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**PRODUCT & SERVICE GUIDE**

# Tax Client Procrastination Can Equate to Fear

As you look back at tax season, for those of you who are tax accountants or even those who hear from your clients asking for recommendations for tax advisors, think about all of the frustration, grief, fear, stagnation, and bad judgment that came in ...

**Gail Perry, CPA** • Apr. 25, 2017



Remember that scene from the movie, *Field of Dreams*, when The Voice said, “Ease his pain”? You should be hearing that voice when your tax clients call or walk into your office, particularly when they wait until the last week or so before the filing deadlines.

There's a reason these people waited until the last minute. The reason might be different on the surface for each one, but the underlying reason has something to do with fear. Fear of how much they'll owe. Fear of not having enough money to pay. Fear of being harassed by the IRS. Forever. These people have nightmares. It took so much nerve to make that call or walk into to see you. And you hold it in your power to relieve that fear.

You might not be able to solve any of the problems they think they are facing – you can't make the tax lower that it is supposed to be. You can't put money into their accounts so they are flush enough to pay the government. You can't make the tax notices go away if they have already piled up. But what you can do is remove the stress and absorb that fear and become the buffer for your clients. Tax bill too high? Help them with budgeting and planning. Not enough money? Work out a payment plan or compromise. Tax notices clogging the mailbox? Get a Power of Attorney and communicate with the government on their behalf.

What you have to offer is better than lower tax bills and the end of tax notices (well, almost). You can offer peace of mind for your clients, the knowledge that they no longer have to fear.

As you look back at tax season, for those of you who are tax accountants or even those who hear from your clients asking for recommendations for tax advisors, think about all of the frustration, grief, fear, stagnation, and bad judgment that came in the door along with your clients and how much of it you were able to assuage.

Now think about how you can be proactive for the rest of the year with your clients, helping them tackle that feeling that led them to your doorstep. As a tax advisor, what can you do throughout the year to make sure clients know you are there for them, particularly when it comes to tax issues? Here are some suggestions:

- Advise your clients to send any correspondence they might receive from taxing authorities directly to you. Not only can you take care of responding on their behalf, you will be able to remain in the loop through the year if there are any requests for additional information from the IRS or state government.
- Just because you've made sure your clients are protected from underpayment penalty, that doesn't mean you shouldn't touch base with them about their tax situation during the year so there are no surprises come next April. Schedule pre-emptive appointments later in the year to meet and determine what your clients can expect for their 2017 tax bill.

- Your self-employed clients might be having trouble making quarterly payments. Tax payments are so much easier when they are withheld from your paycheck. Work with your clients to help them budget, maybe put away tax money monthly instead of quarterly, so it won't be so difficult to make those tax payments.
- Have you started long-range financial and tax planning with your clients? If not, are you the person who can do that or do you need to help your clients find a financial planner? You should be part of that dialog and that process, and the sooner it is started, the better off your clients will be.

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