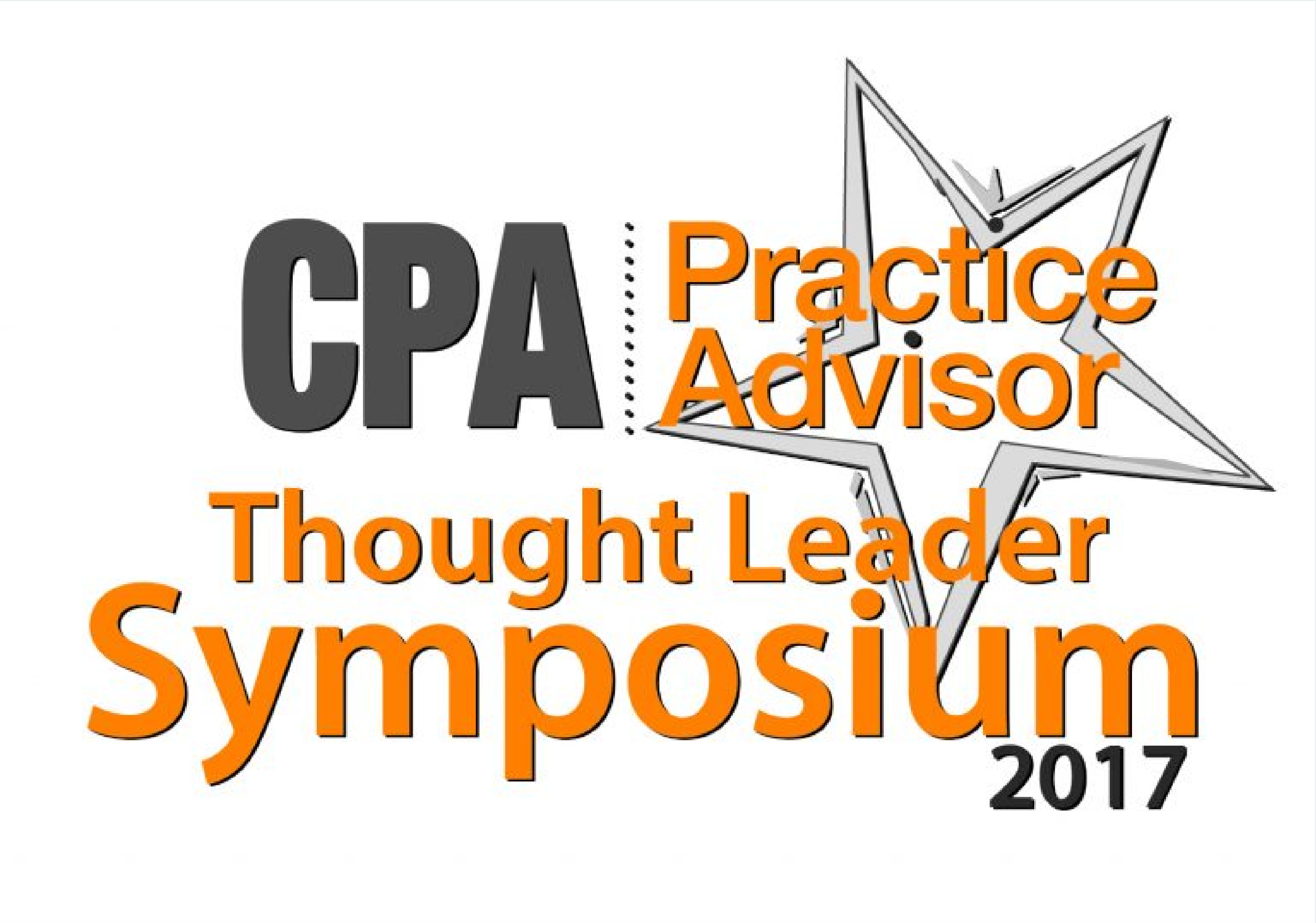
members with an opportunity to immerse themselves in deep discussions about pressing issues in the accounting profession, develop opportunities to collaborate, plan ...

Gail Perry • Mar. 22, 2017



I hear that question a lot this time of year. The symposium is an annual event which developed over time, spawning from a casual meet-up with a group of accounting profession leaders nine years ago arranged by Greg LaFollette, CPA, who at that time was executive editor of *CPA Practice Advisor* (formerly *CPA Technology Advisor*). The group has grown since its beginnings and now has maxed out its membership at 30.

The format is that of a think tank where concepts and models within the accounting profession are discussed, dissected, analyzed, alternatives are considered, roadblocks taken into account. Each year we choose a few issues that are holding the profession back, issues where the members agree they can make a difference – breaking down barriers, charting new territory, cooperating with other leaders in the profession. What the members provide to the profession in the year ahead in terms of speaking, writing, consulting, educating often comes from this meeting.

In addition and just as important, we meet with key vendors that serve the profession, discuss their ideas, products, strategies, and concepts that are being considered for both the short-term and the years ahead. Because this group has such a significant outreach across the profession it is able to see a very broad spectrum and provide a unique perspective. The input from this group is essential in helping these vendors shape their decisions, learn how they can improve and better serve the profession, and choose what to bring to market and how to get it there.

The newest addition to this annual event is the complementary 40 Under 40 think tank that occurs in the fall. The two groups meet independently of each other but share ideas and provide similar input to each other and to vendors. A major difference of the two groups is that the 40 Under 40 group changes each year, so new and younger and more innovative members are constantly joining in the conversations.

What distinguishes these groups is that both the Thought Leader Symposium and the 40 Under 40 are filled with members who have the ear of the profession, the willingness to serve, the ability to visualize new concepts, a platform for sharing ideas, and a mission to embrace the future of the profession as one of their personal goals. The accounting profession as a whole and the vendors that serve that profession are the beneficiaries.