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## FIRM MANAGEMENT

# A New Way of Working

Being a leader right now isn't easy. It can be challenging to recognize how employees want to work and make their wishes a reality while serving clients and meeting firm goals.

Jim Boomer • Sep. 05, 2022



Accounting professionals have embraced a new way of working. The pandemic taught many people that their jobs don't have to stay the way they were. Long commutes, endless distractions in the office, and spending time and money traveling

to meetings that can be just as effective over video have fallen by the wayside in many firms. But has your mindset changed with it?

## **Changing mindsets for a new way of working**

Being a leader right now isn't easy. It can be challenging to recognize how employees want to work and make their wishes a reality while serving clients and meeting firm goals. But it's not impossible. Leadership occurs first in nuanced shifts within a leader's mind, then in behaviors—delegation, coaching, and accountability—that align with that thinking.

If you haven't already, start thinking about how your firm will address this new way of working in the following five areas.

### **Talent**

The talent shortage has reached a boiling point, putting a strain on everyone in your firm, from entry-level staff to partners. The supply of accounting graduates and CPAs simply isn't enough to meet demand. Firms must look for talent resources from various places, including non-CPAs, outsourcing, and working with independent contractors.

### **Process**

If we don't put processes in place that align with the new way of working, we're just going to revert to the old way or be inefficient in a new way.

In the early days of the pandemic, firms did whatever it took to make remote work happen. Now is the time to take a step back and create or refine the processes needed to support remote and hybrid work and digital workflows.

### **Technology**

The firm's technology has to support not just the brick-and-mortar office but also remote and hybrid workers.

Remote work is an opportunity that IT will play a major role in supporting, so define your firm's boundaries to support remote employees. Your policy can't be that you don't support remote workers or people are on their own providing tech for their home offices. Set people up for success just as you would if they were in the office.

# Growth

Your firm has invested heavily in the ability to offer a diverse suite of services to your clients. The problem is that most firms are not packaging services together and offering their clients options to choose from. We always recommend offering the client three options (e.g., small, medium, large). This changes the client's decision from a "Yes/No" binary decision to "which of the three packages works best for you?"

From a pricing perspective, firms are seeing success with a monthly subscription model. It's easier for clients to understand, and it's a model they're already used to. For firms, packaging and pricing services for target clients addresses many of the capacity issues that are hindering growth and makes revenue and cash flow more predictable.

## Leadership

The last two years have included a lot of reacting to change because we had to, and there wasn't much planning or thought put into it. Now, you have an opportunity to reinvent your firm for the post-pandemic age based on everything you've learned in the past two years. This transformation will require leadership to view investment in the firm as a necessity rather than an option.

## Taking a people-first approach

We all know the value of seeing someone in person. People want and need connection beyond a computer screen. However, rushing to get everyone back in the office without a purpose for those connections will do more harm than good.

Hybrid work schedules can be the best of both worlds when people are face to face with a purpose. Make sure you're not demanding that people spend two or three days a week in the office just to spend that time alone at their desk or on Zoom calls. Making people commute and give up free time to do the same thing they could have done from home will hurt morale.

Leaders need to adopt the mindset that policies revolve around people because people are in the driver's seat more than ever. Ensure that your firm's talent, processes, technology, growth and leadership strategies make sense today. Leaders set the tone, and employees must be partners in this new way of working. When everyone is on board, your firm and its people will recognize success.

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