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Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), handling the pandemic, PPP, PPP2, and the changes in tax deadlines, most practitioners report that these years have been among the ...

Randy Johnston • Sep. 06, 2021



From the September 2021 Issue.

It is nice to see the last few stressful years fade in the rearview mirror. With the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), handling the pandemic, PPP, PPP2, and the changes in tax deadlines, most practitioners report that these years have been among the toughest on record for them. But this time has been very profitable! Additionally, there hasn't been much time to work on the practice with business development, technology innovations, or new service offerings. While many of you have worked on your practice, this would be more of an exception than the rule. Further, a significant

number of firms are reporting staff turnover like they have not seen at any time. If

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tax deadlines are past. I've listened to many stories of COVID deaths, long-haul effects, suicides, and other mental health issues which will affect our families, practices, and clients for years to come. Would you please do the best you can to care for yourself and everyone where you have an impact?

While I'm sure you always have concern for your family, business, and clients, note that all may seem appropriately "needy" right now; these needs are likely to continue during the recovery period and for much of the next five to ten years. In addition, as students return to schools after many were taught remotely for the first time, there will be culture shocks for years to come. Our culture is changing, and this unspoken stressor will have unpredictable outcomes on different people. Resilience can be taught, but don't be surprised if someone you thought was fine turned out to need help as was punctuated in the Olympics in Tokyo. Unfortunately, I know a record number of people that have committed suicide in 2021. If I had only known, I would have done something...

So, What's Changing in the Workplace?

Almost everything! We have new tools, expectations, and an accelerated pace of business. Even with my cautions above, I remain very optimistic about opportunities for you and your clients. But all of us will have to change with the times. During my travel for conferences in the last few weeks, I've had the time to read several books about topics that interest me. I also decided to re-read a book from earlier this year. Of note and potential usefulness to you were these three: [Collaborative Innovation](#) by Bart Barthelemy, [KPI Checklists](#) by Bernie Smith, and [Workquake](#) by Steve Cadigan. All are quick reads, taking less than two hours each, but all my copies have wound up heavily dog-eared because of the valuable insights on collaboration, KPIs, and the changing model of working.

The most significant impact on your practice and your clients' businesses may be the

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hosting, which rapidly became mandatory during the pandemic. The ability to work effectively remotely has led to new opportunities for employment. Are you living where you want to, doing the things you want to? The profession went through a period of discussing work/life balance, and we are going through a period of diversity and inclusion. Isn't the actual value of life around family and true friends?

Many of you know that I live in Hutchinson, KS, and much of my family lives in this area. We spend significant time together and enjoy our extended families. While my Mum has just turned 98 this month and continues to enjoy good health, it has been a blessing to spend time together during the pandemic since our family maintained a quarantine pod throughout the entire time. Maintaining our pod minimized the isolation for our family. In addition, it minimized the risk of COVID infection, although we did choose to quarantine at various times due to known exposure before we were vaccinated. For example, our extended family hung out at the swimming pool together during the past week and have had multiple meals together. How valuable is that time? Can money buy that experience?

Each of the books cited above has driven my thinking about Family Experience, Client Experience, Team Member Experience, and how the culture and market have shifted in the last decade. Further, my refined vision of Advisory Services has converted my problem-solving view of consulting from narrow and deep to high and wide. As noted in earlier articles on advisory services, we need to be proactive with clients, not reactive. We need to be forward-looking and spend less time on backward-looking compliance. While most practitioners make most of their revenue today from tax or audit, and both are getting more complex, we will have to figure out how to do the more valuable work for our clients framed with an Advisory approach. The best overall strategy I have seen at this time is [Advisory 101](#). The program provides three levels of certification: Foundation, Diploma, and Advanced Diploma plus [12 hours of CPE Credit](#). As a framework for Advisory services and [other](#)

worthwhile [Advisory Content](#), this approach can help transform your firm into a

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[SurePrep](#), [Taxfyle](#), or [Wolters Kluwer CCH/XCM](#) outsourcing. But the real difference is understanding and applying the forward-looking advisory framework to your personal life, your business, and your clients.

So, What Can We Do Today?

Take time to decompress. Determine your current focus, primary mission, and tasks to accomplish that mission. Look to eliminate tasks that you don't have to do. Reducing your work could be done by referring work out, contracting to experts, or outsourcing. Leverage the tasks you do have to do by choosing the best technology available. Minimize the number of technologies you use, remembering less=more. Automate more tasks where possible with tools like [Hubdoc](#), [Vic.ai](#), or [Dext](#). Take time to learn how to use the tools you do use better. For example, I'm appalled at the time professionals waste because they think they know how to use email, spreadsheets, word processors, workpapers, collaboration tools like Teams, portals, or search tools and haven't taken the time to learn the easy way to do it. Further, don't let technologies like email or social media distract you.

You know these sayings and the sentiment behind them. "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there" Lewis Carroll. I'd like to have you work smarter, not harder. While I enjoy playing hard and working hard, I do value quiet time and the renewal that a vacation in nature brings. Make sure to take some downtime so you are ready to face your challenges and assist with those of your family, friends, and clients. After all, we have just come through a taxing situation, and I suspect there is more to come.

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