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News

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Scott Peterson • Jul. 31, 2018



Joni Johnson-Powe, principal of [Taxnologi Solutions, LLC](#), was recently interviewed by Scott Peterson, Vice President of U.S. Tax Policy and Government Relations at Avalara. Taxnologi Solutions is a company made up of tax consultants who are skilled in the comprehensive understanding of international, federal, and state and

local tax laws, employing hands-on technology solution skills within the field. Here

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with our clients' tax compliance obligations, but also transforming their overall tax function. Increased efficiencies and accuracy allows accounting and tax departments to deploy resources to more value-added tasks.

We help our clients achieve these efficiencies through automated tools and process refinement. We also find that technology is essential to providing cost effective and valuable service offerings to our clients.

Avalara: *Do you see trends in accounting that are forcing firms to adapt, and how has your practice handled that? Are you finding the need to be more entrepreneurial to remain competitive?*

JJP: Accounting firms can no longer simply focus on providing “traditional” accounting, audit and tax services. Instead, as an industry, we will provide value to our clients by obtaining, transforming, analyzing and consolidating our clients’ data through real-time data analytics and other tools. Firms must transform in line with the technological advances that impact our clients’ businesses, such as Blockchain, through strategic and advisory services.

Avalara: *If you have a subscription pricing model, how did you put that in place and what lessons did you learn?*

JJP: For some of our firm’s services offerings, we moved to subscription pricing. In these instances, we bill our clients a flat fee every month for a defined set of services that we perform on a regular basis. As our model of services changed in terms of automating processes and tasks for clients, the move in this direction has been an evolution based on the needs and desires of our clients. An important aspect of

subscription pricing is understanding your clients' needs, clearly defining scope, and

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grades, an accounting degree and passing the CPA are no longer the sole benchmarks by which a candidate can be evaluated. Technology skills, such as SQL and/or data analytics, will be a necessity.

In addition, the ability to adapt, assess and innovate will drive growth for accounting practices, which means not only bringing in staff with the skills, but also training seasoned staff on new techniques and technology.

Avalara: *Who in your career has had a big influence on you and why?*

JJP: As I look back on my career, I often think to myself, "Wow, who would have thought technology would be the primary driver and focus of my practice?" I knew when I graduated law school that the traditional route of law firm associate was not for me.

I also think that starting my career in the Big 4 accounting industry taught me a lot about adapting to client needs. There's a constant change in large public accounting firms and the culture of a service-oriented firm is to look, listen and adapt to their clients' needs.

My most influential boss as a senior consultant was also a lawyer, but he had this deep understanding of how telecom billing systems and taxation functions intertwine. I joined his projects and he shared his passion for finding solutions in a very complex area of taxation. If it weren't for his insight, guidance and encouragement that helped me learn what seemed like foreign concepts of relational databases, table structures and key fields, I would not be where I am today in the tax technology realm.

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