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HER HEAD IN THE CLOUD

How Joyce Washington,
a Tech-Savvy Accountant,
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Catch Up to Her Vision

**Predictions for
2012**

**Strive to 'Think
Differently' ...
remembering
Steve Jobs**

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Strive to 'Think Differently' ... Remembering Steve Jobs

I, like many, am still mourning the loss of one of the most innovative thinkers in history. In fact, I was such an avid follower of Steve Jobs that while traveling recently, my wife texted to see if I was okay after hearing of his untimely death. She knew that though I'd never actually met him, I would feel a profound loss and it would affect me greatly.

My recent travels took me to Palo Alto, California, to meet with a technology vendor in the accounting space. When planning my trip, I decided to stay an extra day in order to take in the sites of Palo Alto and Silicon Valley. For a lover of technology, these spots are much like Disney World is to a child. However, before I could bask in the glow of technology innovation, I had work to do.

"Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds, and Actions," which I highly recommend. Guy ended up standing next to me in line, so I took the opportunity to engage him in conversation. We chatted for quite awhile, and needless to say the dialogue was highly motivational. Kawasaki has been a key "voice" in propelling the need for technology that helps users work more efficiently and with inventive zeal. I eventually did make it to my meeting, even more inspired to discuss ideas and strategies to develop solutions to help practitioners more effectively run their practices.

When work was finally behind me, I headed to Apple's headquarters to take it all in. It was everything I expected it would be. I passed the

be a better leader ... to perform at a higher level ... and to offer a better product. Overall, it's a brand that has pushed me to think differently. *How many brands can we really say that about?*

If Steve Jobs taught us anything, it is to think differently ... about why we do what we do and how we do it. So I challenge each and every one of you to think about how you can offer your clients insanely great services that lead to a rich client experience. Think differently about how you operate your firm — be creative, be a leader and focus on building your own Next Generation Accounting Firm™!

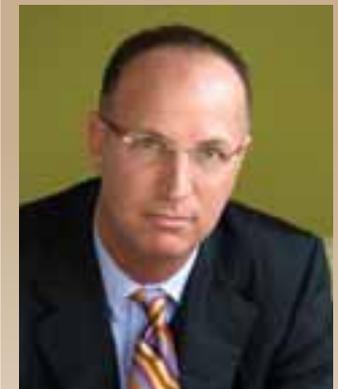
Special thanks to Steve Jobs for motivating the masses! We will remember you always, and remember you fondly. ●

SPECIAL THANKS TO STEVE JOBS
FOR MOTIVATING THE MASSES!
WE WILL REMEMBER YOU ALWAYS,
AND REMEMBER YOU FONDLY.

On Friday morning, I was up and out early — heading to my meeting in downtown Palo Alto. That morning, Apple was releasing the new iPhone 4S. Coincidentally, on my way to the meeting, I passed an Apple retail store. With time to spare (or so I thought), I diverted from my course and swung in to pick up a new phone.

As I waited for my new iPhone, I looked up to see Guy Kawasaki walk in. For those who don't know who Guy is ... well, he was Apple's first product evangelist, and over the years he's written many books. His latest is

humble memorial to Steve Jobs displayed at the entrance to One Infinite Loop, and then wandered around. I thought about why I have such an affinity for Apple. The answer is quite simple. It's a brand that is trusted — one that, like few others, has acquired unprecedented loyalty from its user base. For years, Apple has consistently produced phenomenal products that are not only of the highest quality, but also extraordinarily beautiful. It's a brand presence that is incredibly powerful — one that has served as inspiration throughout my career to



M. Darren Root, CPA.CITP
Executive Editor

Darren is the Executive Editor of CPA Practice Advisor. He remains in public practice as the principal of Root & Associates, LLC, in Bloomington, Indiana, and is president of his consulting practice, RootWorks. He formerly served on the Board of the AICPA's CITP Credentials Committee and is a former member of the Board of Directors for the Indiana CPA Society. He speaks at dozens of professional organizations each year and frequently serves as a guest lecturer at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business.



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Giving Back to the Community

The Watkins team brings anti-bullying program, Operation Nice, to local schools

This month's Great Practice profile is unlike any other. Our spotlighted firm was selected based not on innovation in technology, branding or website (though they certainly exhibit it all in spades), but rather for the firm's commendable effort to give back to the community. Further differentiating this column from others is the fact that Watkins chose to champion a program that is not only close to my heart, but is in fact an anti-bullying program I personally developed — Operation Nice.

With a very unique angle, this month's column is best served up in a question-and-answer format. So I sat down with George Watkins to get his insight on the importance of giving back to his community and why he opted to champion Operation Nice.

Giving Back — It's the Right Thing to Do

George Watkins, CPA and president of Watkins & Associates has experienced great success with his firm ... growing at a rapid rate. Grateful for his success, Watkins expressed that

giving back to his community is simply the right thing to do.

"I've been very fortunate with the success of my practice," Watkins stated. "In fact, I feel so fortunate, that I really want to do something to improve my local community. It's everyone's duty to give a little, individual residents and business owners alike, to make sure our community continues to improve and prosper."

Watkins, aware of the growing bullying epidemic in our nation's schools, identified a bullying prevention program for elementary-aged children and has championed the cause with full force.

The Interview

Kristy: Tell me a little about your firm and the success you've experienced.

George: About seven years ago, I made the transition from being a technician in my firm to being a business owner working on my firm. I invested in advanced technologies to accelerate workflow efficiency and trained my staff appropriately. Today, my firm runs like a well-oiled machine, and I give most of the credit to my staff. I have a team that embraced change and is exceptionally productive,

which allows me to focus on growing the business.

Kristy: It's commendable that you want to give back to your community. What sparked you into action?

George: I've actually been active in my community for several years. I've been involved with Melwood, a local nonprofit that works with disabled individuals to help them achieve a career and a better quality of life. I've sponsored kids to attend the organization's summer camp, and I currently serve on the board. Over the past year, however, I've wanted to do more. The reason I decided to champion this new anti-bullying program is because I'm passionate about the cause. I have a child in elementary school and think it's important to teach kids early on the importance of being kind and respectful. And that's the focus of Operation Nice.

Kristy: Why did you choose Operation Nice as your program of choice?

George: I happened to see the post on Facebook and was interested immediately. I researched it and concluded that it was a program worth championing. I also thought of my own child and wanted to give her and her classmates the opportunity to be involved in a program where the core goal is being kind to each other every day.



George Watkins, CPA & president of Watkins & Associates

STATS AT A GLANCE

Year founded: 1993

Total employees: 2 full-time; 4 part-time

Home base: La Plata, MD

Firm website: www.watkinscpa.com

Firm description: Full-service accounting practice with niche expertise in Department of Defense Contractors, Not-for-profit, Medical practices

Technology of Choice: Thomson Reuters Virtual Office Suite, Bill.com, Right Networks

I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT FIRM OWNERS SELECT A CAUSE THAT IS CLOSE TO THEIR HEART AND MOVE FORWARD TO CHAMPION THEIR PROGRAM OF CHOICE. THERE IS NO WAY TO DESCRIBE THE FEELING YOU GET WHEN YOU RE-INVEST IN YOUR COMMUNITY. ALL I KNOW IS THAT IT FEELS RIGHT. IT FEELS GOOD ALL THE WAY AROUND.

Leading Our Clients Through the Next Generation of Change

As technology changes, so do we. Read more to find out how we can help.



The Watkins & Associates team

Kristy: How did you get your local elementary school to adopt Operation Nice?

George: I first approached the principal and explained the program. I offered the website link and some other informational documents. I also talked to the School Board and introduced the program. We worked from there to set dates for the event.

Kristy: How are you promoting this program within your firm?

George: I started by sending an email to my entire staff the same day that I decided to sponsor the program. Many staff members have small children, so they were on board immediately. There's a lot of excitement here about giving back to the community and about Operation Nice in general.

Kristy: Do you feel it's important for other firms to adopt community-enhancing programs?

George: Absolutely. As a business owner, it's important to pitch in and enhance the local community. Involvement in community-directed programs also helps create a richer office culture, especially when all staff members support the program. It just feels good to do the right thing, and I imagine other firm owners would agree with me.

Kristy: What other notable programs are you involved in and/or think are great causes for other firms to champion as a way to give back to their communities?

George: Like I stated earlier, I've been involved with Melwood for quite a few years, and now the anti-bullying program. I know that there are many more wonderful charitable organizations out there, like Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Purple Heart, Meals on Wheels, and countless other groups that work to provide shelter to the homeless, preserve our forests and wetlands, advance the arts, etc. I would recommend that firm owners select a cause that is close to their heart and move forward to champion their program of choice. There is no way to describe the feeling you get when you re-invest in your community. All I know is that it feels right. It feels good all the way around.

Final Words

George Watkins is a successful business owner, a dedicated family man, and a responsible member of his community. Success has not been lost on Watkins, but rather has driven him to give back — to invest in his city by championing programs that ultimately make it better. His support of Operation Nice will help to further develop a learning environment that is safe, comfortable and fun for elementary-aged children in La Plata, Md. Watkins' dedication to supporting his local community is commendable and sets an example for others. Nice work Team Watkins! I salute you and others who are active in their communities, as well.

For more information on George's community efforts, contact him at George@watkinscpa.com. For more information on Operation Nice, visit www.operationnice.org. ●



Kristy Short, Ed.D

Kristy is a partner in RootWorks Communications (RootWorks.com) and president of SAS Communications 360 (SAScommunications360.com) — firms dedicated to providing practice management education, branding, marketing, and public relations services to the accounting profession. She is also a professor of English and marketing at University of Phoenix and Cleary University. You can reach her at kristy.short@cpapracticeadvisor.com.



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Watkins & Associates is a full-service tax and accounting firm providing clients with the tools and information they need to achieve their goals. But we are more than just the services we offer. At Watkins, we strive to create long-lasting relationships through a personal, one-on-one approach. Throughout the year, we work with you to provide insight into your business and ensure you understand your financial position. We are not satisfied until each client achieves the "Ah-ha" moment and truly comprehends what the data means and how to use the information to make sound business decisions.

Contact us today for more information or to discuss your needs. We are here to serve you...and take you to your Ah-ha place.

If you'd like us to consider sharing your firm's story of innovation in a future issue, go to www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/great-practices and complete the short form. We want to hear from you.

REVIEW SECTIONS

BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

- General navigation/ease of use
- Content delivery options: paper, CD/DVD, online? All?
- Organization sorted by relevance/importance
- Multiple user management
- Multiple browser support
- Various subscription options
- Search routines
- Integration w/T&B applications for billing, DMS output, etc.

CONTENT

- Licensing options (named users, concurrent users, site license, etc.)
- Multiple providers
- Publicly available
- Breadth of content (Fed, State, A&A, other compliance offerings)
- Newsletters
- Wizards for certain specialized research types
- Templating

CUSTOMIZATION

- User preferences
- Alerts
- Saved searches/documents

INTEGRATION & IMPORT/EXPORT

- Integration with Word? Document/client letter integration?
- Integration with DMS? Portal? Browser toolbar?
- Saving & printing to multiple file formats
- Activity/usage reporting for management
- Support for capturing info for billing back charges to clients

HELP/SUPPORT/TRAINING

- Built-in support features
- System/content update frequency
- Support website/documentation
- Live support? Where is support located? Hours?
- Live chat w/other users?
- Multiple training options?

Today's Tax Research Vendors Embrace Mobility

Today's tax, accounting and legal professionals are under a constant stream of knowledge exchanges. Clients call, email and text their respective professionals with a variety of scenarios and demand quick answers. The professionals are then left to work out the details and are often left scratching their heads on where to turn next. Finding answers to these scenarios is not only important, but needs to be done in a prompt and accurate manner. This is where tax research software becomes important.

The tax research options of today have evolved significantly over the past few years. Long gone are the volumes of printed books that were outdated almost as soon as they were printed. No longer are we required to shuffle multiple CDs in the network CD tower. Today's tax research vendors have embraced the computing power of the internet, and tax and accounting professionals have largely welcomed that change.

As with tax preparation solutions, each vendor differs slightly in execution of their tax research offering. Most of the vendors are offering products as full internet-based solutions. Others have pushed the web-based research into tight integration within their respective tax preparation solutions. While both methods have their pros and cons, today's tax research solutions are much simpler to use and navigate.

In nearly every case, the backbone of tax research solutions relies on search.

Current offerings often perform their searches in ways similar to most internet search engines. Search results are then displayed in much the same way. This type of search feature set is less intimidating since most professionals are comfortable with internet search methods. This methodology also fares well for new staff because they don't get bogged down with what search terms to use.

technical code and explanations.

Content provided by the tax research vendors is largely similar. Nearly all vendors offer some level of access to the Internal Revenue Code and Regulations. The biggest differentiator is the explanatory content. The vendors are split on execution here. Some rely solely on staff editors to convert Code to practical application and explanation. Others rely on respected practitioners and educators to deliver the content and examples.

One area vendors have embraced is mobility. All tax research vendors reviewed have an internet-based solution. These solutions are formatted specifically for viewing on both smartphone and tablet devices. Some vendors rely on mobile apps to achieve this functionality, but regardless, the capability has been fully embraced. This capability should prove invaluable to any practitioner who travels to a client office.

Tax, accounting and legal professionals have always struggled to find answers. The current solutions available should mitigate this struggle. Regardless of which tax preparation platform is currently implemented, a research solution is available to complement that platform or user research preference. ●



Search is the most popular way of navigating through the tax research software, but vendors also include folder trees for navigation. Folder trees allow users to navigate directly to specific categories of research content. The advantages of folders trees are generally seen in more senior staff or those who have specific practice and interest areas.

Regardless of whether search or folder tree browsing is preferred, all provided content is usually hyperlinked together. This makes navigation easy and provides multiple ways for users to ultimately get to the same answer. It also allows users to easily switch between



Steven Phelan, CPA

BNA, Inc. — BNA Tax and Accounting Center

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Tax, accounting and legal professionals who want the practitioner view as well as an editorial view of tax law.

STRENGTHS

- Research portfolios authored by respected practitioners & educators
- Clean, easy-to-use interface
- High level of program & newsletter customization

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- No native integration with third-party tax preparation products

SUMMARY & PRICING

BNA is a leader in research, news and guidance for tax, accounting and legal professionals. BNA Tax and Accounting Center includes a comprehensive set of research tools and covers a variety of tax, planning and accounting topics. The core function rests on the BNA Portfolios, each authored by respected leaders and

experts within their respective practice areas. These portfolios are exclusive to BNA subscribers and offer a distinctive advantage over other research options. The portfolios, coupled with a clean and easy-to-navigate platform, make BNA Tax and Accounting Center a quality choice for tax, accounting and legal professionals. Pricing is dependent upon the number of users, but a single-user login starts at about \$800 for a basic library and about \$3,000 for a library including the U.S. Income Portfolios.



★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	CONTENT
★★★★★	CUSTOMIZATION
★★★★☆	INTEGRATION/IMPORT/EXPORT
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446757

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www.bna.com

CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business — IntelliConnect

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Tax, accounting and legal professionals who need a wide range of research options.

STRENGTHS

- New categorized view groups data in easy-to-use chunks
- Up to 8 simultaneous searches on one screen
- Multiple ways of getting the same answer

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Integration only achieved with solutions in the ProSystem fx Suite of products

SUMMARY & PRICING

IntelliConnect stands out among its competitors in both design and implementation and offers a broad range of research tools. CCH strives to provide tax, accounting and legal professionals with fast answers and results, as well as maintaining a wide range of content. CCH is continually improving its research

platform and relies heavily on customer feedback. This feedback has led to many of the adjustments and enhancements recently made to the product. IntelliConnect is designed for use by firms of all sizes and may be scaled accordingly. Pricing is largely dependent on content subscriptions and starts at \$200, which includes the U.S. Master Tax Guide and a variety of custom newsletters. Additional users and content may be added and are priced accordingly.



★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	CONTENT
★★★★★	CUSTOMIZATION
★★★★★	INTEGRATION/IMPORT/EXPORT
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446778

888-224-7377

CCHGroup.com

Intuit — Tax Research for Lacerte and ProSeries

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★☆

BEST FIT

Tax practices currently utilizing the Lacerte or ProSeries tax solutions.

STRENGTHS

- Powered by Google Enterprise Search Engine helps to find the answer quickly
- All-inclusive pricing with no additional fees for network use or multiple users
- No separate product to load or login to
- Strong Help and support options, including assistance from the Intuit social network tools

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Research limited to tax only, with little offering for accounting, auditing, payroll & sales tax
- Little user customization options

SUMMARY & PRICING

Intuit Tax Research is a perfect fit for users of Intuit's Lacerte and ProSeries tax products. The research is directly integrated with these products and provides quick and easy access to a quality set of research tools. Also available as a standalone web-based solution, users of other tax software may benefit from the product, as well,

but without the direct integration features. The standalone product may be accessed from any device, including mobile devices. Intuit Tax Research is available for a flat rate of \$849 for a 12-month subscription and includes access to all content, including Internal Revenue Code, Court Cases, state code and regulations, BNA analysis, and much more. The license fee is not increased for additional users or use on a network. A pay-per-use option is also available for a fee of \$19.95 per use and includes all search results and access to up to four research articles.



★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★☆	CONTENT
★★★★★	CUSTOMIZATION
★★★★★	INTEGRATION/IMPORT/EXPORT
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446794

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Thomson Reuters Checkpoint

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Tax and accounting professionals that prefer a uniform platform for tax and accounting research

- Search options may be overwhelming upon initial use, but should degrade over time

uniform platform that may be easily searched. Many user customization options are available to enhance the tax research experience, as well. Thomson Reuters offers a small firm library consisting of technical code and regulations, compliance and planning libraries, newsletters, access to e-Forms RS, and editorial content for around \$1,000. Additional users may be added and are price indexed based on the number of users and subscribed content.

SUMMARY & PRICING

Thomson Reuters Checkpoint offers a strong tax and accounting research set. The service features a number of highly respected primary resources in addition to proprietary content from the PPC, RIA and WG&L brands. Other third-party research, such as BNA Tax Research may be integrated into Thomson Reuters Checkpoint. All content resides on a

STRENGTHS

- High level of user-specific customization
- Single platform for multiple primary, proprietary & third-party research content providers
- Strong search capabilities

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Based on subscription level, users may experience content overload



★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	CONTENT
★★★★★	CUSTOMIZATION
★★★★★	INTEGRATION/IMPORT/EXPORT
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446768

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Intuit — TaxAlmanac

TaxAlmanac is a free online tax research resource designed for tax professionals. It is a wiki site and largely depends on tax professionals creating and sharing knowledge. A wiki site is simply a collection of web pages developed and maintained

through volunteer collaboration, the most popular of which is Wikipedia.

TaxAlmanac is simple in design and easy to use. It may be accessed through any desktop or mobile browser. Homepage content is updated frequently, often more than once per day

and includes current news stories and laws. In the middle of the homepage is a row of categorical links, such as income, deductions, credits and code. These links take users directly to a list of articles specific to that category. From there, users can click through to find more specific answers based on the articles currently published. The homepage also has direct links to the Internal Revenue Code and Treasury Regulations, though these links provide pure Code and no explanations or practical use examples.

TaxAlmanac currently contains over 75,000 articles, and the content is predominantly written by tax professionals and educators from across the country. Control over authors is lightly monitored, but generally the article contributors are respected individuals or frequent contributors. Typical articles are written in plain English and are not usually bogged down with technical code, which results in articles that are easy to read but not as thorough as other tax research options.

Searching within TaxAlmanac is similar to performing a basic internet search. The search box is on the left part of the screen and remains visible



regardless of which screen users are currently viewing. Search results are displayed in groups based on page title and article content. Any relevant search terms located will be displayed with contextual descriptions, which may result in faster location of the desired research. Users may also enhance search results through advanced search options, which allow the user control over which areas should be searched or focused on.

TaxAlmanac proves to be a paradigm shift in the way tax and legal professionals perform tax research. The content contained within should typically be used as supplementary content and not as a primary source. All content is reliant on other users not only updating the articles, but updating the articles with the most recent and correct information. TaxAlmanac is a nice resource for professionals to gain quick answers and a brief overview of tax topics.

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Gifts, Gadgets and Tech for the Holidays

From Geeky to Chic, A Gadget for Everyone on Your List

Yes, the holidays are nearly upon us. Yet, because of printing cycles and deadlines, I'm writing this gadget-focused gift guide in the month of October. So greetings to our December readers!

Over the past six or seven years that I've put this feature together, I've had the opportunity to see, test and play with a lot of cool devices and technologies; some designed for business purposes, some for purely personal entertainment and others still that bridge the gap in our increasingly connected world. While the increasing "connectedness" of all aspects of our lives (business, family, personal, etc.) has been a long-evolving trend, one of the greater changes in only the past two years has been the advent of the iPad and other

tablet devices. The iPhone also certainly helped transform the mobile phone market, but tablet devices, even though they are still in the early adopter stage, are quickly establishing themselves in business and personal settings.

The innovation behind these two major developments (the iPad and iPhone), and certainly their introduction to the market, was the result of the work of many people at Apple. But Steve Jobs, as he's been rightly eulogized, was the great visionary who helped people see their potential. As the market he created continues to grow, and as a tribute to him, I've added a new section to the gift guide this year focused on tools designed for users of various i-things.

From everyone at
CPA Practice Advisor,
we wish you the happiest
of holidays and a
prosperous New Year.



Isaac M. O'Bannon,
Technology Editor

Isaac is the Technology Editor for CPA Practice Advisor, having joined the publication in September 2002. Through his experience in the areas of consumer and professional-level software and peripherals, as well as knowledge of the public accounting field, he provides reviews of technologies used by accountants and their business clients as well as contributing a regular column that provides helpful information that ranges from improving search techniques, when to upgrade a computer and computing security issues. He can be reached at isaac.obannon@cpapracticeadvisor.com.

❄️ DOWN TO BUSINESS

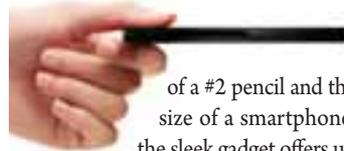
Awesome All-In-One

Printing remains an integral part of office productivity, but it's never been more important to be economical. There's no need to sacrifice quality, however. The **WorkForce Pro 4540 Printer** from **Epson** can cut printing costs by 50%, while also giving you the most advanced full-color printing, scanning, copying and other technologies on the market. This ultimate officejet printer includes built-in wireless networking capabilities and features automatic dual-side printing, copying, scanning and faxing, with a 30-page auto-feeder and a 580-sheet paper capacity. (\$399; www.epson.com)



Sleek Portability

When it comes to true data transfer, a couple of gigs of storage just doesn't cut it, but at the same time, users don't want to carry bulky external hard drives around. The perfect portable solution just may be the **GoFlex Slim 320 GB Performance Drive** from **Seagate**. About the thickness



of a #2 pencil and the size of a smartphone, the sleek gadget offers up to 320 gigs of storage, has a lightning-fast 7200 RPM drive with USB 3.0 connectivity, and has backup software that can automatically sync files and makes it easy to restore previous versions. Enhanced encryption technology further makes it a valuable tool, which works interchangeably with PCs and Macs. (\$89; www.seagate.com; Also at major retailers.)

Finalize Your Wireless Freedom

So you think you're a wireless professional. You've got your tablet, a laptop and a smartphone. That's great on the road, but the place modern professionals are most likely to be constrained by wires is in their own offices or homes. The **Belkin N 750 B Wireless Router** can help you complete your wireless evolution, providing the latest in wireless technology and security to give up to 900 mbps throughput (translation: *superfast*), which gives awesome performance for large data files, video streaming,



online gaming and home theater uses. It also includes high-speed ports for direct connection. (\$129; www.belkin.com)

Portable Perfection

When you're on the road, you still have documents to scan, but it's not like you're going to take a scanner with you. So you get back from your trip with piles of receipts and business cards and ... what? Oh, you *can* take a scanner with you! At only 12 ounces and under 11 inches long, the **Fujitsu ScanSnap S1100** is a great companion for the mobile pro, packing in many features found in full-sized scanners, including producing searchable PDFs, Word and Excel files, scanning direct to email, business card and receipt scanning, and support for Macs and PCs. Plus, it gets its power via USB from your computer, so no extra cables. The S1100 retails for \$199, but enter our drawing for a chance to win one for free! The odds of winning are better than the lottery (last year, there were approximately 100 entrants). (\$199; www.fujitsu.com/ScanSnapS1100)



Win a Free ScanSnap S1100!

Use your smartphone's QR reader app to scan this image, or go to www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/fujitsu to enter before December 16, 2011.



TIPS & TRICKS

Rugged Reliability

Meet the Rocky Balboa of portable hard drives. Where most tech gadgets are fragile and users are rightly fearful of the pains of breaking them (not just the painful cost to replace but also the potential for lost data), the **500GB Rugged Portable Hard Drive** from **ioSafe** is in the ring for the duration.



About the size of a paperback novel, the PC- and Mac-friendly drive offers crush protection of up to 5,000 pounds, can be dropped from 20 feet and can even survive submersion in up to 30 feet of water for three days. It features USB 2.0, 3.0 and FireWire 800, works with Macs and PCs and includes a data recovery service. (\$249; www.iosafe.com)

Organize Your Paperless Office

Paperless this, optimized that ... but if you don't get your office organized, you're simply moving toward digital disarray. The **NeatDesk Desktop Scanner** from **NeatCo**



wants to be your new office manager and has a powerful resume. The high-speed desktop scanner features automatic document feeding of up to 50 pages, has "intelligent text recognition" technology that can pull important data from scanned items, saves files to searchable PDF and Word, and can export data to Excel, Quicken, QuickBooks and TurboTax. As an extra boost, the scanner comes with a digital filing system that automatically organizes files, helping users be more efficient. (\$399; www.NeatCo.com; www.OfficeDepot.com)

Hot Laptop? Think Cool!

Whether or not you've got the latest Netbook or laptop, if the device literally gets hot, you could be in trouble. The excess heat isn't just uncomfortable on your lap, but can also damage the computer. Don't worry, though, just think cool and check out the **HeatShift Netbook Cooler** from **ThermaPAK**. The stylish solutions are a pad made from eco-friendly cooling crystals that absorb and dissipate the heat from the device, lowering temperatures by more than



10 degrees. Even better, this essential tech accessory fits easily in cases, doesn't need power and doesn't make

any noise. Available in various colors and styles for laptops and Netbooks. (\$25-\$28; www.thermapak.com)

❄️ FOR WORK OR PLAY

Keep a Watchful Eye

What's happening at your office when you're at home? What's happening at home when you're at the office? The bad guys can quickly figure out personal schedules and target your property when you're not there, but the new **Logitech Alert 750i Video Security** system makes it easy for you to set up your own security system with multiple wireless video cameras. The system syncs with your PC to offer viewing of the live video feed from any computer or smartphone, and can be set to automatically record video with motion-triggered sensors. Alarms can be set to alert users to activity. Even better, the wireless connectivity and HomePlug technology makes the Alert simple for anyone to set up. (\$399; www.logitech.com)



Smarter Mobility

Tired of spending \$100 per month or more for your smartphone plan, plus having to be locked into it for two years? Maybe it's time to "right-size" your wireless with **H2O Wireless**. With no-contract text, talk and web plans starting at \$40 per month (or the option to go minute-by-minute) and a variety of 3G and 4G devices from which to choose, users can finally breathe a little wireless freedom. They also have an Unlimited Everything plan for \$60 per month that includes talk, text, picture messaging, unlimited Internet and free international calls. Plus, the **\$10 SIM Card Starter Pack** is a perfect stocking stuffer, allowing anyone to transform any existing phone into a no-contract H2O phone, including unlocked Droids and iPhones. (From \$40; www.H2OWirelessNow.com)



The Ultimate Hands-Free Headset

Whether you work in a traditional office or a home office, you aren't always at your desk. A wireless hands-free headset can give you the freedom to move around, while still being connected, and the new **Plantronics**

Voyager Pro HD is taking this convenience several steps further. With Smart Sensor technology, the phone knows when to send calls to your headset or your mobile device, plus it has the very cool Vocalyst service that lets you manage e-mail, voicemail, text, check the weather and even update Facebook. (TV voice: But wait, there's more!) The Voyager also offers voice alerts, brilliant HD music and podcast streaming, and multipoint technology for managing two phone devices at the same time. (\$99; www.plantronics.com)



Backed Up, Even On-the-Go

Even when you're on the road or working from multiple computers, it's critical to make sure that your work is secure, protected and backed up to a reliable location. The **Echo 8GB Backup Drive** from **Lexar** offers added assurance, providing a high-performance flash drive that easily plugs into a USB port and can automatically back up and store your important files, sporting 128-bit AES encryption.



Users can also restore previous versions of files, and the handy gadget can work with PCs and Macs. (\$29.99; www.lexar.com)

Give the Brush-Off with Dust-Off

What is it with gadgets and home electronics that attracts dust and grime? Whatever the cause, keeping them clean can be important not only for visual quality, but also to help extend the life of your devices. Don't clean them with window cleaners or other solvents, though, since different devices use different materials that can be harmed by those harsh detergents. Be safe and use one of the **Dust-Off** solutions from **Falcon**, which include cleaners and microfiber wipes specifically designed for cleaning smartphone screens, computer monitors, tablet screens, and LCD, LED and Plasma televisions. (\$2.99-\$9.99; www.falconsafety.com)



Keep an Eye On Things

You can't be everywhere at the same time, and when you're mobile, you leave your

home and office unattended. You can keep an eye on things, though, with **iZON Remote Room Monitor**, an elegant, "app-controlled" video camera that connects via Wi-Fi, allowing you to view live or recorded encrypted video and audio from an iPad, iPhone or iPod. The camera can also alert you when it senses motion or sound. Great for the home, office, baby's room or even aimed at the front door. (\$129; www.steminnovation.com)



❄️ JUST FOR FUN

The Future's So Cool, You Gotta Wear 3D Shades

The latest big development in home entertainment is 3D, and prices are coming quickly into the realm of mainstream consumers. While that's great news, even better is that you don't need those old blue and red paper glasses that were staples of 3D movies from the 1950s through the 1990s. Better yet, the new **Perfect Vision 3D Glasses** from **Polaroid** are truly cool. With custom women's and men's models tailored to the latest design trends, they may not look like 3D shades. But they really deliver and are RealD certified to give you the highest quality experience. And if you want to wear the fashionable specs outdoors, they also offer full UV protection. Polaroid also offers slip-over shades for eyeglass wearers. (From \$45; www.polaroid-eyewearstore.com)



Add Some Culture to Your Holidays

Have you considered adding a Vincent van Gogh to your living room? Or perhaps one of Cézanne's works? Now you can, and without robbing a bank or "borrowing" them from a gallery. With the **Museum of Modern Art** (DVD and Blu-ray) from **Screen Dreams**, you can enjoy 50 masterworks from New York's MOMA, including paintings by modern and contemporary artists ... accompanied by classical musical performances. This is an excellent addition when hosting friends and family, or for relaxing when the rush of the season has passed. (\$15; www.screendreamsdvd.com)





ScanSnap

I'm mobile.



Process paperwork practically anywhere with the mobile ScanSnap S1100 document scanner.

On-the-road doesn't mean out-of-pocket when it comes to office resources like scanning paperwork for sharing or to file electronically. Just plug-in USB power and scan business cards directly to contact lists. Press one button to scan paperwork directly to email, searchable PDF, JPEG, or to applications like Word and Excel®. You can even scan to Evernote® or Google Docs™ and retrieve your paperwork from just about anywhere. The ScanSnap S1100 helps you spend less time on paperwork so you can spend more time chasing down the next big thing.

The reviews are in. Check out ScanSnap and see how we rate in 3 important areas. Visit <http://us.fujitsu.com/cpa>

FUJITSU

TIPS & TRICKS



Hydrate!

With all of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, it's easy to forget one of the keys to healthy living: Hydrate! Instead of carrying around plastic disposable water bottles, add some style to your fluid intake with one of **Contigo's BPA-free AutoSeal Bottles and Insulated Mugs**. They come in several sleek designs and sizes from 16 to 32 ounces, such as the Blue Addition, which features a push button AutoSpout, or the West Loop Stainless Steel vacuum insulated travel mug, which can keep cold things cold for up to 16 hours, and hot things hot for up to six hours. (From \$13; www.gocontigo.com)

A Man Cave Must-Have

It's the big game, you're in "your chair," kickoff is in 5, 4, 3 ... wait! Where's that bottle opener? Relax, if you've got **The Clicker**, it's already in your hand. The masterminds at **The Clicker Company**

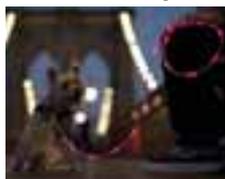


have achieved one of the greatest fusions known to modern man: The combination of a universal remote control and a bottle

opener. The device allows users to control up to nine devices: TV, DVD, VCR, cable, satellite, CD, stereos, amplifiers and bottle caps. (\$25; www.myclicker.com)

Put Spot in the Light

Walking your dog at night can be risky, especially on dimly lit streets. But when your best friend has business to attend to or you're just out for a night in the park, you can make it safer and more fun for you and your buddy with the **Pup Crawl**. Available in several bright colors, they may look, feel



and have the strength of a traditional leash, but they have tons of embedded LED lights that can be seen from up to a

quarter mile away. Part of their proceeds also go to animal rescue organizations. (\$25; www.thepupcrawl.com)

An Awesome Audio Accessory for the Active

Music isn't just something you listen to in the car or at home anymore. We take it with us. And for those with active lifestyles, such

as running, climbing or other sports, finding gadgets that can keep up with you can be a challenge. The audio innovators at **Pioneer** have the solution: **Active Style**

Earbuds (Model SE-CL331) specifically designed for outdoor enthusiasts, including water-resistant features that allow users to wash away sweat and grime. The buds come with multiple ear pieces and produce the high-quality audio for which Pioneer is respected. Colors include yellow, blue, pink and white. (\$59; www.pioneerelectronics.com)



The iGADGETS HAVE IT

Accessories for iPads, iPhones and iPods

Protect Your Pad

iPads are cool, but they aren't cheap. So be careful and protect yours with the **Belkin SnapShield iPad 2 Case**. Designed to keep your tablet clean, scratch-free and safe from everyday impacts, the SnapShield appropriately "snaps" onto the device, and has a hard plastic shell with a soft-touch finish. It includes openings for all buttons and ports, and doesn't block the built-in speaker. (\$30; www.belkin.com)



Deny Prying Eyes

Whether you're in a crowded airplane or at the local café, there are some things on your laptop, tablet or smartphone that you'd rather not share with the person behind or next to you. Such as client data? The business experts at **3M** have been offering their **Privacy Screens** for several years, and now offer them in designs for tablets from Apple, BlackBerry, Motorola and Samsung, as well



as the leading smartphones. With the tablet privacy screen in place, wandering eyes around you won't be able to see your screen, unless you want to share, then all you have to do is change the tablet orientation. (\$40; www.3M.com)

Function Meets Sleek Design

Want to make your iPad2 a little more travel friendly? The **Folio360 II** from **The Joy Factory** looks like an ordinary folio-style case, but quickly converts into an adjustable slip-free stand that can rotate 360 degrees in both portrait and landscape modes. This makes it great for using the rear-facing camera. Other features include a magnetic closure snap that wakes your iPad up or puts it into sleep mode when you open or close the case. (\$60; www.thejoyfactory.com)



Zip, Charge & Go

We all have multiple devices and keeping them charged can be a challenge, especially when you're mobile. Well, take a look at the **Zip USB Touch-n-go Multi-Charging Station** from **The Joy Factory**. A must for active road warriors, the Zip's "ziptails" make charging multiple devices simple, with ports for simultaneously charging up to 16 devices, including smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices. (\$80; www.thejoyfactory.com)



Go Hands-Free with Your Pad

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: The iPad is awesome. It could be better, though, especially if you use the **Tournez C-Clamp Mount for iPad2** from **The Joy Factory**. The Tournez lets you turn your iPad2 into a portable workstation that can be mounted anywhere you go, whether on your desk, in the kitchen, a garage, bedroom or conference room. With the ability to adjust it to any angle and a retractable arm, it lets users quickly position it to a comfortable and productive position, without having to hold it or prop it up. Made from carbon fiber, it's strong, secure and stylish. (\$90; www.thejoyfactory.com)



Super iCharger

Backing up photos, contacts and app data can take time ... and so can charging your iPhone. If you could just do them at the same time. Actually, with the **Omega SuperHero Backup and Charger** for

iPhone, you can. The combined charger-backup device automatically does both anytime the phone is docked, and if your phone goes AWOL, you can quickly restore all that data from the 4GB SD card in the SuperHero. (\$70; www.iomega.com)



Slick Skins

You're unique. So why carry around a gadget that looks like everybody else's? **StickySkins** offers hundreds of phone, laptop and tablet skin designs tailored for virtually all phone types, as well as for laptops, tablets, iPods and gaming devices. Whether you're going for abstract art, nature images, cartoons, tech or just plain cute, there's a design to help express yourself, and if there isn't, you can create your own design using photos or images. Wouldn't mom just love a family picture on her phone? A company logo skin on work laptops? Or perhaps a picture of your last vacation to help you get through the workday. (From \$9.99; www.stickyskins.com)



Lighter than Air

Are you looking to keep your iPad clean and safe during everyday use and travel? The **Just Air iPad Cases** from **Emson** offer tough yet super lightweight construction, plus have a convenient easy-open flip stand that holds your device at a user-friendly angle. The cases are available in black, gray and pink, and in sizes for iPads, Netbooks and laptops. (www.emsoninc.com)



Grip It!

If you've ever dropped and broken a smartphone, I feel your pain. But you don't have to go through it again if you use the **Ribbz iPhone Case** from **Emson**. The flexible case fits snugly around all sides of the phone, and has anti-shock technology and a high impact resistance that absorbs the brunt of the force, no matter what angle the device lands on. The textured grip also offers great hands-on control for gamers. Available in seven colors. (Two for \$30; www.emsoninc.com)



A Year of Change, A Future of Promise

First, I'd like to say thank you to those of you who have followed my columns and presentations for years. I look continuously for companies and products that will help your practices serve clients better while producing better revenue for the firm and the partners. For those of you in industry, I watch for tools to help you manage your overall operations with less effort. Your questions and comments via email and when we see each other face to face are always appreciated. As you look ahead to the next year, I'm hopeful that everything happens to you, your family and your business just the way you would like it in the coming year.

The Past Year of Change

This year has seen much innovation in hardware and software as well as evolved thinking in processes. Notable changes in the past year include the following:

» **Next Generation Firewalls** – This technology provides intrusion protection and filtering of content to protect your network. All business networks should be running firewalls with these capabilities for maximum protection.

» **Sandy Bridge** – Intel Core i2 stepped up the processor speed and graphics capability this past year. An additional key feature in this generation of hardware is the protection of a “sand box.” This isolation of computer resources in hardware can prevent malware

from taking over your computer. There will be more sand boxing in both hardware and software in the coming years.

» **Thunderbolt** – Intel's new internal bus allows internal communication at 10 Gbit/s and is designed to be upgraded to 100 Gbit/s over the next decade. This technology is intended to replace USB, SCSI, SATA, Firewire and all other internal communications technologies. It arrived this year in the Mac Air.

» **Expansion of the tablet marketplace** – After the introduction of the iPad last year, the iPad2 expanded the market along with the introduction of dozens of other competitors. Amazon has added to the frenzy with the new Kindle Fire. Estimates suggest there will be 67 million tablets in use at year end.

» **Ultrabooks** – Small form factor portables like the Mac Air, ASUS and HP that do not compromise performance and are much lighter with long battery life will influence portable purchases for some time to come.

» **Dual Core Smartphones** – We are just beginning to see higher performance from smartphones with the introduction of multiple processing chips. The down side is battery life, but the upside is greater performance on larger screens.

» **Smaller and bigger, faster scanners** – Multiple vendors including Fujitsu and Canon introduced smaller, faster scanners, and the high-end units increased their speed, paper handling capability and reduced their price.

» **Smaller and less expensive to operate printers** – Printers that use less expensive ink and toner arrived. Print speeds of 45 pages per minute are quite normal for \$149 to \$199 retail.

» **Evolution of Software as a Service** – Products picked up more features and more competitors this year. Products continue to be more viable solutions, particularly if you have redundant internet service in your business.

» **Browser-enabled applications** – Traditional applications started to offer browser access at reasonable speeds. An example is Sage Accpac V6, which has a thick client still available, but the experience in a browser has comparable features and speed.

» **Updates in Practice Management** – CCH NextGen has arrived and is being deployed by small firms. Thomson Practice

CS expanded its features. Office Tools Professional continues to grow and expand.

» **Integration of Office 2010, Office 365 and Adobe Acrobat X** – A new generation of productivity software has arrived, has been integrated together, and products are routinely beginning to support the latest versions.

» **Windows Small Business Server 2011** – This small business server upgrade starts the server upgrade cycle for Microsoft. There will be more to come next year.

» **Beta of Windows 8** – This system is showing off the new features of Windows 8 now. Probable release will occur next year.

The Future Year of Promise

With so many innovations in the past year, how much innovation can occur in the coming year? With all due respect to the notable advancements of the past year, we see even more for the year ahead:

» **Upgrades to almost all tablets introduced before the end of the year** – We do not expect any of the existing tablet technology to make it through the coming year without an upgrade. If you are planning on buying a tablet, but don't have an immediate need, wait for the new generation tablets.

» **Higher speed cellular data access** – Some systems have been upgraded, but most of us will see faster cellular data in the coming year. You will probably have to acquire a new device to take advantage of the new speeds.

» **Expansion of Thunderbolt into many products** – Intel should have good success selling this technology to big manufacturers like HP, Dell and Lenovo. After that, most manufacturers will follow.

» **Advancements in Touch Screens** – The release of Windows 8 will drive demand for touch screens in portables and desktops. The age of touch will likely arrive ... if you don't believe that has happened already with the tablets.

» **More use of Solid State Drives as prices fall** – Economics are the key driver behind more widespread use of solid state drives. As prices fall and capacities increase, using a solid state drive instead of a rotating hard drive will become common.

» **Encryption in hardware will become more widespread** – A few vendors are offering encryption in hardware today on internal

and external hard drives. This will become more common, and increasingly specified for protection for the small price difference.

» **Release of the next Windows** – This will be a big event for Microsoft. Watch for versions of Windows 8 for both the desktop and for servers.

» **Upgrades to all web browsers** – After every vendor upgraded their browser last year, expect to see another round of upgrades looking for more speed, protection and ease of use.

» **Better business reporting and analytics** – The reporting tools that have been developed in the past two years have astounded me. Expect innovations from BizNet Software, BizTools Analytics, ClusterSeven, Rivet, Alchemex and many others trying to make reporting easier.

» **Multiple small business SaaS accounting products** – Innovation will occur from big players like Sage, new players like Xero and established players like Intuit. It should be a very exciting year in this area.

» **Expansion of SaaS applications** – Innovation speed will increase even more in the coming year. By the end of the year, we don't expect a single category of software to NOT have an offering. Think of a point need, and believe that someone has seen that opportunity and is trying to build a solution as you read this.

Technology innovation will continue at an accelerating pace. Developers have used the economic hard times to retreat to develop new hardware and software. The creators of these products are just beginning to release the fruits of their labors. The companies who have not been investing are due for a shock as their position in the market is disrupted by innovation. Most important is that you take time to reflect on how you'd like to improve your own client service as well as business operations. Think about where technology can help you. Lay out a plan that includes projects that you can execute over a three-year period, and include some rough budget numbers to take advantage of these new tools. If you know what you want, it is likely that the products you need to solve the business problems identified will be released within the year. And that's innovation that I like ... problems solved before I'm ready to buy a solution! All the best in your technology and business in the coming year! ●



Randy Johnston

Mr. Johnston is executive vice president and partner of K2 Enterprises and Network Management Group, Inc. He is a nationally recognized educator, consultant and writer with over 30 years' experience. He can be contacted at randy.johnston@cpapracticeadvisor.com.

2012 EXECUTIVE PREDICTIONS 2011 YEAR IN REVIEW

Back to the Future for Firms: 2012 ... and Beyond

From a financial perspective, 2011 was a more stable year for firms than 2010. Even though firms are reporting flat revenues or small growth over their results in 2010 (when we saw about the same story), they are maintaining acceptable bottom lines through continued cost cutting, better management of their service delivery processes and more time spent with their clients. It's quite a different story for their clients. Small business America is still wrestling with the effects of the recession and

“stuck in neutral” in terms of making both basic and strategic decisions. Uncertainty in critical areas such as health care, business and personal taxes, hiring incentives and credit availability all add complexity to the most basic of businesses. There is no question that as 2012 unfolds, the 29 million small businesses in America will need their CPAs even more to help them navigate their way to more stable economic times and then to growth opportunities.

WHAT ARE THE TOP ISSUES?

The 2011 AICPA PCPS [CPA Firm Top Issues Survey](#) revealed a number of interesting factors that will have an impact deep into 2012 and beyond. For decades, the survey found that the top issue for CPA firms was staff recruiting and retention. Then in 2009, those concerns went off the radar, and client retention moved to the forefront as a top issue. In 2011, obtaining new clients replaced client retention as a top priority for firms. After many years of a flourishing market, CPAs are now back out developing new business both from new clients and by adding services for existing clients. Among larger firms, a new factor appeared at the top of the list for the first time: partner accountability. Gone are times when partners could rest on the business they brought in many years ago and manage their own portfolio

of clients inconsistent with the rest of the firm. Small firms, on the other hand, continued to wrestle with tax law complexity and implementation of complicated standards. As we move into 2012, the AICPA initiative on private company financial reporting gives small firms and their clients genuine hope of change to a more relevant and useful set of accounting principles for private companies.

A more detailed review, commentary and implementation tools for the 2011 AICPA PCPS [CPA Firm Top Issues Survey](#) can be found at aicpa.org/InterestAreas/PrivateCompaniesPracticeSection/Resources/FirmStrategyandPlanning/Pages/PCPS%20Top%20Issues%20Survey.aspx.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Enough about history. Let's take a look at what will happen in 2012 and beyond and what firms should be doing to plot their future. The year 2012 is probably the most important one for firm strategic planning in many decades. We are at a point where we have done all the cost cutting that's possible, but the marketplace continues to be in flux and will never return to where it was in the days before the recession. In order for practitioners to maintain an acceptable bottom line and long-term strength, there is no question that they must take a hard look at their marketplace, their clients, their skills, their services offerings and their technology, and integrate all of them and more into their firms' business plan. In 2012, creating a business plan will demand more rigor than we usually see at the annual offsite retreat. Substantial analysis and research are necessary to enable firms to make the best investments of their resources in the right places.

As firms examine the marketplace, they will have to consider a number of new developments since the recession. They will have to take a hard look at the industries they serve and could serve and determine not only which ones are growing but also which ones are dying. We know, for example, that for many years to come, anything related to healthcare will have very robust prospects. That includes not just medical practices and hospitals but also related businesses, such as medical supplies, medical transportation, nursing facilities and the like. In contrast, firms with client concentrations in industries that represent old school manufacturing in some of the rust belt cities will find that these once flourishing businesses are never to return to what they

were. Another marketplace consideration is location. The reality is that there are cities and states with robust business climates and there are faltering ones. Today's technologies make it easy for small local firms to work on a national and international basis no matter where they are located. In tough locales around the country, firms that have flourished are the ones that faced this reality and targeted prospective clients that may reside in the local market but do business throughout the United States and the world. Another marketplace consideration is the aging client base and its implications. Practitioners who are expecting to transition firm ownership to the next generation of leaders or to sell or merge the practice will find themselves in a fragile state if the majority of their clients are owners who are well along in age without their own internal succession plans.

As firms look at their current skills, service offerings and even at their functioning owners and partners, there is one foundational tenet that will be even more foundational in 2012. It is that the strength and depth of the client relationship is the driver of firm success. The firms that will demonstrate the most value in 2012 are those that invest in the skills that enable them to “connect” with clients and prospective clients and go deep in understanding their pain points and their potential opportunities. This is the core driver of what the firm's services and skills need to be. The most successful firms for 2012 and beyond will be those that integrate that into their culture.

More information for planning for your firm's future can be found at: aicpa.org/Research/CPAHorizons2025/Pages/CPAHorizonsReport.aspx

JAMES C. METZLER, CPA

Vice President – Small Firm Interests for the AICPA

Jim leads AICPA initiatives aimed at serving the needs of practitioners, including the activities of the Private Companies Practice Section. He serves as an advocate for small firms on standard-setting, legislative matters, practice issues and as liaison between the AICPA and its member firms. Jim

reports to Barry Melancon and works with him on a multitude of professional issues.

Jim has spent more than 40 years working with small firms. Prior to joining the AICPA, he was a co-founder of ConvergenceCoaching, LLC, a national consulting firm dedicated to helping CPAs prosper by assisting

them to develop and implement success plans. Jim spent 32 years in public accounting, as a partner with Gaines Metzler Kriner & Company, LLP, a local firm in Buffalo, New York. He was also founder of GEMKO Information Group, Inc., a successful technology consulting organization. He is a frequent lecturer for the AICPA, State Societies and global CPA professional associations.

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2012 EXECUTIVE PREDICTIONS 2011 YEAR IN REVIEW

2011 Year in Review

In 2011, we continued to invest in our products delivering a range of new capabilities. Our product innovation is driven by two things. First, helping our customers meet the growing demands of their daily tasks. Second, providing anytime, anywhere access to information.

- To support the increasing needs of the mobile workforce, we introduced **BillQuick mobile apps** for iOS and Android OS. Enter time and expenses anywhere with these free apps.

- With the **BillQuick 2011** release, we took things to a new level to further make BillQuick your indispensable time & billing assistant. Its new and enhanced features do most of the repetitive tasks for you. Now, you can automate your billing process with the new **Automatic Billing** feature. And, with the new **Progress Billing**, BillQuick can bill now and link the time entry data on a

later date. When entered, it automatically writes-up/down the time entries.

- We introduced an **Accounts Payable** module with BillQuick 2011. Aside from just billing clients, you can now pay sub-consultants, track business expenses and connect those expenses with business income. You can also print Profit and Loss reports, Balance Sheets, and other financial reports.

- Since launching **BillQuick Online** in 2010, many of our customers have benefited from managing their time and billing anywhere and reducing their overhead — no software installation or server maintenance required.

These are only a few things that we've accomplished in 2011. For 2012 and beyond, innovating with our customers' success in mind is at the heart of everything we do.

PREDICTIONS FOR 2012 & BEYOND

2012 will bring new ways of interacting with technology, a reduction in "data entry", a shift in the way you store data and the beginning of the end of the conventional PC.

1. Zero entry approach to information will increase.

Applications and devices will collect and present information with little or no input from you. Some examples of applications already utilizing this concept are Mint, TripIt, LinkedIn and Google Analytics. Here at BQE, we're working on adding zero entry features to our app. For example, it will track your employees' client visits (location and duration) and travel time. Then it will automatically create time and expense entries based on the day's activities. Zero typing resulting in zero loss of billable time.

2. Location-based applications will surge.

The two biggest users of this technology will be social networks and advertisers. Right now, you can use Facebook to locate nearby friends and family. Or, use Twitter to view tweets of nearby customers, coworkers or peers. Advertisers will increasingly use this technology to detect your location and make restaurant recommendations, send coupons, etc.

Innovation with location-based technology will only grow as more products (i.e. phones, watches and cars) incorporate it.

3. Sales of mobile and tablet apps will double.

More applications will be designed from the ground up for tablets and you'll see a decline in laptop sales. Tablet apps for Peachtree, QuickBooks and BillQuick will be introduced that are better designed and more intuitive than their desktop counterparts. It's a whole new game.

4. Voice recognition competition will heat up.

In response to Apple's Siri app, the voice command applications from Microsoft and Google will hit the market and accelerate innovation in this space.

5. The proliferation of the cloud will accelerate.

Cloud service use will become commonplace, for two reasons. First, bandwidth cost will decrease significantly giving you a faster connection to the cloud. Second, the data will no longer live on your device. Instead, it will live on the cloud and become device-agnostic. Apple's iOS 5 Photo Stream is a good example of the device-agnostic data.

SHAFAT QAZI

CEO and Founder, BQE Software

For nearly two decades, Shafat Qazi, the CEO and Founder of BQE Software, has worked with professionals in service-based businesses such as accountants, attorneys, architects and engineers to develop solutions to help them achieve greater efficiency in the management of time, expenses, billing and projects.



Shafat has a passion for technology and possesses an innovative and forward thinking mindset that is reflected in the time and billing solutions developed by BQE. Examples of this include the implementation of workflow automation and the use of Fuzzy logic (i.e., Artificial Intelligence) to create software that actually learns as it's

used. Not content to just solve the current needs of BQE's customers, Shafat is always looking to create solutions for future demands that may arise from the latest technological innovations and changes in the industry BQE serves.

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ABOUT BQE SOFTWARE

BillQuick® by BQE Software is the leading time & billing, and project management software for small to mid-sized firms. With over 250,000 customers, it's the trusted solution that CPAs, accountants and other professional services firms depend on every day.

BillQuick streamlines your time & billing processes, increases profitability, and helps you make better business decisions with real-time data. It integrates with QuickBooks, Peachtree, MYOB and Outlook. Add-on products for BillQuick include:

- Web-based anytime, anywhere access via **BillQuick Online cloud service** or self-hosted **Web Suite**.

- Free, native **iPhone** and **Android Apps** that allow Web Suite and BillQuick Online customers to enter time and expenses seamlessly from their phone.

- **BillQuick HR** to efficiently track staff's sick and vacation time.

- **BillQuick Outlook Add-In** to record all appointments, tasks and correspondences created in Outlook as time entries.

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2012 EXECUTIVE PREDICTIONS 2011 YEAR IN REVIEW

Year in Review

In 2011, CCH continued its strong commitment to customers with significant investment in developing and enhancing workflow solutions for tax, accounting and audit professionals. And, we continued to see strong adoption of these solutions and continued industry recognition.

A cornerstone of our product development process is collaborating with customers. In 2011, CCH took this to the next level with our new Innovation Lab, where we have expanded our contextual design focus of working side-by-side with customers to best understand their processes and to create solutions that seamlessly support their workflows by automating, simplifying and helping our customers continue to gain productivity and benefit from greater efficiencies.

This underscores the overall commitment we have made to help our customers advance from best of breed solutions to what CCH has identified as Best in Process. Best in Process ensures that every step in a tax, audit, accounting or firm management process is made more efficient and effective through technology, and that technology facilitates the flow of work across multiple processes in a streamlined and seamless way.

Foundational to our ability to help customers achieve Best in Process is the ongoing investment we have made to deliver the industry's most advanced and agile software and research platforms. They are world-class — and truly world-proven as CCH and Wolters Kluwer extend our global leadership position in tax, accounting and audit.

Building on our technology platform, we continued to enhance the ProSystem fx[®] Suite in 2011. This included enhancements to our Foundation solutions, as well as the further roll out of our SaaS solutions, including the new Scan (SaaS), and the introduction of ProSystem fx Document (On-Premise) and the new ProSystem fx Practice Intelligence, which gives firms quick, accurate information via on-screen dashboards to better manage their practices and chart their success.

As a testament to the growing importance of ProSystem fx among tax professionals, we realized our strongest tax e-filing season ever — with

more than 11 million tax returns transmitted through ProSystem fx Tax and Global fx Tax. We also were recognized for having one of the industry's leading acceptance rates for federal 1040 individual and business tax returns. Additionally, ProSystem fx Portal is becoming an essential component of our customers' workflows — and their clients — with more than a million exchanges to date, all paperless, all encrypted and secure.

Further enhancements also were made to CCH's award-winning research platform *IntelliConnect*[®] to ensure CCH delivers Faster Answers and Better Results. And, with the introduction of *CCH Mobile*, professionals now have access to authoritative research information anytime, anywhere.

In state and local tax, CCH advanced the accessibility of cloud solutions through its acquisition of SpeedTax, which we've renamed Sales Tax SaaS. Only through CCH, firms and their clients now have advanced SaaS technology and premier rate and taxability content supported by strong customer and professional service. On a global basis we also continued to expand to meet our customers' growing need for cross-border solutions. For example, our *Global Integrator* has become a preferred solution for firms and their multi-national clients looking for a comprehensive, web-based solution for managing the global tax function.

In 2012, CCH celebrates its 99th anniversary. The company was founded on the basis of helping customers be able to efficiently and effectively serve their clients. From the outset, we have done this through the combination of authoritative content and innovative solutions. That commitment continues.

As we look to the future, we know the investments we've made in understanding our customers, technology and research platforms, and mobility and cloud computing are enabling our customers to realize remarkable breakthroughs in productivity and efficiencies — crucial as firms prepare for 2012 and beyond.

MIKE SABBATIS

President & CEO

Mike Sabbatis is President and CEO of CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business. At CCH, Sabbatis leads the U.S. and Canadian businesses in serving as a strategic partner in delivering innovative, customer-focused Best in Process solutions for professionals. Under his leadership, CCH has invested at record levels in

its integrated solutions, and he has led the strategic development of CCH's next generation research and software platforms, including new cloud and mobile solutions. As President and CEO, Sabbatis has significantly expanded CCH's presence in both the professional CPA and corporate markets,

and has led the extension of the ProSystem fx Suite across in the U.S. and across Asia Pacific, Canada and Europe. A leader in the profession, Sabbatis is a frequent speaker on technology and strategic business issues, and he is consistently recognized as one of Accounting Today's Top 100 leaders.



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PREDICTIONS FOR 2012

The next year will be an acceleration of what we've already started to see as firms continue to prepare themselves to be what we call "Future Ready." Technology and client demands are moving so quickly that the only way firms can be prepared to respond is if they focus on clearly understanding their workflows, optimizing their processes, leveraging technology to best streamline and support these processes, and establish a framework of continuous improvement.

In 2011, we commissioned *The CCH Future Ready Firm Survey*, an independent nationwide survey of tax and audit professionals to examine what firms are doing to make sure they are preparing for the future. It offers good insight; a few important points we see:

1. Supporting an increasingly mobile workforce becomes essential. The *CCH Survey* found that within three years, nearly all tax and audit professionals at large firms will rely on smartphones and tablets to perform their work. Most firms are not ready for this today, but recognize getting ready is a priority. In 2012, firms will examine their processes to better understand where mobile technologies fit in and can streamline their workflows. A great example: Today, professionals most commonly use their mobile devices for e-mail and calendar. In the future, they'll increasingly see them as an extension of their desktop — or even a replacement — using mobile devices regularly for research, practice management, audit

and tax compliance — wherever they need to perform their work.

2. Cloud computing gains momentum as it moves from niche to mainstream. More than three out of four large firms will rely on cloud solutions within the next three years, according to the *CCH Survey*. This will give them tremendous advantages in simplifying their technology infrastructure and the agility to meet new customer and market demands. Many firms will use 2012 to identify how cloud can help improve their workflow, support mobile workers and better manage firm resources. Those more advanced will further expand their deployment of cloud to generate near-term efficiencies.

3. Expectation grows for technology to deliver Best in Process. In the *CCH Survey*, most firms told us: 1) their processes could be improved; and 2) they could be doing more to leverage technology. The first step is understanding that change is needed. In 2012, firms preparing for the future will examine their processes, streamline them and start to evaluate technologies by asking fundamental questions: How will this technology further automate my workflows, enhance my processes and improve my results? These firms will expect more from their technology — and their technology partners. CCH alone is positioned to deliver on Best in Process to ensure firms are future ready for 2012 and beyond.



Winn-Dixie gets the big picture on sales tax issues that change from state to state — and donut to donut.

In one state, there's the six-donut rule: sell fewer than six donuts and sales tax applies; more than six is considered nontaxable. In another, it's the half-pint rule: sell less than a half-pint of ice cream and it's taxable — but more than a half-pint is free of sales tax.



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Rich Tansi, Manager, Sales/Use & Property Tax, Winn-Dixie Stores, Inc.

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2012 EXECUTIVE PREDICTIONS YEAR IN REVIEW

A LOOK BACK AT 2011

For a lot of tax and accounting professionals, 2011 was the year when “The New Normal” got a lot less new. We began to see firms adapt successfully and flourish in a changed environment. Firms that have been creative about using all of the information and technology resources at their disposal are doing well. They have become trusted advisors to their clients, part of the solution to the volatile economic times. They are indispensable to their clients and more profitable than ever.

2011 was an exciting year for us, as well. We introduced a variety of new products and enhancements that will help forward-looking firms flourish in their new role, including:

New mobile applications that will enable accounting firms to deploy a mobile app branded as their own to clients for sharing documents, collecting scanned receipts, and more. In addition, it will allow employees of those client

businesses to enter time, view W-2 information, and much more from their mobile devices.

Workpapers CS, a completely new application, will bring engagement management to the cloud. It builds on the revolutionary real-time collaboration capabilities that we originally introduced in Accounting CS to enable firms to efficiently manage workpapers from anywhere.

NetClient CS portals have also seen enhancements that make them an even better client service tool and paperless workflow instrument for the firm. For example, new integration with Practice CS makes it possible to create and populate NetClient CS portals directly from Practice CS. There's also a new option that gives firms one-click access to a client view of the portal, making it easy to see the same portal view as clients.

PREDICTIONS FOR 2012

Mobile will be bigger than you think. We all knew that mobile would be a great way to keep tabs on the office from the road. What we didn't anticipate was the incredible value of mobile technology as a tool for interacting with clients and building relationships in the field.

Suddenly, firms can walk into a meeting with the ability to look at data in real time, to do work, finalize reports, and solve problems. All on a friendly, unobtrusive device that doesn't put a barrier between you and your client. I can't think of a better symbol of the new dynamic in client-firm relationships.

Accounting will be less about numbers and more about people. You already know that computational services like tax processing are becoming commoditized, largely because of the influx of automated alternatives. But a software program can't build relationships. It can't find creative new ways to save clients money, grow revenue, or make smarter business decisions. You can.

Consultative, value-added services will be the solution for many firms that are looking for a more profitable

alternative to the nuts-and-bolts computational services that continue to shrink in value.

Partners, technology managers, and IT departments will lose their fear of personal devices. It's impossible not to see the onslaught of personal mobile devices in the workplace. Increasingly, their owners want to use them to access email and other firm resources. This has been viewed with skepticism and fear by some firm principals and IT managers. That attitude needs to change.

In effect, these workers are asking permission to use their own resources to be more productive. They're eager to take on responsibility and increase their involvement. If you refuse, you send the message that you view them more as a security risk than a source of new ideas. And you're leaving money on the table.

It has been a bumpy few years for just about everyone. But I believe that in 2012, the ubiquity of the web, myriad new devices, and their potential to make us all more efficient will make the New Normal less murky and more lucrative for the firms that embrace it. Success may look a little different, but it's still well within reach.

JON BARON

Jon Baron, President, Professional,
Tax & Accounting, Thomson Reuters

Jon joined Thomson Reuters in 1992 and has more than 35 years of technology development and



executive management experience providing technology solutions for the accounting profession. He was vice president of technology development from 1992-1998, and was responsible for the design and development of the CS Professional Suite of products. Jon was then promoted to president and CEO of the business in

July of 1998. In July 2004, he was promoted to the position of president of the Professional unit of Tax & Accounting, which focuses on the accounting, bookkeeping, and tax software market in the United States and Canada. Jon holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Siena College and an MBA from Boston University.

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NetClient CS®, Practice CS®, and GoFileRoom®, these comprehensive suites are designed to work together seamlessly, allowing every task to flow efficiently from start to finish and eliminating redundant work. Learn more at www.CS.ThomsonReuters.com

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Tech Predictions for 2012

At a global broadband policy conference in late 2011, I was asked to define the state of technology in this year. The answer came down to this: 2011 was the year that reality set in. This statement requires a bit of explanation, but we can begin to define it with five simple trends that emerged this year:



Dave McClure
Mr. McClure is a consultant and widely published writer on technology issues. He can be contacted at dave.mcclure@cpapracticeadvisor.com.

1. Anything 4G is a hoax. There is no device, no program that meets the 4G specification, and won't be for a while. What happened is that the manufacturers, bereft of something new to dangle before consumers, sought and got permission to call 3G devices "4G," on the grounds that they were slightly better than the old 3G. This led to the ridiculous

claim that WiMAX was in some way a form of 4G.

2. Technology has changed us, for both good and bad. Technology has kept its promise of changing basic institutions, from religion to government. But the change is not always positive. Fail to be clear in your Facebook invitations, for example, and a thousand strangers can show up at your house for a party. And the world over, governments are struggling with how to keep technology from fostering revolution and unrest. The Wikileaks situation this year has not helped.

3. Cyberwar is real. So is cybercrime. For a long time, we could hide behind the facade that cybercrime only happened to foolish people who visit porn sites on the internet. And that cyberwar was some future thing that George Lucas had already dealt with. Now we are faced with ever-growing assaults, the rise of botnets and an increase in identity theft.

4. Facebook is not your friend. Google does evil. How many ways do these guys have to steal your personal information to enrich themselves before consumers ditch them and go back to doing things an older but more secure way? We used to fear that the govern-



ment would follow our every move, collect all our information to use against us and pound us senseless with propaganda messages. We were wrong ... it is the marketers who are doing it.

5. In technology, many seemingly good ideas turn out to be stupid. Like Microsoft's "Bob," watching movies on your cell phone, localized information sent to your cell phone, Twitter, and ... well, feel free to complete the list on your own. Just because the engineers like it does not mean that consumers will. And just because a lot of consumers like it doesn't mean it is not stupid. Think chia pets.

This is the year reality set in, driven by a hard economy and the suspicion that perhaps we have given up just a little too much of our privacy to get the baubles and trinkets they are offering.

So how did our prognostications for the year turn out? Here's what we predicted and what actually happened:

2011 Predictions & Results

PREDICTION: Internet applications will continue to lag internet speeds.

ACTUAL RESULTS: If the folks at Gartner are to be believed — and they should be — folks use the internet for email and search, followed by sharing photos, navigation and shopping. Not a whisper of YouTube or social media. And none of the top applications are particularly bandwidth intensive. Of course, video on demand could change all of that. But it hasn't yet.

● **SCORE:** 1.0

PREDICTION: Printer Management will be the new efficiency hot button.

ACTUAL RESULTS: They even have it in featured ads on television now. The total lifecycle cost of printers is generally so bad that the printer manufacturers should be tarred and feathered. On the other hand, HP seems to have enough troubles as is. Just remember this: If they refuse to give you information on how many sheets a cartridge will print, there is a reason.

● **SCORE:** 1.0

PREDICTION: Facebook will go public, but ...

ACTUAL RESULTS: Only they didn't. CEO Zuckerberg pulled the public offering at close to the last minute, frightened off by, as we noted last year, the ongoing privacy woes and the disastrous redesign of its user interface. Of the two, the threat from regulators is the greatest, and Facebook is busy hiring lawyers to try to fend them off.

● **SCORE:** 0.0

PREDICTION: Small desktop computers are "in."

ACTUAL RESULTS: Though the trend is going smaller, this year was definitely bigger than usual. Amazingly, even tiny Netbook units were pushed aside by tablets that are even smaller. Demand is so great for these smaller units that it is hard to find a good micro-ATX case if you want to build your own.

● **SCORE:** 1.0

PREDICTION: Internet crime will get worse. Much, much worse.

ACTUAL RESULTS: You can blame some

of the hoopla on increased public attention to the problem, but the reality is that by any measure you wish, crime on the internet has exploded in the past year. In part due to the economy, no doubt, but disconcerting nonetheless.

● **SCORE:** 1.0

PREDICTION: The computer you really want will cost \$250.

ACTUAL RESULTS: And isn't that a lovely thing. In both desktops and laptops, the base price for a decent model is about \$250. We added a bit more RAM and better keyboards, bringing the total closer to \$300, but then replaced all of the PCs in our office.

● **SCORE:** 1.0

PREDICTION: Big screen monitors will take the market.

ACTUAL RESULTS: Sure, it has skewed our trade balance with China. But the reality is that the big screen phenomena has hit full-bore. These monsters are, in some cases, even serving as wall monitors for PCs.

● **SCORE:** 1.0

PREDICTION: Cell-Fi will replace Wi-Fi for accountants.

ACTUAL RESULTS: Any tax and accounting firm that still allows its professionals to use public WiFi to conduct business does not deserve your business. It is simply too fragile. More expensive, but equally more secure, is the use of cellular 3G wireless connectivity when business has to be done in a place without a wired connection.

● **SCORE:** 1.0

PREDICTION: Tablet PCs will prove a flash in the pan.

ACTUAL RESULTS: Okay, I wish I could claim I was drunk when I wrote this, but the fact is that I was stone cold sober. What I failed to understand is that, given a choice between gold and cheap colored beads, some of the natives will choose the beads. Tablets still do not replace a laptop, but they sure do sell. I own three of them myself.

● **SCORE:** 0.0

PREDICTION: We will finally adopt IPv6.
ACTUAL RESULTS: Likewise, this looked like a sure bet back in 2010 as we began to panic over the shortage of internet addresses. But it turns out that the shortage was not as short as we thought. In fact, lots of folks are sitting on whole blocks of IP

addresses, creating an active and lucrative black market in addresses. Sure, many more organizations are prepared for IPv6, but the transition remains a few years down the road.

● **SCORE:** 0.0

Harsh. Very harsh. In the 18 years I have been doing this annual column, I have never had only seven points out of a possible 10. I could rightly claim that the economy got in the way. Or that certain IP address hoarders were looking for a quick fortune. But a bad prediction is a bad prediction, which reminds

me only that I am doing better than Bob Metcalfe, the inventor of Ethernet and co-founder of 3Com Corporation. In 1996, he predicted the collapse of the internet.

Nonetheless, I will endeavor to do better with the predictions for the year ahead.

2012 Technology Predictions

1. The Internet Will Prove Fragile. We are used to thinking of the internet as some kind of enduring, monolithic network that may occasionally go down, but will never really fail. But failure, as we discovered in 2011, is more than just possible. The core elements of the internet are being targeted by other countries and by criminals, and while the two major attacks in the past year have not been catastrophic, they could have been. Look for both public and private organizations to work harder to shore up this somewhat shaky network, lest we see a global loss of communication and commerce. Think of it this way: If you lost the internet tomorrow, would your company survive? Would you?

2. The United States Will See Data Caps For Internet Services. Most of the world has long since adjusted to having data caps for broadband internet, but for those in the United States the whole concept is foreign and repugnant. Nonetheless, as we move to a combination of wireless and fiber for our internet connections, the current “all you can eat” menu will give way to a “pay for how much you want” scheme. And it will happen this year. Already being adopted by cellular broadband and cable, it will rapidly spread to other segments of the internet ... with substantial penalties for breaking the cap. 2012 will be an awkward year, in which the data caps become a battleground for video-on-demand services and some download services, but this should settle down by the end of 2013.

3. Recession Will Hit The Tech Industry ... Finally. One of the few segments of the economy that has weathered the current recession with no outward sign of serious impact, the tech industry is starting to show signs of turmoil. Venture capital has dried up, initial public offerings are being deferred, employee

benefits are shrinking, profits are down and merger activity is sluggish. It's not that the pace of change is any different or that new products are not coming into the market. It's that consumers don't have enough discretionary money to spend, and companies can't get funding for expansion.

4. The Kindle Fire Will Catch Fire. Trust Amazon to realize what the major computer manufacturers did not — that there is a huge, untapped market for recreational computing devices. Until now, the computing market has been split between the gamers with their consoles and handhelds, and the “serious” devices for business use. The new Kindle Fire, introduced at the end of 2011, represents a new kind of device. A toy for grownups, if you will, that allows for book reading, video viewing and basic internet functionality.

5. 3-D Television Will ... I'm Not Sure What It Will Do. As one of the people who still remembers sitting at the drive-in theater with those goofy red-and-blue-lens 3D glasses, I can state with a fair amount of confidence that 3-D television isn't going anywhere in 2012. Sure, it's something fun to look at every 30 years or so. But in the living room? Today, 3-D sets and programming are too expensive and don't deliver enough improvement in the quality of the entertainment to make them more than a novelty. As previously noted, some really great-sounding technologies turn out to be just stupid.

6. Privacy will be a major battle. Google tracks your every move online and sells the information to advertisers, the government and anyone else who wants to buy the data. So does Facebook. So does the OnStar system in your car. And guess what? Even that new Kindle Fire is designed to capture all your web browsing and viewing behaviors. It's not an issue that

Congress wants to take up in an election year — what member of Congress wants to risk contributions and support by tackling something so controversial? But consumers are getting fed up with being followed and snooped everywhere they go. Expect a backlash in 2012.

7. Desktop Accounting Applications Will Begin To Die. Sure, there are downsides to cloud computing. Just check Wikipedia under “Cloud Computing,” which offers a nice list of issues. But the reality is that the old days of software versions and installations from physical media like a CD are rapidly coming to an end. Online computing in a shared environment improves the quality of the software, enhances productivity and enables a whole new dynamic in client communications never before available. By the end of 2012, the only accounting software not available online will be a handful of legacy dinosaurs.

8. Cell Phone “Wallets” Will Falter. Here's an idea: Take all of your credit and debit cards, and replace them with an app on your cell phone. The money is transferred right out of your account every time you have the cell phone scanned. Of course, if you want to see how easily this whole system is to hack, just sit in any conference room and have your Bluetooth phone scan for other phones in the room! Wow! I did this at a tech conference and got nearly a hundred. The number of them with security in place to stop me from taking their data? About three. So here is a quick test for whether new technologies will actually take flight: Are consumers asking for it? Do they see a need for it? Didn't think so.

9. Windows Version 8 Will Roar! Microsoft is a strange company. They have produced technologies so far ahead of their time (think Web TV) that you could just cry. They have rocked the world

with new operating systems ... and produced others that just made you want to scream. I'm still trying to figure out what Windows 98SE was all about. But mark this: Windows Version 8 will be a winner. The Version 7 of last year fixed the problems with Vista, but this new operating system is scalable like no other that Microsoft has produced, working on everything from cell phones to mammoth PCs. And the features ... well, stay tuned.

10. Movie Downloads Will Get Cheaper. Having killed off the most popular pirate sites for movies, as well as setting a funeral date for Netflix, the major studios are in a bind as to how to sell movies to viewers who refuse to buy CDs. With Amazon and iTunes in the fray, movie downloads at a reasonable price will finally appear in 2012. What's more, the premium cable channels have their own Video On Demand Services, as do the satellite services. The good news? They will go to war for your business, resulting in lower prices with better services. The bad news? Don't look for the all-you-want-for-a-monthly-fee model. That likely died with Netflix.

That will not be the only tech news this year. AOL and Yahoo! desperately need to be bought by someone if they are to survive. Ditto for RIM, maker of the flailing BlackBerry. There is the question of the AT&T/Qwest merger, reformation of the Universal Service Fund, the future of HP now that Meg Whitman has taken control, and the fate of Google now that they are persona non grata at the White House.

The lowly mouse is due for another overhaul, the recession is still a-raging, “green” technologies are still not ready for prime time, and it will still take forever to load web pages, no matter what internet speed you are paying for.

More Later.

In-Firm 2012 IT Predictions and 2011 Results

Yup, it's "predictions" time again so join us as we dust off the crystal ball and share our vision of 2012, as well as how we fared on last year's guesses. 2011 is pretty well in the history books, and year-end indications point to firms beginning to actively spend on their IT again. We see this mostly in response to firms needing to replace equipment that has been pushed well beyond recommended limits, but this can be seen in a positive light as it allows firms to step back and evaluate their overall situation and make quantum leaps to transition to the leading but "stable edge" technologies that have been shown to improve firm productivity. With that in mind, we begin with the results from last year, followed by our predictions for 2011.



Roman H. Kepczyk, CPA.CITP

Roman H. Kepczyk, CPA.CITP is Director of Consulting for Xcentric, LLC, and works exclusively with accounting firms to implement today's leading best practices and technologies. Roman recently updated his "Quantum of Paperless: A Partner's Guide to Accounting Firm Optimization," which is available at Amazon.com.

2011 Prediction Results

Prediction 1 — Secure Data Transfer (WIN): For 2011, we expect a significant increase in the number of firms using portals and third-party email for secure data transfer of tax returns, financial statements, and even organizers for early adopters. This was an easy WIN as the Association for Accounting Administration's (AAA) Paperless Benchmark Survey pointed to 73% of firms having a portal or FTP site and many more also having encrypted email solutions.

Prediction 2 — 64-Bit Windows 7 Standard (WIN): The majority of tax workstations purchased by firms in 2011 will be Windows 7 64-bit with at least 6GB of RAM to take advantage of the multiple monitor environment, since we have heard from four of the major accounting application vendors that virtually all of their applications work in this environment. While the purchasing did not begin until late in the year, the majority of our clients' inventories pointed to buying new workstations with Windows 7 64-bit with 8GB of RAM as the standard.

Prediction 3 — iPads are Cool Enough (WIN): This year we expect to see firms buy iPads for owners when they are traveling because they are "really cool" and, honestly, those users don't really do much work beyond email when they are on the road! Another easy win as all the other tablets struggle, especially since the iPad2 came out.

Prediction 4 — Standalone SaaS Thrives (DRAW): Standalone cloud applications like data backup, disaster recovery and even hosted email (Exchange) will thrive in firms in 2011, giving cloud computing credibility and setting the groundwork for future adoption. Almost half the firms in the AAA Paperless survey were using web-based backup this year, but the adoption of outsourced email has

been slow, so we take the DRAW as "thrive" would be an overstatement.

Prediction 5 — Digital Delivery Finally Outpaces Manual Delivery (LOSE): Firms will finally get it that it is easier to send a document electronically once they get over the security concerns and experience the cost/efficiency gains of digital delivery, so we believe there will be more electronic delivery than snail mail in 2011. While

Prediction 7 — Android Becomes King (after BlackBerry) (DRAW): iPhones are currently the coolest device around, but my friends with AT&T service know all the places they will drop service, which creates enough frustration to want to go back to another service. While those firms that are on BlackBerry will continue to support them, those looking to upgrade to a smartphone will shed their older RIM devices,



our more advanced firms were delivering the majority of their client work electronically, the smaller, more conservative tax firms were still mailing out the majority of their returns, so those sheer numbers makes this prediction a LOSE.

Prediction 6 — AutoFlow Technology Works in 2011 (WIN): We predict a sketchy start to the busy season for this technology, but enough firms will tout the benefits of the automatic insertion of scanned and verified data that firms will transition to it over the summer extension season, and everyone will be front end scanning. Easy WIN as AutoFlow products working with all the major vendors and third parties like Copanion have been successful this year.

HP/Palms, Microsoft Mobiles (now Microsoft Phone), and we predict the Android devices in accounting firms will overcome the number of iPhones to be number two on the smartphone list this year. While Android did overcome Apple this year, we didn't predict that the BlackBerry users would also switch in droves. While there still "may be" slightly more BlackBerry users in firms at the end of the year, we can't honestly take the WIN without any definitive survey results.

Prediction 8 — Tablet Application Developed (LOSE): Tablets have been around but not adopted in firms beyond consultants looking for a cool tool to make them look on the bleeding edge (me included). While some applications like OneNote are phenomenal, the

reality is that we don't see firms use tablets for tax returns and audits because the software just isn't there yet. Windows 7 adds touch capability natively so our prediction is that accounting application vendors will finally take notice and at least one will roll out a tablet/touch-capable application or announce plans to do so in 2011. Nope, nada, zip, not even close, solid LOSE. (I wish one of the engagement application vendors would take note and LEAP ahead of the competition with touch capability!)

Prediction 9 — Green Will Be Cool to Accountants (DRAW): I think we can finally start seeing the “greening” of the accounting profession taken to heart. This will promote the use of digital vs. paper delivery and more sustainable practices because studies will show it is good for business (and becoming more cost effective, which always catches our ear). While there has been a lot of press about the “greening” of the profession, and firms are implementing environmentally sound processes (including transitioning to “less-paper” technologies), it has not been obvious that they are doing it to save Mother Earth, so we will have to settle for a DRAW.

Prediction 10 — Security Breach Freaks Out Profession (DRAW): It's bound to happen, and I am guessing that 2011 will be the year. A major security problem will occur, creating National legislation protecting privacy and forcing a security response for firms that will have to scramble to implement a solution. This will drive firms to outsource more of their IT support or to move applications to secure “cloud” platforms that can be managed by teams of security professionals. There were lots of financial institution breaches in 2011, and even PricewaterhouseCoopers had to pay for credit monitoring services for 77,000 Alaska Retirees whose data was breached, but this was not enough to “Freak Out” the profession, so we will take a draw on this.

Okay, for our 2011 predictions, we pulled off 4 WINs, 2 LOSSes, and 4 DRAWs, which we feel honestly reflects our predictions.



With that out of the way, we present our 2012 guesses to help you direct this year's technology spending:

- **In-Firm Audit Engagements:** With the roll out of 4G digital cellular systems and firms asking clients for access, we expect to get Internet access at over 95% of those locations, which will allow firms to do the majority of their audit work directly on the firm's servers via remote access. This will minimize security risk and reduce maintenance (backup and networking) in the field.
- **Cloud Adoption Leaps:** We see many firms with a completely outdated IT architecture, and IT people that have not kept up with the front edge of technology enough to competently install it. This sets up the perfect environment for firms to cost-effectively transition to Cloud hosting. So we expect to see double-digit growth in the number of firms taking the leap to the Cloud.

- **Patent Wars Heat Up in 2012:**

Apple sues Samsung, Samsung sues Apple. Using lawyers to slow your competition will become more common and may be the only way that HP makes back any money on their Palm investment (since Palm owned so many handheld patents) so we expect a lot of headlines this year.

- **Slow to No Windows 8 Adoption for Workstations:**

While a solid Windows 7 was adopted by firms after Microsoft's Vista fiasco, the stability of current Windows 7 will keep firms standardizing workstations on the 64-bit version of that operating system.

- **Stabilization on Office 2010/2007:**

Firms transitioning from older versions of Microsoft Office will jump up to 2010 to take advantage of the larger Excel grid, while those on 2007 will stay there unless they have already paid for Software Assurance. 2012 will be No-Go for 2012 as it takes the major accounting vendors at least a year to stabilize their products; so early

adoption of Office 2012 goes against any positive technology ROI.

- **Android Leads Smartphone Platform:**

We will be running surveys this year to find out what smartphones firms are using, and while we believe the Apple iPhone 5 will be the coolest phone by the end of 2012, we see the overall market numbers going to Android and putting them in the top slot.

- **iPad Clear Tablet of Choice:**

While there is a lot of hype about iPads not running Flash, Microsoft's announcement that they won't support Flash in the future will help buyers overcome that hurdle and decide to buy iPads anyway, particularly if the iPad3 is delivered as promised.

- **Minimal VDI Adoption:**

While the real techs are running Virtual Desktop machines to lower the cost of workstation maintenance, the majority of firms won't want to deal with the headaches, keeping VDI on the list of “bleeding edge” technologies for 2012.

- **Video Calling Becomes Commonplace:**

Okay, for my “Dick Tracy” prediction of 2012, we believe the majority of firms will implement video calling capabilities within their practices and use it to connect to other firm members and clients. For those of you that don't know who Dick Tracy is ... Google it!

- **Nationwide Cyber Security Laws:**

With the security breaches of the last year, I'm bringing back my “freak out” prediction from last year and saying all 50 states will have a cyber security law in place by the end of 2012 as an accounting firm security breach causes accounting firm partners to take note.

We know you are approaching your 2012 busy season so we wish you the best and suggest you revisit this list in May when you are ready to improve your processes for the coming year. ●

Barcoding: It's Not Just For Retail Anymore

Barcodes belong on a grocery store shelf.

That's the common attitude toward this 60-year-old technology.

Consumers have long accepted barcodes as the preferred method for a quick checkout at the grocery or department store. Some businesses use them in the warehouse. But for decades, the technology has evolved little beyond these retail and supply chain uses.

Today, however, that's rapidly changing. Barcodes are breaking out of their retail mold. They're finding new ways to help businesses of all kinds build more efficiency into their operations, even enhancing marketing and training efforts. By learning more about old-school barcode technology, you can help clients simplify, organize and optimize their organizations. The benefits will filter all the way down to the bottom line.

What are barcodes?

A barcode is a graphic representation of data, which can be numbers and/or letters. The black lines and white spaces (1D barcodes) or "blotches" of black and white in a square (2D barcodes) are read by a barcode scanner or smartphone.

are the catalyst or "name" that makes tracking information much easier and virtually foolproof. Here is an illustration of how a 1D barcode can be used.

A barcode is like a person's name. Consider the name *Teddy*. Just like in real life, this name can be mispronounced or misspelled. Is that person

human error of rekeying information. Using a mobile scanning device or barcode scanner attached to a PC, the user can scan the barcode. The scanner communicates with software, which identifies the item's "name" and other associated information. (Check out this video for a demonstration: <http://vimeo.com/21706155>.)

2D barcodes work like 1D barcodes, but can also contain more data. 1D barcodes used in retail environments contain 13 characters, while 2D barcodes such as DataMatrix can hold thousands of characters. Newer 2D barcodes such as QR Codes (Quick Response Codes; <http://buzz.waspbarcode.com/5-ways-qr-codes>) and Microsoft Tag (<http://tag.microsoft.com/home.aspx>) are appearing on a wide range of consumer items, advertisements and more. When a user scans one of these barcodes with a smartphone, they can be directed to interactive marketing materials such as videos, websites and more.

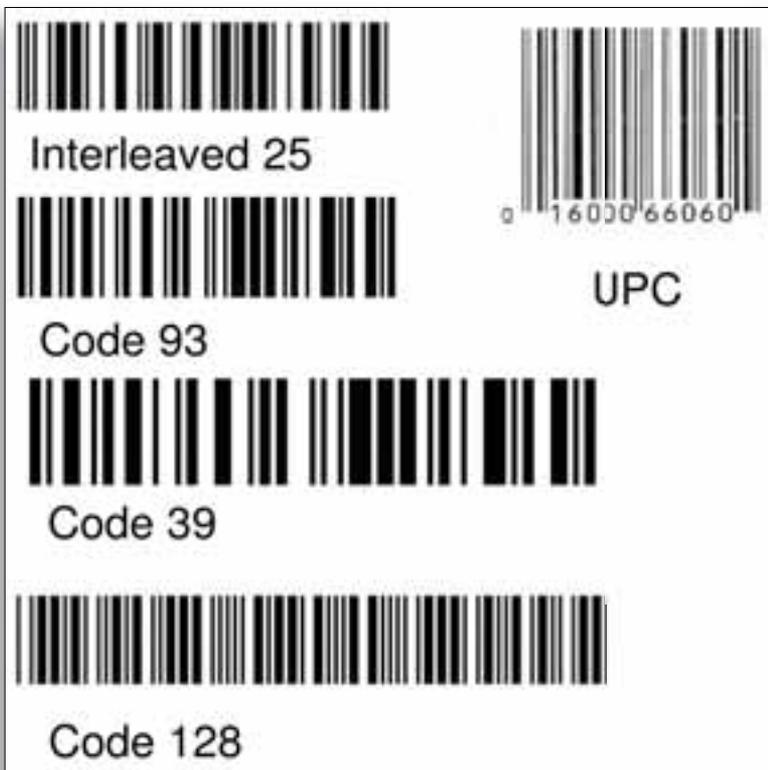
BARCODES ELIMINATE THE NEED TO RELY ON MEMORY,
AS WELL AS THE TIME AND HUMAN ERROR OF
REKEYING INFORMATION.

When a barcode is scanned, it is quickly and accurately translated without the mistakes associated with manual data entry. The data is immediately displayed in a software application on a PC, smartphone or tablet.

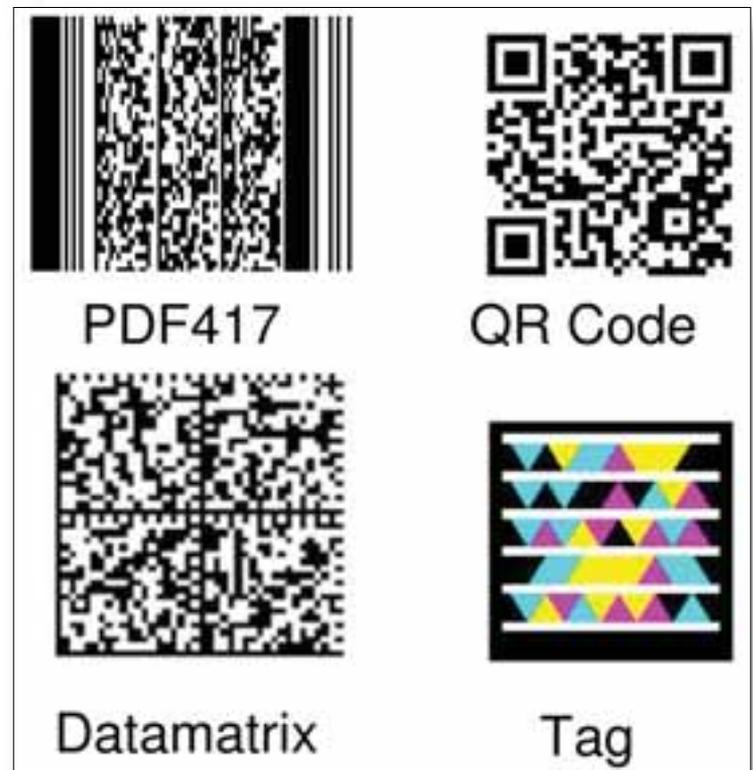
Barcodes by themselves do not produce information; however, they

an Edward, a Theodore or a Ted? Male or female? Further, there's no way of knowing other useful information such as height, birthday or address. If you don't see that person for six months, can you remember their name or when and where you last met them?

Barcodes eliminate the need to rely on memory, as well as the time and



1D BARCODES



2D BARCODES



Taking barcodes to small business

So how can your clients improve their profitability with barcodes? Here are a few simple ideas to get them started. The applications are endless.

- **Easier forms processing.** 2D barcodes are ideal for eliminating the time and errors associated with rekeying redundant information. For example, health insurance and patient forms often require the same information to be input into various databases, time and time again. What if each patient instead had a personalized barcode that could be quickly scanned, making it easy to enter basic information in multiple places? Look for ways your clients can minimize time-consuming data entry by creating 2D barcodes that can simply be scanned instead. The improved accuracy alone would pay for any minimal investment in handheld scanners.

- **Cutting-edge marketing.** Video has become the preferred medium for marketing communications. It gives potential customers an opportunity to learn about a business, plus get a feel for the company's culture and

products. Try it out yourself. Using a video camera or even a smartphone, capture your 30-second elevator pitch on video or, better yet, record a customer testimonial and upload it to YouTube. Create a QR Code that links to the video, and print the code on your company brochure. When a client receives your literature, they can scan the barcode with their smartphone and immediately watch your video. What better way to reinforce your message?

- **Fast, helpful training.** Forget burning DVDs or sending out printed instructions that soon become out of date. Instead, use a barcode to link to the information on your web page or record a quick training video. Just like the above example, clients can simply scan the barcode and immediately be directed to the video, where they will be trained to complete a simple task.

The Big Payoff: Fixed Asset Tracking

While there are countless ways to improve a business with barcodes, one proven strategy can pay off almost immediately with virtually every client you serve. By putting an asset tracking solution in place, companies can save big bucks and create return on investment in a matter of months.

Every business has fixed assets, including computers, smartphones, copiers, tools, equipment, vehicles and more. Your clients spend tens of thousands of dollars buying these items. Yet virtually every day, questions about assets arise, such as the following: Who has that projector? Where are those tools I need? Didn't we just spend thousands of dollars, and what did we buy with the money?

Most businesses attempt to track their fixed assets with pencil and paper or on a spreadsheet. But when an audit is required to verify what is actually on site, or when a particular asset is needed, days are wasted in an attempt to locate and count items.

In addition, employees push to buy new assets to do their jobs, from PCs

and software to equipment and tools. Sometimes, these assets are already owned by the business, but no one has any idea of where the equipment is or if it's available. Additional purchases may be made, yet later it's discovered that the company already has more computers, projectors or tools than are needed. That's money wasted. Unfortunately, theft can also be an issue. At some companies, fixed assets disappear and no one realizes they are gone.

With barcodes and software, companies can see what fixed assets they own at a glance — and where they are. Items can be checked in, checked out and attached to a unique record with a wide range of information including purchase date, location, initial cost, service record and more. Then, when the time comes for an audit, mobile devices can quickly and

accurately audit equipment in the office or out in the field to ensure all information is up-to-date.

Don't get left behind. This 60-year-old technology stalwart is breaking out with new and exciting opportunities, from simple forms to exciting marketing ideas to office efficiency. Each of these strategies represents a new way you can counsel your clients to save time, reduce costs and improve efficiency. These messages and ideas are always welcomed by businesses looking for ways to excel. And best of all, it's a conversation you can have that expands your role as a trusted advisor to clients looking for additional services and assistance that will positively transform their businesses. ●

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO SEE A

SHORT VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH

MANAGING EDITOR MELODY

STEELMAN & GRANT WICKES:

BARCODING MAKES A COMEBACK

— HOW UTILIZING BARCODES CAN

HELP SMALL BUSINESSES WITH ROI



By Grant Wickes

An experienced strategic marketer, Grant Wickes excels at helping technology companies understand market opportunities, develop products and craft marketing programs that drive profitable growth and business value. Wickes' marketing and sales experience spans more than two decades, the majority of which has been spent growing small technology companies. Currently, Wickes serves as vice president of business development with Wasp Barcode Technologies (www.waspbarcode.com), a leading provider of small business productivity solutions.

The ‘Soul’ of your Service

“In most people’s vocabularies, design means veneer. It’s interior decorating. It’s the fabric of the curtains of the sofa. But to me, nothing could be further from the meaning of design. Design is the fundamental soul of a human-made creation that ends up expressing itself in successive outer layers of the product or service.” – Steve Jobs

This is one of the quotes that circulated the office when Steve Jobs passed away last month. It gives words to the fundamental passion upon which Jobs worked. His intense focus on design is because he was giving us all a way to see the soul of an inanimate object, whether it was a product or service. And what an amazing job he did. Who would have thought that *machines* could have souls?



Rene Lacerte

Mr. Lacerte is CEO and Founder of Bill.com and the former CEO and co-founder of PayCycle. As a third-generation entrepreneur building solutions for accountants, he is uniquely qualified to bring insights from an entrepreneur’s and accountant’s perspective. He can be contacted at rene.lacerte@CPAPracticeAdvisor.com.

They do. They reflect the souls of those who work on them and use them. The design is critical in letting us find both reflections. We are indebted to Steve Jobs for many things, but this insight might be his most lasting legacy.

Since the advent of Apple’s resurgence in the late 90s, design has become one of the most critical positions for which to hire in Silicon Valley. There are lots of examples to provide but the most obvious financial application that has delivered on elegant design is Mint. Why did Mint acquire millions of customers while Quicken Online failed to acquire near that many? Simply put: Design. As each year passes and each new Apple product goes on to great success, the importance of design has become more and more clear.

How does this relate to accountants? Well, your service is your work product — your *machine*. Your customers interact with your *service* on a routine



basis. Every interaction, whether it is via paper, the web, phone or email, is the place where your customer interacts with your *service*. It is where they get an indication of its *soul*. This is why it is so important to care about the details. Have you ever thought about the experience your customer has with your *service*? Better yet, have you ever asked your customers about the experience they have?

What can you do?

I can only speak for my company, but I waited too long to look at our product with that singular focus of design. It was too easy for all of us to say, “we

understand the product” and then assume that our customers would as well. We realized we needed help last winter and hired a great designer, and we just recently rolled out a new user experience for our customers. It is extremely motivating to hear from customers that they are discovering new features when, in fact, the features have been there for months if not years.

While the service you offer your customers is different than the web application we are building, there are a number of things worth examining. Everything from the font you use to the way you answer the phone to the technology and tools you use to engage your customers makes a difference. The most important thing you can do is to guide your customers through the experience. This is exactly what Apple does. When you go into a store or go to the website, you are guided and aided at every step along the way. Only you can decide how to guide your customers and the level of assistance to provide. Just don’t assume that your customers are capable of a self-guided tour with no map provided.

Perception is critical to our world. It’s how we make decisions in an instant. So why leave it to chance? Go design the perception you want into your *service* and gain the loyalty and customer satisfaction you deserve. ●

“IN MOST PEOPLE’S VOCABULARIES,
DESIGN MEANS VENEER. IT’S INTERIOR DECORATING.
IT’S THE FABRIC OF THE CURTAINS OF THE SOFA.
BUT TO ME, NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE MEANING
OF DESIGN. DESIGN IS THE FUNDAMENTAL SOUL
OF A HUMAN-MADE CREATION THAT ENDS UP
EXPRESSING ITSELF IN SUCCESSIVE OUTER LAYERS
OF THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE.”

— STEVE JOBS

REVIEW SECTIONS

BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

- General Navigation/Ease-of-Use
- Multiple Concurrent Users
- Multi-Entity Management/Number of Assets
- System Setup/Customization

CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES

- Preconfigured Books (GAAP, Fed, AMT, ACE, state, custom, etc.)
- Asset Type Support/Multi-Part; Property Classes
- Asset Life Events (Acquisition/Disposition/Bulk/Partial/Exchange/Split/Undo)
- Depreciation Types Supported
- Consolidation Capabilities
- Asset Location/Tracking Features

REPORTING

- Managerial (reconciliation, periods, net book value, asset records, etc.)
- Compliance Reporting (FASB 109, Sec. 179, IRS forms)
- Customizable Reporting Options
- Report Output Formats (PDF, HTML, text, Excel, etc.)

IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION

- Data Import Capabilities (Excel, CSV, spreadsheet, etc.)
- Data Export to Tax/Accounting Apps

HELP/SUPPORT

- Built-in Support Features
- OS/Browser Compatibility
- Support Website/documentation
- Live Support

SUMMARY & PRICING

Effective Asset Management is More than DEPRECIATION

If you're reading this review, then you have more than a passing interest in fixed assets ... if such a thing is possible. After all, in the glamorous world of tax and accounting, few things may inspire more eye rolls from clients than talking about effective depreciation strategies and methods such as MACRS, ACRS, straight-line, etc. Yet, as a professional, you understand that what they don't know can indeed hurt them.

For most of the past two decades, asset depreciation has been tracked dutifully on spreadsheets that, for some businesses and professional accounting firms, became monumental symbols of the hours (weeks and years, too) spent tediously creating macros and pivot tables. Whether your firm has traditionally viewed asset management functions as a service you provide or a process managed by your clients, if you're involved with asset management on either side, the thought of these spreadsheets and their vulnerabilities may be the cause of migraines.

Asset management isn't always that complex, of course. For small businesses and organizations with a few vehicles, a building and a few other depreciable assets, the functions can often be easily managed by the many of the depreciation tools found in professional and even some DIY software programs. However, as the assets grow in volume or the businesses become more dynamic with extended subsidiary units or departments, their needs result in much more complex taxation scenarios. Added to this complexity is the frequency of changes made to the tax code, particularly to bonus depreciation and Sec. 179 expensing over the past decade.

The result has been the emergence of several fixed asset management solutions that help streamline the



processes involved in tracking depreciation, as well as in finding the most beneficial and appropriate treatments. As much as tax planning can greatly benefit individual filers, a comprehensive asset depreciation strategy is essential to corporate taxation and to establishing a more reliable bottom line. After all, fixed assets can be a considerable component of a balance sheet, but if the assets aren't properly managed then those figures could be substantially incorrect.

In addition to concerns for depreciation, the actual existence of assets may be a concern, particularly with assets that are mobile in nature, such as vehicles and service equipment. In large enterprises, it has been estimated that as many as 20% of fixed assets are either "ghosts" (aka missing,) or have fallen into a condition of un-usability. Not only does this potentially affect financials, but it may also result in unnecessary property tax or insurance payments.

Most of the programs reviewed in this section are designed primarily for use by public accounting practices that manage multiple clients, but all have the ability to manage multiple companies. Some have extended capabilities that enable more complex hierarchical corporate organizations, while others are better suited to smaller and mid-sized businesses that have outgrown their own ability to manage depreciation and that seek a streamlined solution. All of them, however, make it much easier to effectively manage and maintain fixed assets, allowing users to leave the spreadsheets behind. ●



Isaac M. O'Bannon,
Technology Editor

FIXED ASSETS

CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business – ProSystem fx Fixed Assets

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Firms with clients whose asset bases are large or complex, or potentially distributed across multiple geographical locations, particularly those using other components of the ProSystem fx Suite.

STRENGTHS

- Comprehensive capabilities for all depreciation methods & treatments
- Wizards for performing mass asset life events such as acquisitions and disposals

- Good report export options, including to Word and Excel
- User customization options
- Tight integration with ProSystem fx Tax and Trial Balance

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Book projections are limited to seven tax years
- No RFID or barcode scanning integration

SUMMARY & PRICING

ProSystem fx Fixed Assets is designed for professional accountants serving

multiple clients and can be used as a stand-alone program or as a part of the larger ProSystem fx Suite. It provides comprehensive tools for asset depreciation and management for companies with asset bases of any size, with support for multi-divisional entities. Pricing starts at \$2,100 for a single-user stand-alone or network license.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



a Wolters Kluwer business

★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES

★★★★★ REPORTING

★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION

★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446161

www.tax.cchgroup.com

800-PFX-9998

Wasp Barcode Technologies – MobileAsset

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Businesses needing to track mobile assets, such as tools, equipment and vehicles, including scheduling and check-in/out features.

STRENGTHS

- Excellent location tracking capabilities
- Built-in barcode scanning support
- Intuitive interface

- No compliance reporting for FASB 109, Sec. 179, IRS
- Limited asset type, class, depreciation methods

SUMMARY & PRICING

MobileAsset is focused primarily on asset usage, providing exceptional tracking, check-in/check-out, maintenance record keeping, scheduling and barcode asset audit functions. It is less comprehensive on depreciation management and forecasting for more complex strategies, and is therefore best

suited to managing the assets of entities whose asset management needs are more focused on physical location tracking but with simple depreciation needs. The program starts at \$599 for the single-business Standard version, and at \$2,495 for the Enterprise version.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES

★★★★★ REPORTING

★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION

★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446894

www.waspbarcode.com

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Limited to a single book per asset

214-547-4100

Thomson Reuters — Fixed Assets CS

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Firms serving multiple clients with moderate to complex asset bases and depreciation needs, particularly those firms using other programs in the CS Professional Suite.

STRENGTHS

- Mass edits across groups, departments & global
- User-friendly wizards for many tasks
- Simplified splits, disposals & consolidations

- Good user customization
- Tight integration with tax & trial balance

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Not unlimited on assets or entities, but more than sufficient for most needs

SUMMARY & PRICING

Fixed Assets CS offers a streamlined and intuitive asset management solution that can be used to manage virtually all asset and entity types, with extensive calculations and

support for multiple books per client. The system is best suited to firms using other parts of the CS Professional Suite, particularly UltraTax CS, Trial Balance CS and Accounting CS, providing excellent integration and data sharing. Pricing starts at about \$1,500 with renewals at about \$300.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



THOMSON REUTERS

★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES

★★★★★ REPORTING

★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION

★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446175

CS.ThomsonReuters.com

800-968-8900

CCH Small Firm Services — Fixed Asset Manager for TaxWise & ATX

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Small to medium-sized firms that are looking for an easy-to-use asset management system that provides flexible reporting for clients with evolving asset management needs, including multi-departmental and geographical locations.

STRENGTHS

- Easy to use
- Supports all common depreciation methods
- Customizable reporting, including output to Word, Excel, PDF and Crystal Reports

- Integration with TaxWise & ATX tax systems

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- No RFID or barcode scanning integration
- No fully custom depreciation books
- Limited consolidation/mass asset action functions

SUMMARY & PRICING

Fixed Asset Manager is a good addition to firms using either the ATX or TaxWise compliance systems, and can also be used as a

complete stand-alone application. It provides basic depreciation management with support for all common methods, is easy to use and offers good reporting. The program costs \$420 when purchased individually, but is also available in some of the ATX and TaxWise bundles.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES
★★★★★	REPORTING
★★★★★	IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

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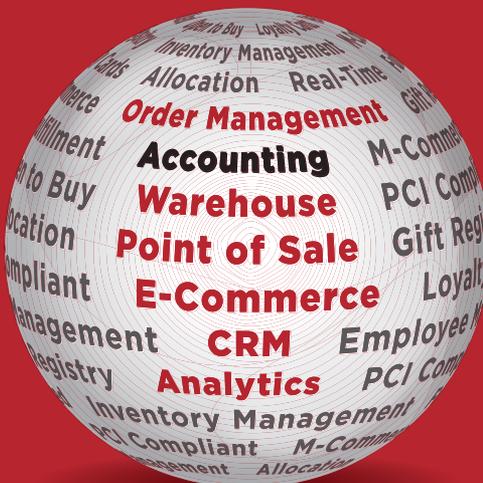
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FIXED ASSETS

MoneySoft — Fixed Asset Pro

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★☆

BEST FIT

Fixed Asset Pro is best suited to medium to large organizations or firms managing their assets and who have asset management strategies of moderate complexity.

STRENGTHS

- Excellent data import & export capabilities
- Robust reporting & customization
- Ability to manage any number of entities & assets

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- No integrated RFID or barcode scanning for asset audits
- Limited consolidation functions
- No multi-part assets
- No mass acquisition/disposal other than by import

SUMMARY & PRICING

Fixed Asset Pro can support any number of companies and assets, provides good tools for management of depreciation and Sec. 179

expenses, and has excellent reporting output and customization options. The program costs \$599 for a single user, or \$699 for the multi-user site license, with annual renewals priced at \$189 and \$269, respectively.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ REPORTING
- ★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446187

www.moneysoft.com

800-966-7797

Sage Software — FAS 100

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★★

BEST FIT

Mid-sized or larger organizations, or professional firms managing the assets of such entities, who have increasingly complex asset depreciation needs and departmental management requirements.

STRENGTHS

- Excellent customization & assistive features
- Global edit capabilities
- Support for all asset types & disposal needs

- Strong reporting options & output formats
- Optional barcode scanning for physical audits/inventory

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Live support is free during initial use, but then requires a support subscription.

SUMMARY & PRICING

The redesigned interface for Sage FAS is exceptionally user-friendly, with simple customization and drag-and-drop functionality. The

new Assistance Center further eases program use. The FAS 100 system offers comprehensive asset management, depreciation and tracking capabilities, with strong reporting for firms that manage entities with fewer than 20,000 assets. Pricing starts at \$2,385 for FAS 100; FAS 50 starts at \$1,495.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ REPORTING
- ★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446257

www.sagefas.com

800-368-2405

Intuit — ProSeries Fixed Asset Manager

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★☆

BEST FIT

Professionals using the ProSeries tax compliance system, whose clients have increasing asset bases and moderately complex depreciation strategies and needs. The program can also be used as a stand-alone with the tax package.

STRENGTHS

- Direct integration with the ProSeries compliance system
- Intuitive interface & navigation
- Support for groups, departments, locations, cost centers & other sub entities

- Reports saved to Word, Excel & PDF
- Unlimited years of asset projections

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- No RFID or barcode scanning integration
- Limited consolidation/mass asset action functions

SUMMARY & PRICING

One of the most notable benefits of the ProSeries Fixed Asset Manager is its direct integration with the ProSeries tax system, which

should greatly reduce data entry and help ensure higher accuracy. The program offers generally comprehensive asset depreciation tools, projections and reporting, best-suited to firms whose clients have small to medium-sized asset bases with moderate complexity. Fixed Asset Manager costs \$229 for a license that supports the same number of users as the tax package.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ REPORTING
- ★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446688

<http://proseries.intuit.com/products/fam>

800-934-1040

Pro-Ware, LLC — Asset Keeper

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Asset Keeper is best geared toward public practices managing medium to large dynamic asset bases for multiple clients with multi-tiered organizational structures, and who have need for mass asset edit/acquisition/disposal capabilities.

STRENGTHS

- Designed specifically for public accountants
- Excellent reporting & output options
- Strong asset life features, mass acquisitions & disposals

402-861-8800

- Consolidation & unconsolidation of entities
- Up to 99 years of asset projections

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- RFID or barcode scanning not available for inventory
- Vendor doesn't make trial balance/tax program, so little direct integration

SUMMARY & PRICING

Designed specifically for accounting professionals, Pro-Ware's Asset Keeper provides a streamlined and

effective system for managing large asset bases, with the ability to quickly perform mass acquisitions and disposals, as well as global edits and consolidations. Its reporting functions are exceptional, with comprehensive output and multiple options for output. The system costs \$599 for a license that allows any number of users across a firm's network.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ REPORTING
- ★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446876

www.ProWare-CPA.com

Red Moon Solutions LLC – Fixed Assets Manager

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

In-house by organizations with extensive asset management needs, including multi-location and multi-departmental entities, or by accounting firms providing services to such clients.

STRENGTHS

- Exceptional reporting
- Integration with ERPs & with Vertex for corporate compliance
- Broad customization options
- Multi-entity consolidation functions

800-224-1260

- Extensive calculations
- Installed & hosted options

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Moderate in-system Help features

SUMMARY & PRICING

The Fixed Assets Manager from Red Moon Solutions is a powerful depreciation and financial management program, with extensive calculations and asset disposal options, built-in tools for Sec. 179 and bonus depreciation, and the ability to manage asset bases of any size. The

program is best suited to mid-sized and large enterprises, including very large organizations with multiple locations, departments and other units. It provides excellent integration with ERP systems. Pricing is based upon the size of the asset base. A mid-range solution that accommodates up to 30,000 assets costs \$2,500 for a single-user license.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ REPORTING
- ★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446900

www.redmoonsolutions.com

BNA Software – BNA Fixed Assets DesktopPro

2011 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Professional firms managing multiple clients with varying asset bases and depreciation needs. It's also a good fit for large enterprises or government entities with complex asset management needs.

STRENGTHS

- Global/group/departmental edit capabilities
- Wizards for asset life management/mass actions
- Multi-entity consolidations

800-424-2938

- Strong customization options

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Doesn't offer income tax compliance for any entities

SUMMARY & PRICING

BNA is the expert in tax knowledge and planning, and the company's BNA Fixed Assets DesktopPro reflects this expertise, providing comprehensive depreciation management capabilities with the ability to manage multiple books

per asset along with excellent customization capabilities. The system can handle asset bases of any size, including enterprises or entities with complex, multi-departmental needs. BNA Fixed Assets DesktopPro starts at \$1,595 and includes unlimited technical support from a staff that includes CPAs.

PRODUCT DELIVERY METHODS:

- On-Premises
- SaaS
- Hosted by Vendor



- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ CORE ASSET MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ REPORTING
- ★★★★★ IMPORT/EXPORT/INTEGRATION
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10446678

www.bnasoftware.com

Marketing at a Pace You Can Handle

Marketing is still a fairly new concept for firms. In the minds of most, marketing is a task of overwhelming proportions. However, it doesn't have to be. Like anything else, it will take time to get up the marketing learning curve, but no one says you can't ascend at your own pace.

Like anything else that is unfamiliar, developing a marketing program can be scary. But break it down into management chunks, and it becomes less intimidating. The key is to keep moving forward, continue to ask questions and educate yourself, and set a pace that is comfortable. You don't have to launch a full marketing program from Day 1. It's best to take it slowly.

The following are starter initiatives that you can take on to get your marketing program off the ground. This is nothing major ... and each initiative can happen in good time.



Kristy Short, Ed.D

Kristy is a partner in RootWorks Communications (RootWorks.com) and president of SAS Communications 360 (SAScommunications360.com) — firms dedicated to providing practice management education, branding, marketing, and public relations services to the accounting profession. She is also a professor of English and marketing at University of Phoenix and Cleary University. You can reach her at kristy.short@CPAPracticeAdvisor.com.

Launching Your Marketing Program

You know you want to move forward with marketing efforts. But like many firm leaders, you don't know where to start. Make it easy on yourself (and your staff) by focusing on a few activities and slowly growing your program as you become more comfortable. Rest assured that you will eventually fall into your marketing groove. Then, before you know it ... you've become a marketing sage.

Identify a Marketing Gatekeeper

You've got a lot to do, so if you can hand over marketing tasks to a reliable staff member, do it. This person will oversee all marketing initiatives and ensure that the program stays running and on course. Your gatekeeper will also keep you informed of campaigns and seek your advice on messaging when needed. But ultimately, he or she will be responsible for broad program operation. Look around your office for your gatekeeper. You may be surprised at the creative folks that will want to take this on.

Start Your Plan

A marketing plan provides a blueprint of what tasks need to be accomplished and the proper timeframe for each, keeping you on track and your marketing goals realistic. The plan doesn't

have to be comprehensive; you just have to get something down on paper. For example, create a spreadsheet divided into quarters (Q1-Q4), and then begin to populate the plan with marketing initiatives you would like to accomplish. Start slowly ... perhaps one campaign per quarter. Over time, and as you add initiatives, you will start to see an organized plan come together.

Build an Arsenal of Marketing Collateral

It's difficult to run a marketing program if you don't have the proper marketing resources to support it. You can talk all day about what you offer, but eventually a prospect will request follow-up information, such as a brochure, services fact sheet or a link to your website. Evaluate all the collateral you have on hand (which includes your website) and ask yourself: Does it support my brand? Is it professional looking, well written and up-to-date? What additional pieces do I need? Be sure that you have the proper marketing collateral in stock before you hit the streets.

Launch that First Campaign

Don't be scared to hit the ground running with a few small marketing campaigns. As long as you research your audience and create the right

message, there is little that can go wrong. Just ask a few simple questions up front: Who is my audience? Am I communicating to clients or prospects? Am I targeting a specific niche (e.g., dentists)? Once you have all this, create your communication and hit Send!

Final Thoughts

These steps represent the big rocks of a sound marketing program. Starting with a few manageable tasks helps ease you into marketing and sets the stage for a full program roll out down the road.

Approach marketing slowly to mitigate frustration for both you and your staff. Learning how to run a marketing program by taking small steps allows everyone ample time to absorb new information and processes. It's also much easier to identify and correct issues when your program is small and confined, opposed to launching a full-scale plan from the get-go. Most importantly, you are far less likely to abandon marketing efforts altogether if you take it slowly. When people feel overwhelmed, it's human nature to retreat and avoid. Don't let that happen. Roll out your program in increments and learn at a pace that is comfortable. You'll see ... you'll move from "walk" to "run" mode in no time. ●

THE KEY IS TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD,
CONTINUE TO ASK QUESTIONS AND EDUCATE YOURSELF,
AND SET A PACE THAT IS COMFORTABLE.

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Resources for Year End

One of the most helpful sites for end users of Sage products is the Year End Centers for the various products, including Sage Peachtree (www.peachtree.com/yearEnd) and Sage Simply Accounting (www.simplyaccounting.com/yearEnd). These sites have year-end checklists, detailed instructions on how to perform annual maintenance on databases, links to resources to assist with tax report preparation, and many other helpful tips and tricks that can make the year-end process go more smoothly.

Another often overlooked year-end resource is the Sage FAS fixed asset management tools or modules included with many products. For example, Sage Peachtree includes a bundled version of the Sage FAS fixed asset management application, which supports up to 200 assets. This tool makes it easy for any business to

maintain their own fixed asset records and have the most up-to-date information in their internal financial statements. With 2011 rapidly coming to a close, companies will want to update their fixed asset records to include any 2011 transactions, and will also want to consider the impact of these transactions in year-end tax planning decisions.

SaaS by Sage

Many analysts have asked what Sage's strategy is for providing on-demand applications. While some independent hosting companies such as InSynQ/CPAASP, Awensa, and Right Networks offer hosted versions of many Sage applications, Sage recently formalized its hosting programs. The company now refers users interested in hosted versions of many of its applications to authorized independent hosting companies through the related product websites. Some plans also offer end users the ability to access Sage applications without having to allocate a significant amount of capital for the purchase of licenses. For example, the licenses for the hosted version of Sage ERP MAS 90 are simply included as part of the monthly service charge.

Financial management products available in a hosted format include:

- Sage ERP MAS 90
- Sage ERP Accpac
- Sage Fund Accounting, Sage Grant Management and Sage Fundraising Online
- Sage Peachtree and Sage Peachtree Quantum
- Sage Simply Accounting

The Sage Accountants Network (SAN) also includes a number of benefits for members, such as:

- Sage Assured Send, a privately labeled version of the popular LeapFile secure file transfer service
- Access to marketing, training and support resources
- Discounts on web-based seminars



through CPE Link and training through Sage University

- Webinars and other online educational events to help you keep up to date with the new features in the latest product offerings.

For more information on the Sage Accountants Network, visit www.sageaccountantsnetwork.com.

Specialization Programs for Construction & Real Estate Announced

Sage recently announced a specialization program in the Sage Accountants Network for members who are interested in construction accounting. The program provides a subscription option for Sage Accountants Network members who are interested in working with clients who use Sage Timberline or Sage Master Builder, and was announced in early October. Members receive marketing tools, training, applications, and support related to these popular mid-range products for businesses in the construction and real estate industries. More details about these membership programs

are available at www.sageaccountantsnetwork.com.

Sage is also making its business intelligence tools available at a significant discount to SAN members who would like to use these new tools as part of their practices. For more information on the offerings and pricing, contact your firm's accountant advocate or call SAN customer service at (866)565-2726.

Peachtree FUTA Calculation Change

The company recently released updates, which allow the use of an "effective date" for rate changes for federal unemployment calculations in Sage Peachtree. The change to the payroll calculator enables the Payroll Tax Report, Exception Report and Tax Liability Report to calculate FUTA based on an "effective date." Additional changes were made to these reports in order to properly display payroll tax information. As this goes to press, these updates were available for download as part of the service releases for 2009 SR6, 2010 SR3, 2011 SR4 and 2012 SR1. ●



**Brian Tankersley, CPA, CITP,
Technology Editor**

Brian Tankersley is a Knoxville, Tennessee CPA and consultant whose practice is focused on technology consulting and training for accountants. Brian is a nationally recognized speaker with K2 Enterprises (k2e.com), and blogs on accounting technology at CPATechBlog.com. Comments, suggestions, and errata are always welcome, and should be e-mailed to brian.tankersley@CPAPracticeAdvisor.com.

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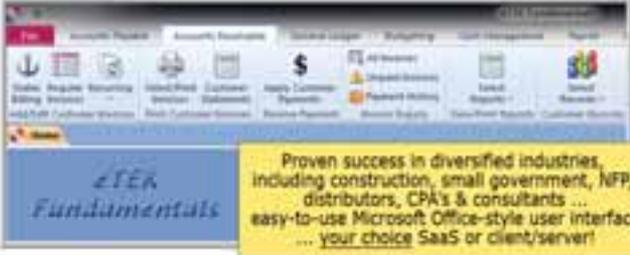
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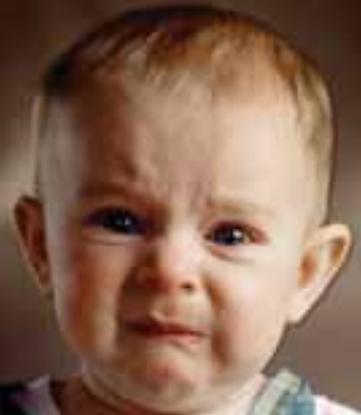


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Her Head in the Cloud

How a Tech-Savvy Accountant Waited for Technology to Catch Up to Her Vision

Some of the greatest ideas are imagined years before they can be accomplished. In 2002, a young professional accountant had the idea of providing virtual accounting services to clients. While that's less than a decade ago, it is almost an eon technologically. The word *cloud* still meant those white fluffy things in the sky, and the term SaaS, when spoken, was more likely to be confused with *sass*, as in backtalk.

Yes, there were online programs even in the accounting space as far back as 1998, but the term

having a professional help them keep their books in order on a periodic basis and also provide some more day-to-day interaction and counseling."

One of the keys to her approach with clients is to get them to visualize themselves as a bigger company that has a full-time accounting department, but it's just located in another office — her office. With Joyce as part of their team, they have access to the same level of accounting expertise as a larger business, but without the costs of having that staff full-time in-house.

data in the cloud, but now most can see that it's actually safer there than in their office, whether from a disaster or a simple computer crash. Web-based systems just make better sense, since you can get back up and running very quickly, even if your computer goes down." Her clients are primarily service-based businesses, in addition to a couple of nonprofit organizations.

It's probably fairly obvious that Joyce is a bit of a tech geek, which she proudly admits. She has built her practice around the virtual model she envisioned nine years ago, with the core service a virtual accounting department solution through which she and her staff provide weekly and monthly reporting, account reconciliations, online management of AR, AP and payroll, and offer online document management through portals.

The practice also offers business consulting, payroll compliance, write-up and technology training, and although she claims she "doesn't really do taxes," she still prepares about 50 individual returns

per year.

"Most people think that in addition to taxes, the CPA credential is synonymous with audits and compilations. That part of the profession just doesn't interest me much, because I prefer working with the day-to-day issues of business productivity." For all of their engagements, the practice uses value-based, fixed fee pricing as determined by contracts with each client.

Since Common Cents, LLC, is completely built around remote accounting and consulting, Joyce and her staff of four consultants all work from their own home offices, providing client services as necessary. She uses a laptop computer with two monitors and is considering adding a third to her desk. The firm developed all of its clients using online methods, and uses a marketing consultant to advise on search engine optimization and other strategies. The practice scored a 332 on the Productivity Survey (www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/productivity-survey), a free online assessment tool for firms that helps measure and benchmark their use of technology and workflow processes.

Joyce's technology savvy also extends to social media (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn). She also hosts her own accounting blog at



Joyce Washington, CPA

Founder/CEO: Common Cents Consulting

LOCATION: Baltimore, Maryland

WEBSITE: www.TheCommonCents.com

PRACTICE SPECIALTIES: Virtual CFO, Bookkeeping, Training, Consulting, Property Management

EDUCATION: Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: AICPA, Maryland Society of CPAs

HOBBIES: Decorating, baking, writing

FAVORITE CPA PRACTICE ADVISOR SECTION: Darren Root's "My Perspective" Column

MOST RECENT BOOK READ: "Good to Great," by Jim Collins

SOCIAL NETWORKING: www.twitter.com/thecommoncents
www.facebook.com/thecommoncents
www.linkedin.com/joyce.m.washington



SaaS, for Software-as-a-Service, wasn't even coined until 2005 at a technology conference. So in 2002, when Joyce Washington envisioned a practice built around remote accounting systems and anywhere/anytime virtual services, the technology was only starting to emerge and was still fairly limited.

Available technology wasn't the only challenge she would face while trying to build a virtual practice. Until only the past few years has the public been open to the idea. And in the early years, people were quite skeptical of this new, web-based client service model. So unfortunately, she had to put her plans and her practice on hold, opting to work for other firms and businesses while building up her experience to obtain her CPA credential. Joyce never let go of the idea, though, and was able to restart her Baltimore, Maryland-based firm of Common Cents Consulting, LLC (www.TheCommonCents.com).

"A lot of really small businesses can't afford a full-time accountant, and perhaps some don't need one," says Joyce. "But they can definitely benefit from

She notes that improvements in technology have made it easier to get her clients going, too. "Back in 2002, there were only a couple of options for remote accounting, and they weren't affordable for small firms serving small businesses. Now, there are dozens of choices, and most are very easy to learn and use both for the clients and for me and my staff."

Changing perceptions of SaaS/web-based computing has also helped. "At first, many people were concerned about the security of having their

AT FIRST, MANY PEOPLE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SECURITY OF HAVING THEIR DATA IN THE CLOUD, BUT NOW MOST CAN SEE THAT IT'S ACTUALLY SAFER THERE THAN IN THEIR OFFICE, WHETHER FROM A DISASTER OR A SIMPLE COMPUTER CRASH.



Business is good. Joyce Washington, CPA, in her Baltimore, Maryland office.

www.TheCommonCents.com/blog, where she offers small business accounting tips such as troubleshooting online accounting systems, the “difference between the terms *remote* and *virtual*,” and the different accounting and tax requirements relating to using contractors or full-time employees. She says that when she first started using contractors for her own firm, “it was scary,” but exhilarating, because “it felt like the practice was more real” since it wasn’t just her anymore. She expects to add a full-time staff member early next year.

Joyce is a Baltimore Ravens fan and an avid reader of thriller fiction. She also spends as much time as she can with her friends and an extended family in the nearby Washington D.C. suburb of Fort Washington, where she grew up. She graduated from Morgan State University in Baltimore.

“Your perspective changes after a while. When I first started my career and then my practice, I spent all the time working, but now my goal is to be more balanced and focus on the things that are most important: family and friends.” Her family and faith are the cornerstones of her life, and she cites a Martin Luther King, Jr. quote on faith as a guiding principle: “Faith is taking the first step even when you can’t see the whole staircase.” ●

What We’ve Learned

(an interesting stat)

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CPA Practice Advisor
Today's Technology for Tomorrow's Firm

How Motivation & Opportunity Disguise Themselves

I've seen a few articles recently and listened to a few podcasts on the topic of *quitting*. Some were for quitting, others gave warnings against quitting. This brings up the great psychology behind knowing when to quit, the fear of quitting and the adrenaline it takes to run your own show. You can think of this in wide terms, from quitting the firm you currently work for or from the perspective of something like stopping your efforts of trying to make your yard look good and making the decision to use an expert. Whatever you apply this to, the magic is in knowing *when*. When do you stop *waiting* and start *quitting*?

Quitting at its core is about change. Change is something we all should be comfortable with (because it is a part of everyday life), but it's something we all seem to avoid if possible. To be sure,



Jason Blumer, CPA.CITP

Jason M. Blumer, CPA.CITP, CFE, is managing shareholder of Blumer & Associates, CPAs, PC. He wears flip flops and jeans, says "dude" a lot, and often works in coffee shops with headphones blaring the latest Bloomberg podcasts (though he doesn't understand most of it). Jason loves new game-changing cloud technology and plays rock and roll too loud. His daily duties include consulting, process design, blogging, marketing and business development, innovative thinking, coaching, practice management, and acting as a change agent. Jason founded the THRIVEal +CPA Network to enhance and change the tax and accounting profession based on the foundational tenets of Community, Collaboration, Technology and Innovation.

change is not always necessary or fun. But it will always be a part of life. Let's bring some focus to this discussion around quitting. Let's talk about the idea of leaving the firm you are currently employed with and going out on your own.

As the tribe leader of the THRIVEal +CPA Network, my message to the younger members is to innovate in your own firm. I tell people to quit as often as possible. That message may not be for everyone, but it just might be for you. Stop working for those riding their traditional stodginess until they retire. You can't implement change in that environment, and you'll never get to enact the great change happening in our profession unless you are running the freakin' show. Are you ready?

Again, I'm not talking to everyone. Some people need to work in a company ... and are great assets to that organization. That is okay. I have people like that working for me, and I need them. But THRIVEal is for leaders of organizations. It is not for employees. We talk a lot about innovations, changing our profession and leading organizations. This network is all about engaging, empowering and encouraging — coaching techniques needed for those who are leaders. Are you a leader? Then you need to be involved in organizations like this. Let's hit two topics that come up when *quitting* is discussed: fear and risk.

Quitting & Fear

Many are fearful in their move to quit their jobs, and I don't blame them. Almost 10 years ago, I quit one firm to

go work in my own firm. I took a huge pay cut, moved my family a few hours away from where we lived to go into business with my dad. I had to get a paper route on the side to make ends meet. I was scared. And that fear is compounded when you have a family.

But my wife was behind me, and we knew it was the right move.

Fear or not, I did what leaders do — they move forward keeping the fear in check, but weighing the wisdom of the periodic nausea. Fear motivates.

The THRIVEal +CPA Network has a lot of innovators quitting their firms and doing their own thing. We **engage** (accountability, coaching), **empower** (give each other the right tools, collaborate) and **encourage** (get up, you can do it!) each other in our pursuit to create new things, offer new services for our customers and send fear packing. We are a community of support, and that really helps keep the fear at bay. To be sure, some of our members are crazy ... but crazy people often change the world. It's not so scary hanging out with crazy people. You start to feel at home among the nuts! Let fear sit in the passenger's seat, if you must. But take the wheel back and drive fear where you want it to go ... not the other way around. Fear can motivate you to change, and that is a good thing!

Quitting & Risk

Quitting your job is risky. But when you weigh risk, and you do it with wisdom, you can manage risk to benefit instead of hurt you. We see risk for what it really is — opportunity! Risk keeps the posers out of our blue ocean

strategies (from the book "Blue Ocean Strategy") while we build huge values for our customers in previously uncontested markets. Risk doesn't tell you what you should NOT do... it tells you what you SHOULD do. Where there is risk, there is a small market of people willing to do the hard things to grab the opportunities that are really available to everyone. With strategy, our members move *towards* risk, not away from it.

Are you risk-averse? Maybe you aren't a THRIVEal member. Not everyone is. Because even when we weigh risk, crap pops up that we didn't expect. It is then that you find out what you are made of. Will you back down? Will you look at risk and retreat? Some do, but THRIVEal members do not. We move ahead and develop new strategies where old ones are no longer relevant or available. We're hacking the vines in the jungle making way for the less risky. It's not comfortable up there, but it sure is exciting! We see new worlds first, and the beauty up ahead that the risk-averse never get to behold. There are beautiful new things yet to discover for those who see the opportunity.

So is it time to quit? Maybe you need to stop hoping someone else will quit in your firm. Why not be the first? Maybe your move will lead other innovators to take your move to heart and create their own firm, too. Then come join THRIVEal so we can support you in your position up front clearing out the jungle. You'll find it isn't as scary as you thought when surrounded by other innovators.

Fear and *risk* may become close companions after you make your move, but use them wisely ... they are really motivation and opportunity in disguise. ●

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