CPA
Practice **Advisor**

how can you make this transition smoothly without overwhelming yourself or your clients?

Blake Oliver • Sep. 29, 2023

Many accountants begin as solopreneurs but eventually want a reliable team. So,

Keep reading for a summary of the key takeaways, and watch the recording for all the insights.

For Your First Hire: Consider an Admin

You'll almost inevitably reach capacity with your client workload as a solo practitioner. You know you've reached capacity when you have to turn down new clients and opportunities. This signals it's time to consider hiring.

Instead of a technical hire — in other words, someone to do client work — consider hiring administrative help first. Davis advises, "Sit down and see how much of your daily work is administrative. And if it's more than 10%, then you probably want to look at adding an admin professional to take some of those things off your plate."

Bringing on an admin professional allows you to focus on higher-level client work rather than getting bogged down in admin tasks. And bringing on an administrative assistant first is less risky than someone to do client work.

Hire Someone in Your Network

When hiring your first admin, look to your network for referrals. Hiring someone familiar speeds up training and ramps up time significantly. Davis says, "My first hire was someone I knew and trusted. Because I hired someone I knew and trusted, it was easier for me to train them."

When to Add Technical Hires

Eventually, you'll need to bring on additional technical help for client work. If you've maxed out your technical client workload, it's time to distribute work to another hire. Delegating technical work allows you more personal time rather than working long hours.

As Nicole shared, "I didn't know that I necessarily needed an additional accountant

acquisition. So today, I have not touched any payrolls that we acquired."

Invest in Several Weeks of Training

Nicole recommends putting new hires on client work after a dedicated training period. You'll need to absorb their cost for at least a few weeks. Be sure to have a structured onboarding program to skill up new hires before client interactions appropriately.

Nicole says, "We have our training system in place to bring someone that does not have the experience or hasn't worked in public accounting or a firm very long. So we can train them and show them how to do the work and how we want them to do it."

Invest in Workflow Software

Before adding new team members, it's crucial to establish efficient processes and task management. Practice management software can streamline workflows, even for solo entrepreneurs. This initial investment in organization and delegation pays off in the long run.

Nicole says she started using general task management or task checklist software. Then, eventually, she graduated to accounting-specific practice management software.

Create Documentation

Document your processes as you work. Nicole suggests, "Start with your current tasks and build out processes for those. You don't have to create a list of tasks you think you will create processes for eventually. You can just do it daily as you're completing the work."

As you work, create step-by-step documentation. Write down the steps. You can save

Instead, do so as soon as possible, giving employees enough time.

Nicole says, "I struggle a lot with delayed delegation still now. But one of the things you can do to overcome that fear of letting go and trusting others to handle those important tasks is start small and build trust for you."

Building Accountability

Once you delegate a task, you must review the work and offer constructive feedback to encourage continuous improvement. Additionally, establish regular feedback practices and hold your team accountable for delivering high-quality work. Foster confidence through rewards while ensuring there are consequences for inadequate performance.

Davis advises, "You have to have some mechanism in place or some consequences. But the consequences don't have to be harsh." With proper review and accountability, you won't feel the need to micromanage.

Focus on Strategy

With your team handling client deliverables, transition your focus to improving processes and firm strategy. Nicole says that these days, "I spent a lot of time doing strategic planning, big picture, determining what vendors were going to work with, and determining how to improve processes."

Spend time on tasks you enjoy most rather than getting stuck in client service work.

Take Time Off

Delegating work allows former solopreneurs to take time off and disconnect. It's

office down for us while we were away."

Watch the webinar for details on transitioning your solo practice to a team-based firm. You can even earn CPE credit with the Earmark app.

Blake Oliver, CPA, is the co-host of the The Accounting Podcast and the founder of Earmark CPE.

Firm Management • Payroll • Small Business

CPA Practice Advisor is registered with the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) as a sponsor of continuing professional education on the National Registry of CPE Sponsors.