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faster, but also smarter. You need to be agile to compete, drive transparency into your processes and be able to effortlessly mobilize organizational knowledge and ...

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Becoming a collaborative, client-focused leader means changing how you work with each other, and transforming how you work with clients.

You're an exceptional accounting firm. You deliver high-quality service, operate efficiently and keep information up-to-date and scrupulously accurate. And yet, in spite of the immense value you bring to your clients, the increasingly competitive

market in which you operate is making it harder than ever to differentiate your

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and expertise to deliver exceptional quality.

Achieve this and you are well positioned for success. A 2015 study across professional services organizations found that those that scored highest for client satisfaction saw greater revenue growth and higher billable utilization.

But achieving this, and creating more valued and engaging client relationships, requires accounting firms to become more collaborative and fundamentally change the working dynamic between internal teams and their clients. In fact, it's a change that's not only being driven by accounting firms, but also by the clients themselves who are beginning to demand greater transparency in the process.

Unfortunately, many of the legacy enterprise tools we all rely on to collaborate on client engagements, socialize knowledge and manage client relationships are no longer fit for purpose in today's "age of the customer" economy. In fact, many enterprise tools present very real barriers. Processes are riddled with inefficiency, governance is often put at risk and clients become frustrated with delays. A recent Huddle study of accounting professionals found that 55% were limited by their workplace tools when sharing files with their clients, 51% had wasted time working on a document only to discover it had already been succeeded by a newer version, and 39% were routinely delayed on a project while waiting for approvals. None of this speaks to the efficient, client-focused approach that's required for success. So, improved collaboration between teams and clients is the key to client transformation.

Be more agile

Agility has become as important as ability for any services business. Unfortunately, as organizations grow they often lose the agility that defined their initial success.

From auditing and management consulting projects, to deal and tax advisory, clients

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Be more engaging

In the age of the customer, clients expect a more social and collaborative working relationship where ideas are shared and projects monitored with greater transparency. Traditionally, extending a shared working environment outside of the corporate firewall has been time-consuming and troublesome, often requiring considerable IT effort.

Client-focused leaders understand that technology must not be the barrier to meeting client expectations. Clients today not only want confidence in the security of their sensitive data, but also in the robustness of your processes and governance standards. In the age of the customer, a one-way push of information is not enough. Your clients must be kept engaged and consulted at every step.

Try mapping your client journey. How do you engage and collaborate with clients at each stage of the engagement process? Are you reliant on email and the occasional conference call? Is that sufficient enough to build client satisfaction?

Cloud-collaboration technology is making it easier than ever for teams to collaborate in secure, shared environments where they can share content with clients, iterate on project deliverables and share ideas.

Be more mobile

Client-focused leaders understand that we are no longer tethered to physical desks. However, an enterprise mobility strategy doesn't stop at email. Whether in the office, on the road, or at client sites, today's teams need to be confident in their ability to work seamlessly, manage approvals and follow team communication as they hop between devices and locations. 39% of industry professionals that have been delayed

on a project and missed a deadline while waiting on an approval from a manager

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Achieve this with less risk

However you look to achieve greater employee efficiency and an improved client experience, there's no room for error. Maintaining governance over your internal processes remains critical not only to the quality of client deliverables, but also your brand. 43% of industry professionals admit to losing a hard copy of a document and 80% admit to using unsecured USB flash drives to share files.

Client-focused leaders understand that security must be balanced with the flexibility to allow teams to function efficiently. Consider the shadow IT tools that are currently in use across your organization (including consumer-grade file sharing apps and USB flash drives) and how cloud-collaboration can offer a solution that meets both productivity needs and security requirements.

Not investing in cloud technologies that achieve greater levels of collaboration increases your exposure to shadow IT as employees circumvent cumbersome legacy technology to get their work done efficiently.

Morten Brøgger is the CEO of [Huddle](#), a provider of cloud collaboration and workflow tools. Brøgger has more than 20 years of experience in the technology industry and extensive go-to market and SaaS experience, spanning the US and European markets.

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