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**Jim Boomer** • Aug. 22, 2017



When you make a list of your firm's strategic business partners, do your technology solution providers make the cut? If your answer is no, you're likely approaching these relationships in a way that limits your opportunities to truly leverage technology as a strategic asset. Too often, firms view solution providers as someone who wants to sell them something that they may or may not want to buy. They immediately create an arm's length barrier and proceed with caution. In our peer communities,

members and sponsors approach it as a partnering relationship and tap into the

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much more in a partnering relationship than with the buyer/seller approach.

## **What business partners gain**

The solution providers in our industry welcome feedback and input from the firms they support. They want nothing more than to have the very people who are current users or could become future users of their solutions taking an active role in the future roadmap for their products. The solution providers also obtain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges that CPA firms are facing today.

## **Creating a win/win**

Given what both sides desire from a partnering relationship, we have structured our communities and their respective sponsor programs to promote the strategic business partnership in terms of both attitude and behavior. In our peer community meetings, sponsors remain in the room for a majority of the discussions, and we invite them to take an active role. We also help to bring together the multiple technology decision makers in a single location which helps to streamline discussions.

In some peer communities, we have taken it a step further by having sponsors sit at the tables with members and actively participating in all dialogue. This has been welcomed with open arms by both members and sponsors alike. In this collaborative setting, knowledge, experiences, and connections flow freely between firms and solution providers.

I encourage you to replace the term “vendor” with “partner.” Sure it is semantics, but it is critical to changing attitudes and behaviors about the relationship between CPA firms and their solution providers. Only through collaboration can we ensure that

technology supports our shared goal of improving the profession and maintaining

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