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PRODUCT & SERVICE GUIDE

Do Your Best Tax

If you are in the market to replace or add tools for your tax practice, there are several considerations. Vendors want to sell you new products, and they want you to be happy with the products you select. There are important characteristics that you ...

Randy Johnston • Nov. 18, 2019



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Many CPA firms make most of their revenue from tax compliance. While some pundits claim that tax will not be an important part of CPA firms in the future, this

won't happen any time soon. Compliance services are “must haves” as opposed to “nice to have” services. While we have covered other service offerings in the columns throughout the year, what can we do to improve our tax offerings? Traditionally, CPA firms have used tax providers like [Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting](#), [Thomson Reuters](#), [Intuit](#) and [Drake](#). While personal and business tax software is core to the practice, CPAs change tax preparation software as often as they change physicians and religions. Supporting products for your tax department go beyond tax preparation. Consider planning, portals, e-signature, workflow, 1040 workpaper software, tax document gathering products, Robotic Process Automation (RPA), tax research, as well as specialty products such as sales and use tax software. To build a comprehensive practice, most firms have a library of tools to support their professional tax team.

If you are in the market to replace or add tools for your tax practice, there are several considerations. Vendors want to sell you new products, and they want you to be happy with the products you select. There are important characteristics that you might take for granted, for example speed, reliability, accuracy, availability and integration when you work with a single vendor publisher. Other more subtle expectations include timely support, non-disruptive updates, ease of use, rapid completion of common tasks, and logical implementation of features. Finally, pricing for the product, conversion, and per user are important decision factors, too. You should create your own shopping checklist.

Expansion into special tax areas require special tax tools and techniques. Consider the advantages to your clients if you can electronically gather documents or prepare sales tax returns. Consider the advantages to your team if you have proper workflow, 1040 workpaper automation and RPA. Consider the advantages to both your clients and your team if you use portals and e-signatures. Should you cost justify these tools to yourself and your partner group?

So, How Do We Recommend and Pick the Right Tax Tool Strategy?

First, clearly identify your existing tools and assess your needs. Consider your target clients and services. Do the existing tools satisfy the needs of all clients in a seamless fashion? What tax services have you been asked to provide that require additional capability? Are the needs of your clients becoming more complex requiring better tools, or are the needs becoming simpler so that a less capable product is enough? Named below are products in several categories.

Tax Preparation Software

- GoSystem RS Tax
- CCH ProSystem fx Tax
- CCH Axxess Tax
- UltraTax
- Lacerte
- ProSeries
- Drake
- Canopy Tax

Portals

- Thomson Reuters [NetClient CS](#) and [NetClient CS Mobile App](#)
- CCH Axxess Portal
- CyberCabinet – AccountantsWorld.com
- [Microsoft OneDrive for Business](#)
- [ShareFile for Accountants](#)
- SmartVault
- LeapFILE
- Secure Drawer – eFileCabinet
- Thomson Reuters GoFileRoom Portal

e-signature

- CCH
- Doc-It
- DocuSign
- Echosign
- Right Signature
- SignatureFlow
- Thomson

Workflow

XCM Workflow

- CCH Axxess Workstream
- Thomson Reuters FirmFlow
- Pascal Workflow
- Jetpack Workflow
- Aero Workflow

- Liscio
- Inside products
 - WK CCH iFirm
 - Doc.It
 - OfficeTools
 - Vohcom
 - Clarity Practice Management

1040 workpaper software

- CCH Scan with Autoflow
- Copanion GruntWorx
- Doc.It
- SurePrep
- Thomson TaxSort

Tax document gathering

- 1Tap Receipts/ Receipt Bank Personal for Schedule C clients
- Receipt Bank Extract, Receipt Bank Fetch
- Sage Auto-Entry is a solution which is designed to extract transactional data from invoices, bank statements, and credit card statements
- Audit Dashboard
- Suralink
- CCH My1040Data
- PBC options exist in many DMS systems (Doc-It, iChannel) as well as practice management systems – around fifteen options in all

Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

- [Automation Anywhere](#)
- [Blue Prism](#)
- [UiPath](#)
- [Foxtrot](#)
- [Gappify](#)
- [Kofax RPA](#)
- [Pegasystems](#)
- [AntWorks](#)
- [Appian](#)

- [Bonitasoft](#)
- [IBM Digital Business Automation](#)

Research

- Bloomberg BNA
- CCH KnowledgeConnect
- Thomson Reuters CheckPoint Catalyst (replacing RIA) and Edge

Sales and use tax software

- AvaTax
- CCH SureTax – Wolters Kluwer
- Sabrix – Thomson Reuters
- Sovos
- TaxWare
- VerTex

While you certainly should have a strategy in place before expanding into other offerings, you can see that tax software is available for wide variety of business use cases. Further, we did not explore other needs like ex-pat, local property tax, excise tax, and more that may be a part of your existing practice.

Are there downsides and upsides to changing your tax service?

Absolutely! Clearly there are compliance risks and deadlines that must be met. You can't do a tax service for a few clients and be successful. On the other hand, if you are performing a service for ten or more clients, then automating that process could allow you to handle more volume with greater accuracy and profitability.

Tax provides a good recurring revenue stream that can extend throughout the year. While in earlier times we might have completed most work between late January and April 15, many firms are struggling to meet the September and October deadlines. When that work is complete, it is time to start another tax planning cycle and complete another year of tax work. Tools listed in this article can save you time and money while providing superior results for your clients.

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