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Ian Vacin • Mar. 31, 2017
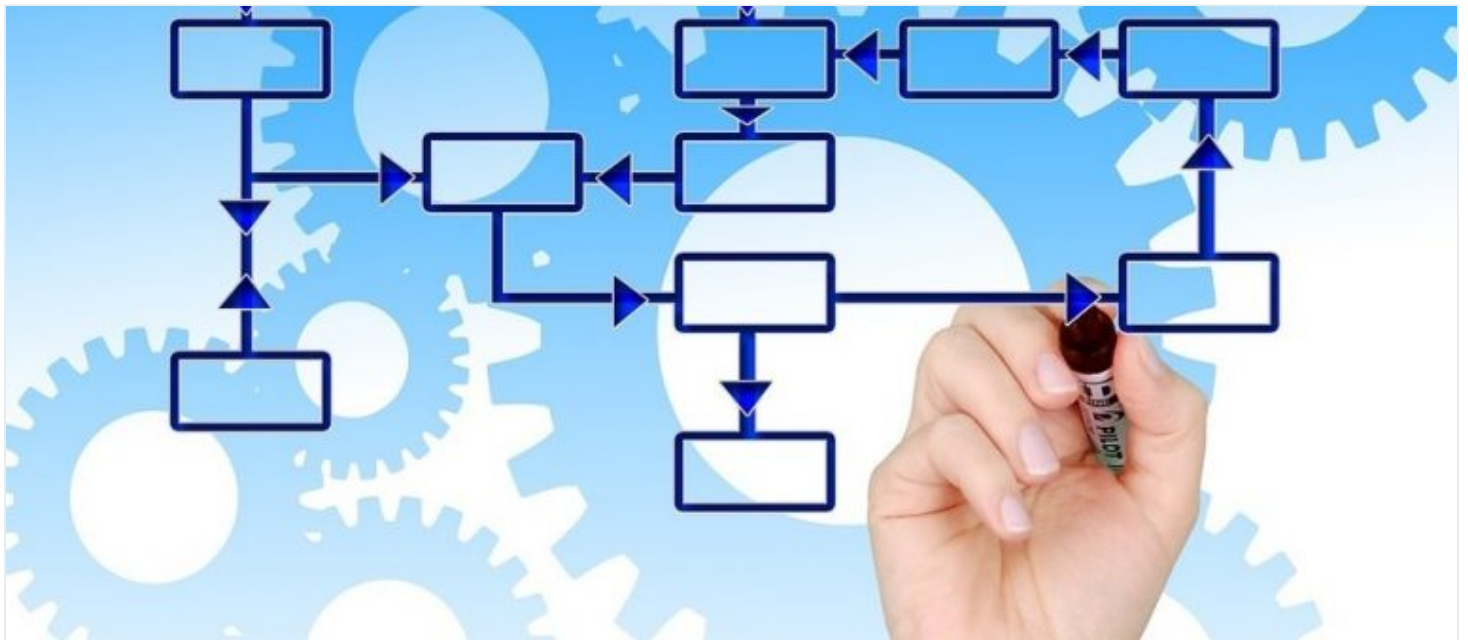
To grow your accounting practice, or even just to operate at your most efficient, visibility is pivotal. You need systems and processes in place that allow everyone in your team to know who is working on what, with who, at any given time.

When everyone is able to see the overall picture—and all the details from the micro to the macro— efficiency follows organically. Bottlenecks and roadblocks are either minimized or much easier to identify and overcome, it's easier to stay on top of client relationships, and everyone in your practice knows the shared goals they're working toward.

Despite the importance of visibility, it's still a big issue for many practices around the world. To help boost the visibility your firm provides, here are the measures that some of the most transparent accounting practices around the world are using.

1. Standardize & document your processes

steps—will be extremely difficult. This step warrants a full guide on its own, so for now, let's move on with the assumption you've standardized at least the most common of your processes.

2. Make everyone accountable

With some consistency and predictability provided by standardized processes, you next need to achieve firm-wide accountability. Your goal is to ensure everyone follows the standards set, and that you find out when things are going right or wrong.

Everyone must have clear goals, objectives, and ownership that ladder up your firm. Everything everyone in your firm does should contribute upward to the overall goals of the firm as a whole. If the goals don't contribute to the overall objectives, why are they doing it?

3. Have only one owner for everything

Every task and job must have a single owner. If there is more than one overall leader or assignee for one individual task or project, the chances of this falling through the cracks or missing its deadline will increase dramatically.

Obviously, some larger projects will require multiple team members collaborating on them, but you still want to ensure there is one overall leader and clearly defined sub-tasks that are each assigned to one individual.

4. Share what you're working on regularly

Introduce some operating mechanisms like daily stand-ups, where everyone in your firm shares three things they are working on. This will provide day-to-day and

immediate visibility, allowing everyone from top to bottom to know what's going on

visibility is, and must be, a two-way street. If you want your team to get in the habit of sharing what they are doing, be prepared to reciprocate. Make an effort to let them know what you are working on and, ultimately, where things are headed. That is how trust is built and how transparency grows organically.

Everyone must be in this together, working for the same shared outcomes. You can't expect your staff to embrace what you aren't willing to do yourself.

6. Eliminate information silos

Repositories of information, like your email inbox, are private and separate. What you see and do is completely isolated from anyone else and what they see or do in their inbox. To maximize transparency, remove these silos and keep information flowing through your firm.

Explore modern team collaboration tools like Slack and Karbon, that keep an open and active dialogue. Instead of information silos, communicate in public channels, and have a single system to work together, where emails and tasks can be assigned to whoever is best for the job, not stuck in your own individual inboxes.

7. Track everything

Keep a record of all external and internal communications relating to clients and jobs. Foster an environment where people do not share information internally via email, but use one of the above tools for all internal dialog and tracking of external communication.

This will let anyone find information, updates and communication easily when they need it, without needing to disrupt anyone else in the team. This step alone will dramatically decrease bottlenecks and increase efficiency.

By making the processes in your firm consistent and transparent, ensuring everyone

thousands of accountants over the past decade, understanding what challenges the industry faces, understanding how accountants can improve their productivity and profitability through better workflows and ensuring new products can cater for these needs.

Firm Management