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Jon Baron • Jun. 28, 2016



Small to mid-sized accounting firms are traditionally viewed as serving only local clients, but with rapid increases in technology, the world is quickly becoming a smaller place to do business. As globalization presents numerous opportunities for small businesses, it also opens the door for smaller accounting firms to expand their services into the international arena.

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accounting firm association, saw coming.

When he started out in the accounting profession more than 40 years ago, Terry was part of one of the largest accounting firms in the world, Arthur Andersen. At that time, firms like this were dominating the market for international accounting and advisory services. But even back then, Terry sensed that the marketplace would eventually evolve, making international work commonplace for all sizes of firms.

“It was a shift that seemed inevitable,” said Terry.

After leaving Arthur Andersen in 1976 to work with a small independent practice in Champaign, Illinois, Terry began fielding questions from clients that demanded international insight. He knew the firm couldn't keep pace to address the needs of international clients and it was eventually merged into RSM in 1983.

In his current role as President and CEO of Allinial Global, Terry is now helping firms of all sizes remain independent by providing a full backstop of international talent and resources for member firms to pull from.

“International tax inquiries are a trend smaller firms can no longer ignore,” said Terry. “Even if these questions are coming in only once or twice per year, the inability to answer them opens the door to competitors. Our association of international firms share education, marketing resources, and technical knowledge in a wide range of services and sectors to help each other answer these questions.”

Is an international alliance right for your firm?

Like Allinial Global, international accounting alliances are made up of independently owned accounting firms around the world who work collaboratively to serve clients. To understand whether or not joining one is right for your firm, take

a look at your client base and figure out which clients are doing business

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Among its many benefits, membership to an international accounting alliance provides a platform for independent firms around the world to share knowledge with one another on country-specific accounting, tax, auditing and advisory services. They also offer referral services, networking opportunities and a chance to develop your international tax acumen, not to mention the camaraderie you'll enjoy while working side-by-side with others in your profession around the globe. Yes, you'll be sharing the revenue, but you'll also be mitigating the risk.

"One of the most valuable benefits of joining a global accounting association is that you're not only reading or studying up on international tax code, but also utilizing the insight and expertise of others who are out there actually doing the work," said Terry.

With more than 40 international accounting associations to choose from, make sure to do your research and select the one that best meets the needs of your firm and your clients. Many of these alliances have strict criteria that must be met before your firm can become a member. The flip-side of this selectivity is that once accepted, you know the partners you'll be working with are valuable assets.

How technology can support international work

As your firm begins to take on more international work, make sure your [practice management](#) system enables effective collaboration. It should allow you to share general information among staff and throughout your alliance network, but also have the ability to restrict access to more sensitive information based on roles. The balance of control and visibility is important in a collaborative work environment.

Being a member of an affiliation is also a great way to leverage and learn how other members manage and deploy technology within their own firms. It's an easy way to take a best practices approach to technology management.

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current position as Managing Director of the Professional segment, Jon held the positions of President of Professional Software & Services, and Vice President of Development, where he was responsible for the design and development of all Professional products and services. Jon has three decades of technology development and management experience. Jon holds a BBA in Accounting from Siena College and an MBA from Boston University.

Firm Management

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