However, for those of us with families, businesses, savings and assets, a tax professional is much more cost-effective.

The average taxpayer isn't keeping up-to-date on ever-evolving tax legislation, so our ability to understand how our client's life experiences and financial situations impact their tax liability translates into significant tax savings. And, consider this: if we find just one significant deduction or tax credit, it can easily exceed the average fee for preparation.

3. We save people time.

The more complex an individual's taxes are, the more time it takes them to file on their own. Investing in a tax professional who is far more experienced gives taxpayers an optimal tax outcome in a fraction of the time.

Further, our more advanced software solutions have the ability to quickly scan information and organize line items and forms correctly using OCR technology (Optical Character Recognition), similar to what your bank uses when you digitally deposit checks. By letting us automate much of the data entry process, there's less chance for the human error that can jeopardize a taxpayer's return.

Additionally, by turning to an expert, taxpayers do not have to worry about wasting time understanding complicated legal issues, or trying to evaluate finances with limited experience. After all, their time is worth money too.

Long story short, anyone can drop numbers in software, but tax professionals have the ability to analyze a taxpayer's situation, look for tax savings opportunities, and help them plan strategically for the future. So, like the brakes on your car, it is often a much smarter decision to let a tax professional handle the job.

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