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**FIRM MANAGEMENT**

# A New Outlook for Your Accounting Practice

Change vs. Old School is something the accounting profession has had to deal with in recent years too, and while that theme isn't new to these pages, I'd like to give it a bit of a different twist.

**Gail Perry, CPA** • Aug. 19, 2018



It's state fair time in Indiana, so naturally we're going to be working pork chop sandwiches and Ferris wheels and cow barns and classic tractor parades into our regular routine. My photographer husband has entered some of his photography into the state fair competition this year, and so we're balancing an excitement of bringing something new to the fairgrounds with the love for keeping things the same way they've always been.

Change vs. Old School is something the accounting profession has had to deal with in recent years too, and while that theme isn't new to these pages, I'd like to give it a bit of a different twist.

I've been having a lot of discussions with people lately about what they would do differently if they were to have a clean slate. And rather than considering a complete, start-from-scratch clean slate, which definitely leads to a fascinating conversation, for the purpose of this article, let's just consider a clean slate in your workplace.

As it stands now, every day is about the same. You go to the same place to work, and even if you're working at a client's workplace, you take the same tools with you, follow the same route, set up the same sort of space. Your staff, assuming you don't

work independently, has been with you for some time, and they all take care of their expected tasks. You use the same pens and pencils, the same worksheet templates, the same software programs, the same document storage devices – the same things you’ve been using probably for years.

Now, set aside some time, plan a discussion with your colleagues and even some clients, and picture yourself starting fresh. You walk in the door of your office or workplace, and the space is empty – waiting for you to design it in the most useful and efficient way possible. Where would you start? What about the design of your workspace is most important to completing the jobs you need to do?

Now onto your staff. Are you using staff members in the most efficient and effective ways possible? Do they have the training you would like them to have? Do they all get along with one another? How could you help them be better versions of themselves and provide better work product to help the firm and its clients?

Consider the tools – the old school tools as well as the technology. What works the way you want it to work? What needs improvement? Where can you go to find the solutions to make sure the tools you’re using are the best?

Think about the jobs themselves. Are you doing the work you want to do, for the clients you want to work with, and in the way you want to do it? Is it time to expand your service offerings? Or cut back on services that aren’t profitable or that simply aren’t enjoyable?

And the biggest questions – what are your goals for your practice? Are you hoping to grow the practice, or cut it back? If expansion is in the cards for you, do you want to expand your client base or do more for the existing clients? Are you hoping to focus on a niche industry? What do you think your clients are going to need from your firm in five years, and are you prepared to provide that service?

None of these questions can be answered quickly, nor should they be. Take them on, one at a time, and lay out a plan for your future that will serve as your blueprint for the years ahead. And then start figuring out how you’re going to make that happen!

Meanwhile, enjoy the remaining days of summer, get some fresh air, remember what’s good about everything that surrounds you, and then interject some newness to help you freshen your outlook.

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