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The Executive Series – Understanding the Road Ahead

recently flew into San Jose, California and made the short drive up to Mountain View to Intuit's headquarters. While there, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Brad Smith, CEO of Intuit, and asking him a series of questions that I believe are on the minds of many practitioners. My interview with Smith was the second in a series spotlighting executives from several major software vendors. Be sure to read the full feature article in this issue.

As a practitioner running a busy firm each day, just like you, I want to know what's on the horizon in relation to technology. Technology and workflow are at the heart of a well-run firm, so it's important to know where vendors plan to take us over the next few years. If you are like me, questions like "Am I using the right combination of solutions to run at peak efficiency?" and "Is my primary software vendor taking me in the right direction?" are always at front of mind. My hope is that this series will offer insight into where today's vendors are going and what firm leaders can expect.

In the July issue, we featured Teresa Mackintosh, CPA.CITP and newly appointed Vice President at CCH. Teresa clearly stated that CCH's vision for their software suite is all about the web. For the past few years, CCH has been heads down developing its "Next Gen" product line—an advanced platform built on a single contact

database and residing in the Cloud. Teresa also provided insight into CCH's open integration strategy and the company's newly launched Open Integration Platform (OIP). OIP is designed to support integration with

CCH's complete suite and other mission-critical third-party applications.

Over the next few months, I will be sitting down with other top executives including Bill.com founder, René Lacerte. I'll talk to René about how Bill.com is revolutionizing the process for accounts payable and receivable. Also on the roster is an interview with former Executive Editor of our publication, Greg Lafollette, CPA.CITP. As a long-time friend, peer and mentor, I find Greg's perspective on the future of the profession meaningful. After years of working in public practice, Greg served as Vice President at Thomson Reuters, Executive Editor of CPA Practice Advisor (formerly *The CPA Technology Advisor*), and today

currently serves as Vice President of Product Strategy at CPA2Biz.

My goal is to continue our Executive Series and talk to many more vendor thought leaders that are helping to shape today's firms. With so many solutions to choose from and the ever-expanding needs of practitioners, we could all use a little help and extra insight as we work to build highly efficient systems and operate at peak efficiency.

I hope that you will remain engaged with this series, as I believe we can all learn a great deal from our experienced line-up of interviewees. Please take a moment to read my interview with Intuit CEO, Brad Smith. You may be surprised at what you learn. ●

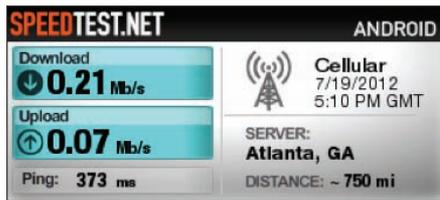


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Executive Editor

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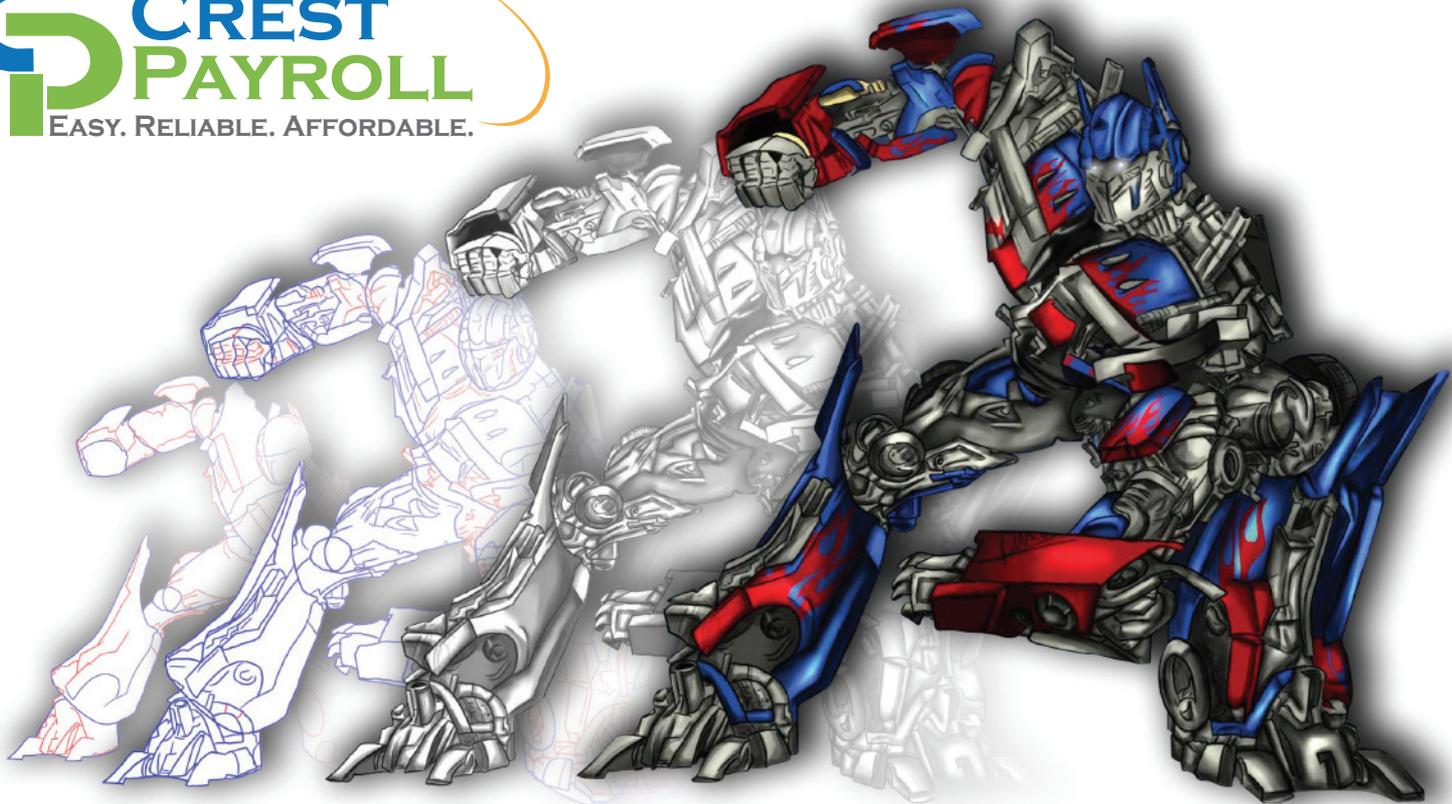
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Getting Candid with Intuit's CEO, Brad Smith

I recently made the trip to Mountain View, California to spend the day with the folks at Intuit who are responsible for developing the products we use daily. Mountain View is in the heart of Silicon Valley, which for a tech-loving guy like myself made for an awesome trip. For example, next door to Intuit's campus is Google, and down the street is Apple's headquarters. If you drive north just a few miles, there's Salesforce.com's corporate offices, and just a bit further down the road is the Facebook campus. I was in my version of technology heaven.

My visit to Intuit was incredibly insightful—having had the opportunity to sit down with CEO Brad Smith and ask him a series of questions about the profession, customer expectations, and a slew of other inquiries that would help our readers understand Intuit's direction and future vision. And bonus—I also had the pleasure of meeting Scott Cook, Intuit's co-founder and Chairman of Intuit's Executive Committee.

I started the conversation with Brad by focusing on customer expectations and the pace of change occurring in the accounting profession. I've been a practicing CPA for more than 25 years, and I've personally never experienced a rate of change as great as it is today. Paperless, portals, mobile apps, social media, Cloud technologies, integration, open platforms, and scan and organize (OCR) solutions—it's enough to make your head spin. Brad agreed, stating, "Technology platforms used to change every six years, and now it's every six months."

I also spoke candidly with Brad about Intuit's vision on the Cloud and the mobile space, allocation of development resources, and the importance of a client-centric culture.

His responses provided a great deal of insight on the direction of company and what we can all expect.

DARREN: *Do you feel customer expectations are changing?*

BRAD: Absolutely they are... all the time. Today, it's the data that must be liberated in order to allow the customer to work in whatever platform they choose and to integrate with other solutions of the client's liking.

DARREN: *Intuit is approaching another big birthday; can you tell me about that?*

BRAD: We are proudly coming up on our 30th birthday. We are an elder in Silicon Valley and have witnessed the evolution of DOS to Windows, Windows to Web, Web to Cloud, and now Cloud to Mobile. With the rapid pace of technology, and the new solutions we're working on every day to delight customers though, in many ways, the energy our teams have for innovation, it feels like we are just getting started.

DARREN: *Speaking of mobile, tell me about what Intuit is doing in the Cloud and mobile space?*

BRAD: We've experienced a major shift in the company since 2008—moving to being a "connected services"



company. In the past few years, Intuit's revenue has evolved to the point that two-thirds of our revenue is coming from the Cloud or subscription-based services. We now have over 50 apps that work on mobile devices with 7 million active customers using our mobile products.

DARREN: *You mentioned to me earlier that Intuit is driven by a couple of core value beliefs, would you explain?*

BRAD: Yes, and I feel strongly about

these. First, in many ways, the highest paid person's opinion counts the least. It's the customers' opinion that matters most—what we refer to as *customer-driven innovation*. Second, we design for delight and do so with small, nimble teams that can react quickly to customers and get prototypes to market fast. Our innovation teams are comprised of no more people than two pizzas can feed.

DARREN: *It's obvious to me from*

talking with many of your team members that Intuit is very customer focused. With the rate of change that is taking place and with the often “seismic shifts” that are taking place in everything from technology to social media, how do you stay out in front?

BRAD: Intuit is committed to being a leader. We work with the Institute for the Future (www.iftf.org)—a Palo Alto-based non-profit research center specializing in long-term forecasting and quantitative futures research methods. The IFTF has reported four major trends:

- The world’s borders have come down; there is no natural, geographic border to a Cloud product.
- End users do not want to be just consumers; they want to be participants in the development of the solutions. This is called “participation innovation.” Companies that are winning have customers that help drive product innovation.
- The mobile experience has won. Consumers want things at their fingertips. We all do!
- There is power in data ... big data for the little guy. For example, there is power in finding ways to use data to help small businesses compare their performance to their industry peers, as well as offer real-time access to data—when the customer wants it.

DARREN: We talked about a couple of Intuit’s core values earlier, but what do you see as Intuit’s primary mission?

BRAD: It’s very simple. Our mission is to profoundly improve the financial lives of our consumers so they never want to leave or go back to previously used solutions. Our strategy is to use the Cloud across multiple platforms to accomplish this.

DARREN: How do you feel the accounting profession is doing in keeping up with the rate of change?

BRAD: What we see is that consumers actually change first and accountants and small businesses adopt new technologies second. We’ve

seen this specifically with the iPhone, iPad, and Facebook. The rapid adoption of these technologies by the consumer pushed the adoption in small businesses and corporate America.

DARREN: Those are great examples, and I agree. However, I also see a select group of accounting firms that do “get it” and are rapidly moving their firms forward. Do you see this?

BRAD: I do. At Intuit, we actually have an acronym for this group—RTA ... or Rapid Technology Adopters. RTA is Intuit’s buzzword for a firm that adopts new technologies more rapidly than other firms. They are using the cloud and mobile solutions to be more efficient, save time, grow their practice and better engage with clients. But you know this better than anyone. You and your staff at RootWorks are leading the pack in this area.

“TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS USED TO CHANGE EVERY SIX YEARS, AND NOW IT’S EVERY SIX MONTHS.”

DARREN: Intuit is obviously leading the way with many of the technologies accountants and small businesses use every day, so why not just declare that it is now time to move to the Cloud and everyone should just get over it?

BRAD: Moving to the Cloud definitely has its advantages, and we are moving quickly towards it and focusing our innovation resources there, but Intuit will never force a product, platform or business model on a customer. We will leave no desktop user behind, but we will help them see how connecting the desktop data to the cloud where it makes sense is like connecting chocolate with peanut butter. Great on their own, but even better when you put them together.

DARREN: You live and work in what I consider one of the best places in the world. You have a vibrant and youthful

culture all around you. What do you hear when talking to the younger generation about entering the accounting profession?

BRAD: That’s a great question, and we do talk to this group. What I hear is this: “I just inherited my father’s firm, and I want to keep the firm alive, but I don’t want to work the way my father did.” They are referring to the crazy hours during busy season and being chained to a desk. The up-and-coming generation of accounting professionals want to work differently. They want a new model. They believe in the “virtual office,” and the Cloud is a big part of that model.

DARREN: With the Cloud being such a big part of Intuit’s strategy, how do you see QuickBooks Desktop playing out in relation to QuickBooks Online?

BRAD: QuickBooks owns 91-92 percent of the small business software marketplace. Between 2005-2007, we dedicated 75-80 percent of our engineering resources to desktop and a much smaller percentage was dedicated to the Cloud. Today those percentages have reversed—75-80 percent of our engineering resources are invested in Cloud development. I think this clearly represents our focus and our commitment to moving online.

DARREN: That’s a monumental shift in resource allocation. Do you see new desktop software being built today?

BRAD: I do not. Today we see vendors maintaining their desktop software while using the Cloud to build future solutions. We’re also seeing 3rd party developers getting into the fray to develop solutions that connect into our core products. What’s great is that they’re focused on problems that we either would not or could not develop solutions for, so that’s great for customers and also means our products actually get better while we sleep!

DARREN: QuickBooks Online has traditionally lacked some functionality. Do you see this changing?

BRAD: I agree. QBO has lacked some functionality, but that is changing. As I mentioned before, we have

reallocated our engineering resources to focus on the future and we believe the future is the Cloud. We are on a four-week development cycle, so every four weeks you will see new enhancements to QuickBooks Online, many of which are based on feedback we’re getting straight from accounting professionals. If you haven’t checked out QBO in a while, we encourage you to take another look, or talk to a peer or colleague who has.

DARREN: How many customers are using QuickBooks Online?

BRAD: We currently have more than 350,000 licensed QBO customers, more than three times the number of customers we had at this time last year.

DARREN: With the functionality of QuickBooks Desktop and the fact that many customers and accounting practitioners are familiar with it, what I’m seeing is a move from desktop software to authorized Intuit hosting providers that offer the benefit of online collaboration. Why did Intuit choose to go with an authorized hosting program instead of hosting QB internally?

BRAD: Strategy is not only what you are going to do but also what you are not going to do. We felt partnering for hosting was a better strategy because it allowed us to keep our engineering resources dedicated to developing the Cloud platform.

DARREN: When I look at what I call a Next Generation Accounting Firm™, I see a firm using an integrated set of solutions that supports collaboration with clients in real-time. I consider the Cloud instrumental in delivery of these products and services. Do you agree? And, is Intuit heading down this path?

BRAD: I absolutely agree. And, yes, Intuit is firmly on this path. ●



By M. Darren Root, CPA, CITP, Executive Editor

Is it Really Better in the Cloud?



M. Darren Root,
CPA.CITP
Executive Editor

At some point, every accounting professional needs to stop and ask the question: Is the Cloud really better? Of course, “better,” is a relative term and means different things based on who is asking (and answering) the question. For example, if someone asked you “Is a Range Rover better than a Toyota Prius?”, answers will vary based on what “better” means to you. If you desire a large luxury SUV or the perceived status, the answer might be “Yes, the Range Rover is better.” On the other

hand, if you are looking for good gas mileage and cost effectiveness, the answer will be “No.”

What I’m getting at is that there is more to answering the question about the Cloud than a simple Yes or No. It’s important to understand why you are asking the question. Are you looking to increase efficiency, lower costs, and/or elevate client service? Many factors play into whether you are ready to move to the Cloud...and whether it’s “better.” To help you decide, below are some of the key benefits firm leaders can expect from Cloud technologies. After reviewing the list, your answer should come much easier...

- **Anytime/Anywhere Access**—I know; you hear this all the time. But in terms of efficiency, 24/7 access is critical to today’s firm and can’t be overstated. The ability to access data and applications on an anytime-anywhere basis is monumental. This means workflow is seamless, even from multiple offices, at home, from Starbucks, or an airplane, so process is never interrupted.
- **Heightened Data Security**—Cloud technology offers better data security and disaster recovery. Top-tier cloud solutions are housed in Level 4 data centers, providing greater security safeguards and scheduled backups. If you have your data housed on a network server in your office, security is only as good as the lock on your front door. And do you even know if your backups work?
- **Reduced Network Maintenance**—With Cloud solutions, maintenance shifts to the vendor. If you don’t feel confident applying software updates, network patches, and performing appropriate hardware maintenance,

the Cloud is a better option for your firm.

- **Client Collaboration**—This is one benefit of the Cloud that is incredibly important. When transitioning technology from an individual, unconnected desktop to a space where data and documents can be shared in real-time with clients, only then can you experience true power and efficiency gains. Online client accounting solutions, portals, web-based accounts payable apps, and online document storage are just a few examples of solutions that support seamless collaboration with clients.

The benefits offered via Cloud technologies are vast and support the trends taking place in the profession today:

- Professionals want the option to work when and where they desire. The idea of the traditional mode of working—that is, tethered to a desk for 60-70 hours per week—is unacceptable to most.
- Connecting data from multiple sources provides efficiency and convenience that is driving consumers to the Cloud.
- Mobile is winning—we all want access to data when we want it and from the device of our choosing (e.g., smart phone, tablet, laptop, or desktop). The Cloud supports this.

The Cloud is important to accounting professionals. It’s important to our clients. Like me, many of you started with DOS, then moved to networks, Windows, and finally to the Internet. The next step is the Cloud and mobile. And trust me, there is no going back. It’s time to move forward or be left behind. The time has come to say “Yes” to the Cloud. ●



Seeing Clearer with a Cloudy Vision

Everyone keeps saying my firm should transition to the cloud, but what is the cloud?

The cloud refers to solutions and services that allow users to securely create, manage, store and share data and files remotely in real-time.

Erik Asgeirsson, President and CEO of CPA2Biz, points out that the cloud is more than a group of desktop programs that have been put in a data center. "The cloud consists of web-based solutions which are built in a way that supports multiple users," explains Asgeirsson. "In the consumer market, examples are Dropbox, online banking and Gmail. In the CPA market, cloud solutions include Bill.com, Intacct, and Salesforce.com. Those are true cloud solutions."

My firm handles a lot of confidential data and I need to make sure that my clients' information doesn't end up in the wrong hands. Is the cloud secure enough to accomplish this?

With SOC 2 certification, data encryption and physical safeguards in place at data centers, the cloud offers a level of security often unmatched by firms that store data in-house. Many cloud solution providers have a rigorous backend process to ensure no one from the outside can assess data physically or virtually. This usually includes such measures as security guards present at checkpoints surrounding the physical data center where servers are housed, firewalls and firewall protection and ongoing testing to identify and resolve any access points vulnerable to attack by hackers. Frequent backups to remote servers also offer protection against natural disasters.

I think I'm ready to embrace the cloud, where do I start?

The first step in successfully transitioning

to the cloud is to evaluate your current workflow and processes. Identify how you would like to operate in the cloud and then create a plan to successfully implement cloud technology and train your staff and clients on using it.

"The biggest issue I've seen our customers deal with is lack of planning," says Christina Kellerhals, Product Manager - Web Services & Mobile at Thomson Reuters. "They want to move to the cloud, but many of them do not even have paperless processes in place or any idea how they would like to use the technology to improve their business workflow. Take the time, research, reach out to vendors and spend the money up front on testing, training and consulting. It's worth it and your firm will reap exponential benefits."

Bill.com CEO and Founder René Lacerte suggests firms adopt a graduated transition strategy. "Take one cloud application and learn it first. Get your customers accustomed to it before moving on to the next. Focus on one app at a time and gradually roll out each app over a specified period of time."

Things to remember:

- **Stay committed.** It's important to have the firm completely committed before you start the transition. If the staff within the firm is apprehensive about moving to the cloud, it will be more difficult to convince your clients that you are making the right move.

Michelle Wiseman, CPA, Director of Shost & Company, P.C., recalls how reluctance made her firm's transition to the cloud more difficult. "We went into the programs halfway. We were not 100 percent committed to the cloud being our definite solution moving forward and as a result, it made for a slower transition."

- **Be flexible.** As with any change, there will be hiccups and the changes to the

Questions to ask potential vendors:

- What type of encryption does your software use to transmit and store data?
- Is the data stored in a SOC2 certified data center?
- Have you ever experienced any security breaches?
- Do you perform regular security testing and third-party audits?
- What issues, if any, will I have integrating this application into my current workflow?
- Can I restrict access to data at anytime?
- Is there a bandwidth limit I should be aware of?
- What kind of training do you offer for my staff and clients?

process. Work through the hiccups and focus on the end results. It's okay if the process changes a bit.

- **Diversify.** More and more vendors are offering cloud services, giving firms and their clients many options to choose from. Whereas with desktop software, users may have needed to only use solutions from one provider, today, they can choose the best among multiple users creating a suite of products that help them serve their clients more efficiently.

- **There's an app for that.** With an increased focus on the cloud, mobility and the BYOD movement, providers are creating applications specifically designed for mobile devices, allowing their users to be productive away from the office.

Brian Diffin, Chief Technology Officer and Technology Shared Services Vice President at CCH, suggests professionals familiarize themselves with the applications available to them. "There are a lot of cloud apps and services available for mobile devices that perform different workflow functions," explains Diffin. "Spend time each week finding out what's available to increase productivity. By doing that, you can significantly reduce how much time you work each day." ●



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What is the cloud?

Let me explain it with a simple analogy. There are two ways you can get electric power—one by using a generator in your house (local power) and another by hooking up to the public utility (using power from gigantic power stations). Which one is cheaper and easier? Obviously, the public utility. Cloud computing is all about hooking up to giant servers on the Internet and getting all the computing power you need. The servers run the software that let you perform the tasks you want to perform. You may be using the cloud right now in your daily routine - e-mail, online shopping, online banking, online tax research are just some examples. And now cloud computing has expanded to every aspect of the accounting profession including accounting, payroll, tax, document management, practice management, and more.

What are the benefits of cloud computing to accounting firms?

Following the tremendous productivity gains that PC's brought to accounting offices, the cloud offers even greater productivity gains by offering capabilities you never had before:

- **You can work from anywhere at any time.**
You might be already doing this, and you know its benefits.
- **Cloud solutions let you and your clients work closely together.**
This collaboration will completely change the way you perform client accounting. Most of the problems you currently face stem from how you and your clients are doing different parts of the same accounting project, but with no connection between the two systems. This disconnect results in clients making bookkeeping messes that you must fix, cumbersome file transfers you need to manage, different versions of G/L systems you have to work with, client data you have to chase after, and so forth. The cloud has given birth to a new breed of Accountant-Centric solutions that let you and your clients work together using one unified system that includes everything that you and your clients need. You remain in full command and lead the entire accounting process. These cloud based Accountant-Centric systems eliminate all the above problems and make accounting far more efficient and profitable! Accounting Relief from AccountantsWorld is an example of a collaborative system.
- **Cloud solutions let you offer services you could not offer profitably before.**

Payroll is a good example. Thanks to cloud-based payroll systems like Payroll Relief created exclusively for accountants, thousands of accountants have made payroll processing one of their most profitable services. While most

accountants are still driven by the notion that payroll processing is a "no gain, all pain" service, today's cloud-savvy accountants understand how the cloud has completely changed the dynamics of payroll processing. The right payroll solution makes it possible for accountants to eliminate payroll processing tasks in their offices such as: payroll data entry, direct deposit, tax deposit, e-filing of tax forms, and printing of paychecks. And all this processing power is available at a fraction of what the payroll service bureaus charge. That's how the cloud has made payroll processing a no-hassle, highly profitable client service.

- **Cloud solutions take system integration to the next level, resulting in significant efficiency gains.**

In a PC-based system, integration merely means transferring data between different applications installed within the firm. The cloud extends integration to a true data exchange between applications anywhere in the cloud, and also allows integration between different processes and sources, which greatly reduces inefficiencies within the firm. Data can be easily pulled from bank and credit card accounts into accounting systems, thus minimizing data entry. As soon as tax returns, financials, and payroll forms are completed, they can be automatically placed in client portals, where clients can securely access them anytime, anywhere using an Internet connection, including smart phones. This saves the firm the hassle of printing and mailing documents and gives clients the convenience of having immediate, 24x7 access to their documents.

What is AccountantsWorld's expertise with the cloud?

With over 12 years of experience, AccountantsWorld has been the pioneer in cloud solutions for accountants. We also have the most extensive suite of fully integrated cloud solutions, including bookkeeping, write-up, trial balance, live payroll, after-the-fact payroll, client portals, document management, website creation, online marketing, practice management, and personal financial planning. Our Accounting Relief and Payroll Relief have won CPA Practice Advisor Innovation Awards. AccountantsWorld has created one of the largest online communities of accountants and boasts over 110,000 members. We offer AccountantsWorld members a tremendous amount of free resources including webinars, forums, whitepapers, and training about the cloud and all topics related to advancing an accounting practice.

In a fog about the cloud?

Talk to the experts.

We are AccountantsWorld.

**We have helped thousands of accountants harness the cloud.
We can help YOU.**

We invented the **Accountant-Centric cloud** over a decade ago. That means that our cloud solutions are designed specifically to give accountants a level of power and control they never had before. These solutions allow your practice to use the cloud to dramatically enhance your profitability while adding value to your clients' businesses. These solutions can provide you with a pool of new clients, and help you achieve greater efficiencies and cost savings within your practice.

Call us for a **no-cost, no-obligation consultation**, and speak with our **Practice Development Consultants**. They will answer your questions and show you how to easily transition into the cloud with no risk, while maximizing your gains.

**Call 888-999-1366 x517 today,
or visit www.AWAnswers.com
to learn how our cloud helps accountants like you.**

AccountantsWorld®
Do More. Do Better.™



Our cloud experts will help you choose which cloud solutions best meet your practice's needs.

Document Management
Professional Websites
Time & Billing
After-the-Fact Payroll
Client Accounting
Payroll Processing
Client Portals
Write-up
Trial Balance

"AccountantsWorld has long been a path-breaker in the world of cloud software for accountants."

~ Accounting Today

5 Free Ways for Accounting Firms to Grab Attention on Google



Will Scott is Founder and President of Search Influence (www.SearchInfluence.com), and has been helping small businesses get online since 1994, before most people even knew there was an Internet. Since then, he has been focused on making information more accessible online. In the classroom teaching technology to professionals or in the boardroom presenting the value of online business to fortune 1000 companies, Will is passionate about the impact of the Internet on business.

Recently, accounting firms gained a variety of ways to change the display of their listings on search engines. While search engines were once solely a list of uniform links, the evolving Internet has forced Google, Bing, and other search engines to create richer media experiences. These richer media experiences can help accountants to grab the eyes of those searching, even if they're not the #1 result. On-page techniques tend to

be easier to implement, but integration with local search and social media can provide a wealth of striking listings.

The following five techniques can elevate your site's search traffic, regardless of rank, making your site seem more professional to visitors. Meta descriptions ensure optimal text copy on search engines, meaningful image descriptions allow your pictures to be seen, places pages make you a "red dot" on the map, review markup displays ratings under your listing, and social media gives a human face to your company. All these techniques can expand your search presence, bringing more potential customers to your site.

Meta Descriptions

The meta description, though not a ranking factor, is the accountant's first weapon for grabbing a searcher's attention. If they are too unrelated to the query, meta descriptions are often

overwritten by the search engine, but following these best practices is the main way to ensure that your hand-crafted description is left as-is. Though the number is a bit fuzzy, search engines tend to cut off around 150 characters. Creating eye-catching content in around



30 words can be tough, but a CPA can find luck if they include three things: a keyword to display in bold, a call to action to drive the visitor to a goal, and unique facts that set your firm apart from your competitors.

Descriptions should answer the search query, summarizing the answer on the page.

The other meta tag that displays prominently in the snippet is the title. The title, showing the title bar of the browser when you visit the page, is the number one on-page ranking factor, and its value for organic click-through is imperative. The title is also the introduction to the site for a visitor, letting them know if the page will answer their query at first glance. For most pages, simply having the keyword should suffice, but some pages are better led with a more inventive, clickable title. In all, revamping the metadata of your page can double organic traffic week-over-week.

As social networks have become ubiquitous, metadata for their sites have become important as well. While social media sites will usually find your standard metadata, often that copy is not friendly for sharing. Keywords are less important, but calls to action become even more important, as your audience is more passively viewing your content.

Pictures in Less than 5 words

Image search is a powerfully visual change of pace from the purely text world of traditional search, but results pages will now often show a small gallery of images related to the query. There is a type of small metadata for images, allowing you the opportunity to show up on the main search page. Alt and title attributes are like page titles and descriptions. Alt attributes should be extremely succinct but descriptive, while title attributes can be longer to allow for full explanation. Title attributes will also show if you hover over an image, and alt attributes are displayed instead of the image for text-only browsers. Various search engines display images with different content, such as the images below.



Images are a vital organic source of traffic, especially if unique images are used. For tax and accounting professionals, stock photos should be avoided. Though many businesses use these images, they can be too formulaic, too similar to competing sites, or too unrealistic to connect with a searcher. Keep in mind that a potential customer searching for your practice's name can be shown a cohesive brand image. Ensure that as many images as logical are tagged with these attributes. Focus on the keyword, but accurately describe the photo. Image seekers tend to be looking for something specific.

Describing the image is key on photo

Silva Gurtner & Abney is a full-service accounting firm in the ...
New Orleans Office Silva Gurtner & Abney 4330 Dumaine Street New Orleans, LA 70119 ... abilliot@silva-cpa.com

Unoptimized description

sharing sites. Many image sites put much of their ranking weight on the title and description of the image, and the same lessons from page metadata apply to images - test them using a different tone to better resonate with users. On these sites, however, traffic is generated by searching as well, making keywords a safe bet for either title copy. On these social sites, be sure to add your url to the description so that searchers can easily visit your site.

Seeing Dots Everywhere

Joining Google or Bing Places lets you show up in the coveted local search areas of the universal search page. Local results are prominently displayed on some queries, showing reviews, address, phone number, sometimes images, and most importantly, a map to your doorstep. Local and organic search reinforce each other on the page, but an accountant can be confident that their Places listing best represents their business only if the page is claimed and actively maintained. Furthermore, local results power a variety of other engines, such as Facebook Places, that can help provide contact information and additional traffic for your location. Maps listings provide rich results, if you know how to utilize them. See the below example.

to users of local sites like Yelp. Managing such a campaign can bring traffic and customers to your business, especially if you take the time to jive with your communities.

Starry-eyed Reviews

Short of taking on the world of local search, accounting firms can easily replicate one of the most striking search features of those Places listings by including and correctly marking up testimonials on their site. This effectively makes the site seem like an authoritative source on the business. Google, especially, and Bing, to a lesser degree, support “rich snippets,” on-page code that



can radically alter your search listing. For accountants, the most valuable snippet displays stars and other information to show reviews about their business, which can be seen in search listings by using microformats.

While following local industry guidelines, accountants should already have testimonials on their site, especially as “drop-quotes” on their page, that strive to make the potential customer feel at ease about the upcoming transaction. Marking up the code using Schema or microformats will display stars and information about the review to a searcher, drawing eyes to your listing.

Three guiding principles should be pervasive in any use of reviews, especially ones showing on search pages and not your own website.

- **First, be transparent. If your review shows 5 stars on January 15 from someone named CP (often names are anonymous to protect the privacy of others), then your page should show all of that information clearly.**
- **Secondly, provide meaningful but organic copy. No one likes to see overly edited copy, especially the person who provided the review.**
- **Lastly, try to get a numerical or star rating from your customers. This avoids the conundrum of assigning simultaneously accurate, promotional, and visually striking results on your page and on Google.**

Review code is not terribly hard to implement, but there are too many elements and tags to share it here. Ideally, you should have five elements: a name, a date, a 5-star rating, a summary, and a review, all referencing your practice. These five elements will show up in search results and pull eyes to your page, nearly doubling organic traffic to the page.

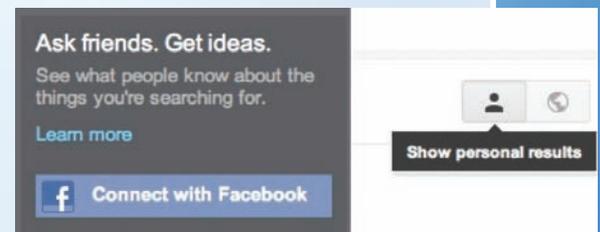
Being Social in Search

Finally, one cannot ignore the increased role of social media in search. Bing’s integration with Facebook and Google’s social layer of Google+ now inextricably connect the social and search worlds. Because of this, it’s imperative to have a Facebook and Google+ page for your business. Describing how to set these up for an accountant would fill a tome on its own, but the effort of doing so utterly outweighs the costs. Bing and Google have similar social strategies based on joining social networks.



Maps pages themselves provide the opportunity to continue catching eyes with relevant imagery and information on the Place page. Continuing your branding, maintaining accurate information, and actively responding both publicly and privately to unhappy customers can increase trust and ensure that your site shows in the Maps listing and is referring business to your firms.

It’s important to know that this isn’t anything beyond the first steps of local SEO, a labyrinth of ensuring consistency across listings, offering something for well-trafficked listing sites, and providing something unique



Bing and Google will display what your contacts have shared higher in the results, but there are benefits for larger clients. Eventually, Google will “verify” your Google+ business page, showing you prominently on the right-hand side of the search results page. This allows you to grab eyes, while once again reinforcing your brand in the results pages.

These five strategies are varied in difficulty and time to implement. However, if you are experiencing ranking difficulties for whatever reason, they can radically change the landscape and traffic generation of your organic online marketing. These techniques are some of the best and most striking ways to change your organic search listings and capture more traffic from other related sources. If they seem too time-consuming for you or your team, consider finding a website promotion company in your area to help you with your online marketing needs. ●

SEEING THROUGH THE CLOUD

Cloud9
Real Time



**ROBERT J.
CHANDLER**

President & CEO
Cloud9 Real Time

Robert J. Chandler is an acknowledged industry visionary and leader in Cloud technology. He was honored with the award of "Top 40 Under 40" by the CPA Practice Advisor Magazine in 2007, 2008, and 2010.

He is also a leading national advocate of modern accounting methods that include universal Internet service with remote access to client files, outsourcing of bookkeeping work, automated accounting systems and techniques, professional certification for all bookkeeping practitioners, and Cloud computing advancements for an aging industry.

Recently recognized as the top "Expert" by the 2012 Small Business Influencer Awards in North America, he is a sought-after speaker for Accounting and Technology conferences nationwide, and is actively involved in moving the accounting industry forward with advancements in technology.

Why Your Firm Needs to Move to the Cloud

2012 brought the Cloud front and center for CPA's at conferences, educational courses, technology options as well as the opportunity to have service expansion. With the influx in Cloud availability, it has drawn out many questions, most frequently "What is Cloud Computing?" Cloud is being used as a metaphor for the Internet, combine that with computing and you have virtual servers that are providing common business applications online. There are many different types of Cloud Computing including the ever so popular SaaS (Software as a Service) and hosting models. The best way to differentiate the two types of Clouds is to give examples: SaaS products are where a manufacturer has released a version of their application that is an online edition such as QuickBooks Online versus the desktop version of QuickBooks. The hosted model of Cloud is where a Managed Service Provider is hosting desktop applications from multiple manufacturers online, not changing the original on-premise version.

WHY THE SUDDEN PUSH FOR CLOUD?

It is a common misconception that the Cloud is a new technology. Cloud services have been around for years but only large corporations had the resources and funds to take advantage of the benefits. With technological advances, Cloud services are now not only available to the masses - they are more cost effective than a traditional client-server infrastructure. Small to medium sized businesses can now afford moving to the Cloud and are doing so in droves; the message of "get into the Cloud" is everywhere they go, and with a thorough examination of what the Cloud is, they can begin to understand why it's so popular!

HOW CAN IT HELP A CPA FIRM?

The benefits of Cloud services to a CPA firm are really three-fold:

1. Cost - while each firm is different in their needs, so are their cost savings but on average a firm can expect to save approximately 30-50% in IT expenses by moving to the Cloud and out of an on-premise server. The cost savings are not just of the physical hardware but also licensing costs, IT consultants, time & labor of maintaining a local system as well as backups.
2. Convenience - Accountants did not go to school to spend their time doing IT work. The Cloud allows them to shift the focus from IT back to billable hours while also offering anytime, anywhere access for remote work.

3. Security - Moving to the Cloud is one of the most secure things a CPA firm can do for their own practice but also for their clients...let's discuss security further.

WHAT ABOUT SECURITY?

I can fully understand and respect the common concern that CPA's and business owners have in terms of security. What is important to understand is that we are talking about Enterprise level infrastructures that are built by organizations whose core focus is Security - not accounting, bookkeeping or taxes. It is of course important for the CPA to perform due diligence in researching their cloud provider and ensuring they are an experienced & vetted corporation. However, the recognition that the data centers and cloud companies have created an environment with security measures that no small to medium sized business owner could recreate is needed. The comfort of having a physical server next to you in the office is becoming an antiquated philosophy like keeping your money under the mattress. A Cloud environment will not only give the CPA a state of the art infrastructure, it will provide them and their clients with a disaster recovery plan, secured offsite backups, 24x7x365 monitoring and support as well as redundancy of the highest standards. When researching a Cloud vendor, be sure to ask if they are at a SOC2 & SSAE16 Data Center, if they are an accredited Managed Service Provider, a Licensed Host and to provide a copy of their Service Level Agreement. These are key indicators of the level of security; support and service that you can expect to receive.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR CLOUD TECHNOLOGIES?

As with all technologies, Cloud Computing will in fact evolve and grow in the coming years. The early adopters have embraced the Cloud with the majority starting to get informed; I predict that by the time laggards get to the Cloud we will have seen a major shift in the way the Cloud is delivered and accessed. It is already a seamless delivery with no downloads, but I believe we will see a singular sign on portal that will integrate all of the applications into one central location including the downloading of banking information into the portal with an OCR to perform the data entry for the accounting professionals and business owners alike. Still unsure about how the Cloud works or can help your firm? See a more detailed review in this 2012 White Paper: <http://blog.cloud9realttime.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Cloud9-Accountants-White-Paper1.pdf>

YOUR OFFICE IN THE CLOUD

SECURE VIRTUAL SOLUTIONS FOR ALL YOUR APPS & DATA



QUICKBOOKS® HOSTING

SAGE™ SOLUTION HOSTING

MICROSOFT™ OFFICE HOSTING

APPLICATION HOSTING

TAX SOFTWARE

CRM SYSTEMS

Cloud9 Real Time is an Accredited Managed Service Provider delivering dynamic Cloud Solutions for Anytime, Anywhere access. Licensed by both Intuit and Sage for Commercial Hosting and offering a customized, privately labeled all-in-one virtual office solution. Voted best Hosting company for 2012 by the CPA Practice Advisor, Cloud9 Real Time provides clients a secure and private cloud solution. On the forefront of cloud computing, giving users access to their Applications, Data and Exchange services in one central location, Cloud9 Real Time offers QuickBooks hosting as well as custom virtual server creation. Never charging for storage, IT or maintenance, get your business on Cloud9 today! Visit us at www.cloud9realtime.com to learn more.

BUILDING CLOUD HOSTING SOLUTIONS FOR ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONALS SINCE 2000

Keynote Speakers

Randy Johnston

Executive Vice President, k2 Enterprises and NMG

Doug Sleeter

President, Sleeter Group

Chris Fredericksen, CPA

President, 20/20 Group USA

Robert J. Chandler

President / CEO, Cloud9 Real Time



SAVE THE DATE

NOVEMBER 8TH - 9TH
PARADISE POINT
SAN DIEGO, CA

The Forecast is Cloudy:

“Think.” “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” “Garbage in, garbage out.” “Work smarter, not harder.”

These common phrases should remind us to apply common sense to our technology decisions. You need to be thinking about your clients, firm and the technology you use to serve those clients. Hardware, software, data, procedures and people all work together to transform data into information. With the major shifts in hardware, operating systems, productivity software, and applications occurring now, this is a great time to plot your future. The future is likely to include more Cloud applications and technologies.

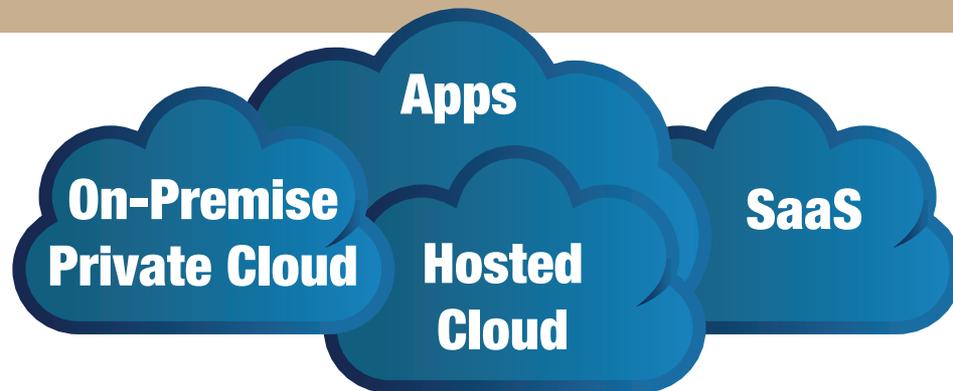
Think Strategically, Implement Tactically

In prior columns, we have asked you to consider your strategic business plan and to develop your tactical plan to accomplish the strategic goals. Likewise we have asked you to build a technology strategic plan that aligns with your strategic business plan and then choose IT tactics that accomplish



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.



your IT strategic goals. This year we have observed an unusually large number of irrational decisions made about IT based on vendor promises, unrealistic expectations from many directions, false claims and numerous other factors. Don't fall into this trap. Think about how you want your firm to operate, and make plans to convert from the way you are today, your "as is," to your future vision of the firm, your "to be." Once your "to be" vision is in place, decide what tools can help you get there. Often, the applications you use help you change the way your firm acts and thinks.

Your applications can make you more effective and efficient. Applications continue to evolve to support your firm and clients. The effectiveness of the software tools you need to run your practice and support your clients should be evaluated at least once a year. If an application no longer fits your strategy, elimination of the application or a replacement should be considered, selected and implemented. Today's applications are commonly in one of four forms: 1) Client/server, 2) Desktop, 3) SaaS, or 4) an "app" – a small, single purpose application that typically runs on a tablet or smartphone. All four of these styles of applications can have their place in your strategy. Once you have chosen good fits for your needs in applications, hardware and infrastructure, learning to use your applications well can pay big dividends. Note that SaaS and apps are automatically Cloud solutions. The way you implement traditional Client/server or desktop applications can make them part of your private cloud.

Think Globally, Implement Locally OR in the Cloud

Client Server and desktop applications still dominate the market. They are robust, mature and stable. You can install these applications on-premise, or these applications can be installed in a data center. Your IT team or hosted provider can enable these traditional applications with remote access creating your own "private cloud." Software as a Service (SaaS) or browser

based applications can be run at the end-user level, installed and/or controlled by your IT team or integrated by your hosting provider. If all the tools you have selected for your firm are SaaS, you will have eliminated the need for local storage and file servers. An app will typically solve a specific problem and solve it very well. Example of apps might include Concur Expense reporting, Thomson Reuters Time and Expense Entry or CCH Practice Intelligence. The apps that you select will each have their specific capabilities to solve a particular problem. Each app will have requirements of your other applications and infrastructure.

The applications that you select will determine the type of hardware that is required. No matter what application solutions you choose, at your office you will need: redundant communication lines, firewalls, switches, good cabling and end-user devices including copiers, printers, scanners, computers, tablets and smartphones. If you have local storage needs, then you have two major choices: On-Premise Private Cloud or a Hosted Private Cloud. An on-premise private cloud could be built using traditional local area networking technology, virtualization of servers, Terminal Services, Citrix Services or Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) using tools like Citrix XenDesktop or VMware View. Wise installers are making all applications run conveniently and securely for remote users.

More Than One Right Way To Do This

We muse over consultants, pundits and experts who strive to convince you that their way is the "only way" or solutions based on their experience is "best practice" for the industry. We are more convinced than ever that there are multiple right ways to solve both client and firm problems and that your knowledge of your client base will lead you to look for solutions to these issues. The way you select and implement solutions will lead to your success. Focusing on the smooth implementation and

training of your people to get your procedures right can pay the highest reward.

Consistency of procedures will contribute the most to quality work products that are reproducible and have a minimum amount of time and effort involved. If you can focus some of your attention and expertise on reducing the steps and effort to solve a problem, document and teach team members about these processes, and help all team members understand the philosophical approach you are using to solve the problem, you should get better decisions made at all levels. A checklist approach may work, but fewer flexible steps with smart guidance and training will promote better client satisfaction and a better work product. All of these factors together should drive out time used and increase realization, too.

One large caution: a trap that many firms experience is letting each partner or manager do things "their way," resulting in dozens of ways to solve a single problem in a firm. This results in higher costs and work inefficiencies that are frequently not correctly costed, charged or attributed to the upper level manager causing the problem. We like flexibility, but we do not like inconsistency. If you want inconsistency in the firm – many small firms or firms with "books of business" do – then expect profitability to be lower. It is your business and you are welcome to make that choice. We just want you to be acutely aware your choice is likely causing you and your people to work harder while your income is lower.

Perhaps one of the easiest ways to think about the issue of planning for the future is to assume that you were starting your business today and had no clients, hardware, software or employees. How would you build the firm to accomplish what clients want and what you want? Most of us would not choose what our tools have evolved into. Why not start the transition with a vision of what you want your firm "to be," and begin the migration now? You and your firm will become what you dream of sooner than you "think." ●

A Fresh Look: Your Guide to the Cloud

Today, I'm joined by Kasey Bayne, Accounting Ambassador at FreshBooks to talk about her point of view "seeing through the clouds."

DARREN ROOT: Why is being in the cloud important to FreshBooks?

KASEY BAYNE: FreshBooks is the market leader in online billing and bookkeeping for small businesses, and has been a cloud solution since day 1 - back in 2004, before "cloud" was a household word!

People have been using cloud-based solutions for so long now - web-based email, online banking - it's only natural to extend those benefits to your business life as well. Our customers are mobile - they're on the road, at customer sites, or at their kids' soccer games cheering from the sidelines. The ability to create an invoice, track your time, pull some reports or send your P&L to your accountant, that's why we're in the cloud. For small business owners, your business is your life, and we strive to make the billing and bookkeeping part of that a whole lot easier.

DR: That's definitely a realistic picture of the small business owners I've run into. How do these cloud benefits translate for accountants?

KB: Being able to access your clients' data, anywhere, anytime - that's valuable stuff. Not having to drive to your client's office, wait for files to be sent over, the cloud solves all of that! Accountants can work on their own terms in the cloud, when and where you want to.

DR: One thing that comes up when making the decision to move to the cloud is security. What do you recommend to accountants looking to make the move safely?

KB: I know how important this is. A company's financial information is really the heart of any company, and keeping that data safe and secure is so important. Some of the tips I recommend, in working with numerous accounting practices and their customers include:

- Pick good partners! Do your research to make sure you're picking a reliable partner that you trust, and feel good about working with, because that's what vendors really are. Check to see that they have a solid support plan, so you can get the help you need - with everything from initial set-up, to day-to-day working. You provide great support to your clients, so it's only expected that your partners do the same for you!
- Downtime, to put it lightly, is a gigantic pain. Of course, having time for upgrades and improve-

ments that come from your cloud provider is an important thing. That being said, ask about downtime - how often, what times (3 am is generally much better than 3 pm!), and one of the most important stats - unscheduled downtime. That's harder to work around, and can really throw a wrench in your business day.

- Backups, backups, backups! Otherwise known as the cloud industry's version of "location, location, location," multiple backups are one of the major keys to a successful cloud implementation. Make sure your cloud partner has multiple backups (in multiple locations), and check that you can back up your own data as well (not only for security, but in case you need to share data with another solution you also work with).

DR: What benefits are clients finding when their accountants move to the cloud?

KB: We all know there are a lot of benefits to moving to the cloud, and for small business clients and their accountants, that's no exception. I see a lot of this at FreshBooks - improved collaboration is a big one. When a small business owner and accountant move to the cloud, both the client and accountant can access their data wherever, whenever they need it. Working together on the same, live data - not only is that a huge timesaver on both sides, but accountants can provide real-time insights and provide the key business advice that their clients are looking for.

DR: You've mentioned collaboration, and that's a common theme in cloud conversations. Can you tell us more about how that helps accounting firms?

KB: Collaboration is so important. No longer are clients looking for someone to only hand them a file of forms at year-end, but they're really looking for a partner to help their business succeed.

Working with your clients is a huge benefit, but there's a second benefit to the cloud for firms as well, and that's in working more effectively within your own business. So many cloud solutions allow you to integrate with other solutions. What does that mean to your business? You, or even your clients, enter data once, and that same information can come to you and travel through your business without having to re-enter the same information time and time again. Having data move from your client's accounting solution, to your system, to your CRM or project management system automatically - that's a huge cloud timesaver you can take to the bank!

SEEING THROUGH THE CLOUD

FRESHBOOKS
cloud accounting



KASEY BAYNE

Accounting Ambassador
FreshBooks

Kasey Bayne is the Accounting Ambassador at FreshBooks, where she works with accountants to help their small business clients move to the cloud. A speaker at events across North America, Kasey's shared her passions and expertise of helping small businesses and their accountants at AICPA Tech+, K2 Enterprises Canada, and others. A 40 Under 40 award-winner, Kasey is also an avid runner and reader based in Toronto, Ontario.

SEEING THROUGH THE CLOUD



**JILL
WARD**

Senior Vice President
and General
Manager,
Accounting Profes-
sionals Division and
Intuit Health Group

As senior vice president and general manager of the Accounting Professionals Division and the Intuit Health Group, Jill Ward oversees two professional services businesses where Intuit serves professional clients, who in turn provide critical services to their customers. The Accounting Professionals Division is Intuit's largest professional services business, developing products and services that help accountants save time, increase their productivity and grow their practices. Ward's teams develop programs to help accountants recommend the right offerings to help their small business clients succeed.

Intuit Health is one of Intuit's fastest-growing business units. Ward is responsible for the company's initiatives to strengthen the relationship between physician practices and their patients by making communication and the ability to accomplish key tasks better, easier, and more efficient.

Ward joined Intuit in 2001 as the vice president and general manager of QuickBase and went on to lead the company's portfolio of industry-specific solutions, and its accountant-related programs and businesses.

Previously, Ward held senior positions at financial and business services companies, including Fidelity Investments, and Bain and Company. She holds a bachelor's degree from Wellesley College and a master's in business administration from the Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth. In 2008, 2011 and 2012, "Accounting Today" magazine named her as one of the Top 100 Most Influential People in the accounting industry.

Destination the Cloud: The Future of Accountancy.

Jill Ward oversees Intuit's Accounting Professionals Division, the company's largest professional services business. The division currently serves more than 250,000 accounting professionals and more than 6 million small businesses through its integration with Intuit's Small Business Group, maker of the popular QuickBooks product line.

We sat down with Ms. Ward to learn where accountancy is heading and how Intuit is helping accounting professionals and small businesses meet those new challenges.

DARREN ROOT: Tell me about the accountant of tomorrow, what do you see?

JILL WARD: We're seeing that the accountant of tomorrow is already here today. A growing number of accountants are going online, using cloud and mobile solutions to save time, save money and better serve and collaborate with their clients. They're answering questions and accessing key client data away from their office, from the palm of their hand. The future is here, it's just not evenly distributed yet.

In the future, all accountants will benefit from never having to enter data and they'll automatically be on the same product version as their client. They'll focus on serving clients with time they currently spend dealing with data backups, server management and software upgrades. They'll share data and documents with clients through a secure portal and say good-bye to paper clutter.

DR: What are the biggest trends affecting accountants?

JW: New technologies are reinventing work and the workplace, allowing greater flexibility around when, where and how work gets done. Accountants are setting up "virtual offices" at coffee shops, in parks, on trains - wherever there's a Wi-Fi signal.

DR: Will there be a day when accountants don't have to enter data at all?

JW: All data is becoming accessible from multiple platforms, flowing in and out of applications, so one day soon, persistent data will prevail. Why does free flowing data matter? Well, the benefit to the accountant is that you'll be able to provide better service and counsel

because you're spending less time focusing on data entry, and more time interpreting what the numbers and data mean for your client.

DR: How has the cloud changed client expectations of their accountant?

JW: Advances in technology have shifted client expectations and the ease of collaboration dramatically. "I'll get back to you tomorrow when I'm in the office" is no longer an acceptable answer.

DR: Are accountants adapting to new technologies?

JW: Absolutely. Accounting professionals and their clients are increasingly looking to smart phones and tablets as necessary tools to manage their practice, run their payroll, gain insights into their business' performance and manage their customers' needs on the go.

We surveyed accountants in 2011 and found that three-fourths of them recognize that online applications will be integral to their firms. Nearly half (48%) felt that it is very important to have the ability to run their business on a mobile device. Accountants who use mobile devices to run their businesses are using them at least 21 times a day - or approximately every 20 minutes!

DR: How does this affect costs?

JW: Software-as-a-service or cloud applications are subscription based. No license fees mean lower initial costs. Having a SaaS provider manage all your IT infrastructure lowers IT costs for hardware, software, and the people needed to manage it all.

DR: How is Intuit innovating in the cloud?

JW: We're investing in Software-as-a-service offerings, creating an ecosystem of solutions - developed both by Intuit and seamless integration to apps created by third-party development partners - that span the online accounting, tax, payroll and payments services. We're seeing tremendous user growth for these products and it reflects our commitment to create solutions that change the financial lives of our customers so profoundly, that they can't imagine going back to the old way.

DR: Can you give me some examples?

JW: Intuit Tax Online is built on the Lacerte tax engine and is the fastest-growing tax solution on the market, tripling our customers over the past year. You can access it from your iPhone to answer client questions anywhere, anytime, without delay.

More than 1 million businesses pay their employees with our payroll offerings, including Intuit Online Payroll. Users can now run payroll in as little as three easy steps, taking about two minutes out of their busy day. Intuit Online Payroll for Accountants lets you run a client's payroll from your iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch.

QuickBooks Online makes collaboration easy for accountants and clients. It's the leading small business accounting solution, with a customer base that's growing 30-40 percent each year, doubling in the last three years. We just surpassed 350,000 subscribers. QuickBooks Online for Accountants takes it a step further, helping accountants collaborate with clients using QuickBooks Online to perform key accounting tasks faster.

And GoPayment, Intuit's mobile payment solution, has four times the customers compared to one year ago.

DR: How long is Intuit going to support the desktop products?

JW: For as long as our customers need us to.

While we are innovating, developing and improving our SaaS and mobile solutions, we will not turn our backs on our desktop customers or force accounting professionals to change the way they work. We will continue to share with them technologies to help save time and grow their practice.

DR: Can the desktop and online solutions coexist?

JW: It's like chocolate and peanut butter. They are both great on their own, but put them together, in this case sharing data, and you've really got something special.

DR: QuickBooks Online is an important product

for accountants and their small business clients. What's new with that product?

JW: Everything. Our QuickBooks Online development team is completely focused on delighting accountants and their small business clients. We have more than 10 times the number of engineers working on the product compared to five years ago. They're engaging like never before with accounting professionals to address their most important needs. They update the product every four weeks and those improvements automatically appear in the product.

The success of the product is based on the flexibility, collaboration, and better business insights it provides. QuickBooks Online makes financial data available anytime, anywhere, and on any device so the client and accountant can collaborate whenever, wherever and always have the most up-to-date data at their fingertips.

DR: Is there an opportunity for third-party developers in the cloud?

JW: Absolutely. The Intuit Partner Platform, for example, is an open platform that allows third-party developers to create integrated solutions that make our products even better. Customers benefit from using quality solutions tailored to their specific needs, and qualified developers achieve access to our millions of customers.

In the case of QuickBooks Online, that product solves the core accounting jobs, while our development partners address other small business needs. Their apps integrate seamlessly with QBO via the cloud to make the client and the accountant more productive.

DR: We hear a lot about "big data." What are the benefits of data?

JW: Advanced analytical tools and ever-larger data sets have armed small businesses with insights and capabilities that were once only available to corporate giants. We call it "big data for the little guy," and we're working to unleash the power of data to provide accounting firms with better ways to organize, monitor and analyze their finances, and better serve their clients.

DR: Is data safe in the cloud?

JW: Yes. Our data centers offer greater security, redundancy and backup than most individual firms could manage or afford on their own.

DR: When did Intuit begin creating cloud solutions?

JW: In 2008, we recognized the emergence of the cloud, the increasing role of social networks and user-generated content, and customers' growing reliance on the web to manage their lives. We decided to move to connected services to offer customers easy-to-use solutions that they can access any time, on any device. Today, Intuit is a true connected services company with 35 million people using our SaaS offerings, including 7 million on our more than 50 smart phone and tablet solutions. Connected services now generate 65 percent of the company's revenue.

DR: What's different about Intuit's approach to cloud product development?

JW: While others develop technology in search of a problem, we distinguish ourselves through two core capabilities. Our tradition of customer-driven innovation includes more than 10,000 hours of sitting in customers' homes and offices, following them to see how they work and where we can make things easier. We also "design for delight," starting with deep customer insight, and working with customers every step of the way through development.

DR: Why are accountants so important to Intuit?

JW: We wouldn't be where we are and we won't get to where we want to go without them. They are our customers, advisors, resellers, recommenders and so much more. In many ways, they're our co-pilots as we journey into the cloud.

DR: What advice do you have for a firm considering moving to the cloud?

JW: It's OK to start slowly, but start now. Get one client online. Experience the benefits and grow from there. You won't look back.

The firm down the block is either already using the cloud or will start very soon. Don't get left behind.

The firm down the block
is either already using the cloud
or will start very soon.
Don't get left behind.

SEEING THROUGH THE CLOUD

Right Networks



PHIL ROMINE

Partner and Chief Technology Officer, Right Networks

Right Networks has leveraged Phil's varied software engineering experience to develop Right Networks advanced virtualization technology known as HyperRight™ and Right Networks leading reporting technology used for consolidated franchise and diocesan reporting. Phil has architected operating systems, designed network protocols, created distributed and mobile computing systems, and is a patent holder in high-availability distributed systems. He has played key roles in the development of software validators for air and space systems for the US Air Force, security software for Fortune 5 companies, and computing systems for weather alerting and air traffic control systems. In 2002, Phil co-founded Right Networks where he is now Partner and CTO.

Right Networks: The Right Way to The Cloud

At Right Networks, we believe these questions are extremely important to ask when choosing a hosting provider:

1) Customers trust their cloud hosting provider with the reputations of their businesses, so it is critical to choose a trusted provider. What major companies have trusted their reputations to Right Networks?

Intuit and Thomson Reuters have unique, exclusive hosting relationships with Right Networks.

For example, Right Networks is the exclusive hosting provider to Intuit's Enterprise Solutions Group. When Intuit sells hosted QuickBooks Enterprise, Intuit is reselling Right Networks hosting. The process for this selection was far more rigorous than for their Authorized Hosting Program and Right Networks is proud to be the only hosting provider that Intuit selected for this program for two years in a row, the entire lifetime of the offering.

2) Is the hosting infrastructure reliable? Do you have multiple data centers? Are they SAS-70 / SSAE-16 certified? Does it have any single point of failure that could prevent access to data?

Right Networks hosts from multiple Tier IV (highest), SAS-70/SSAE-16 certified tier data centers. Within those data centers our systems are end-to-end redundant with no single-point of failure. If any hardware in the data center fails, backup hardware automatically takes over so that our customers can continue to work without interruption. Our infrastructure is the most reliable in the industry and we believe this was key in having been chosen by major corporations for exclusive hosting relationships.

3) Can the hosting provider grow with me or will I run into limitations with the number of users or size of my organization?

Right Networks serves customers with one user and customers with thousands of users. We grow with you as you need us and regularly

have customers move to us when they have outgrown other providers.

4) One of the benefits of the cloud is its on-demand nature, as it gives users the ability to add or reduce capacity as needed. Some hosting providers force users into long-term contracts, negating this benefit. Does Right Networks require long-term contracts?

Right Networks does not require long term contracts. All engagements are month-to-month; we strive to earn our customers' business each and every month. We are proud that we have been successful, and continue to maintain the highest customer loyalty in the industry.

5) Software licensing in the cloud is complex and can expose users and partners to legal risks related to license sharing. How does your hosting environment support license integrity?

In the Right Networks hosting environment, when you run QuickBooks, for example, you run under your own software license key. When you click the Help>About menu, you'll see your license number right there. This means that when you connect to Intuit's online services your payroll, on-line banking, etc., isn't mixed up with other customers.

IN SUMMARY:

The cloud has great potential to allow companies to focus on their business rather than on managing computers, networks, firewalls, and the highly available infrastructure required to operate business critical applications. Right Networks delivers a turn-key, fully managed solution. Companies can rapidly deploy their business in the cloud on Right Networks fully-managed, secure, reliable, trusted platform that enables the service of more clients more efficiently, anywhere, anytime. Plus, Right Networks provides acclaimed US based support if you ever need help.

Right Networks®



Take your business **to the cloud.**

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Some hosted apps: **QuickBooks** | accounting | **Office Tools** | **Office**

SIMPLEHOSTING

The Hosted Network from Right Networks is an Internet-based, enterprise-class office network where your employees, partners, and customers can work together securely anytime, anywhere. Easily move your business to the cloud, today.



Sign up now for your chance to win an iPad!

Sign up now for your chance to win an Apple iPad each quarter in 2012. You will be automatically entered into a quarterly drawing for an iPad using the qr code or promo code each time you place an order for a Right Networks hosted desktop login. New and current customers are eligible.

Simply enter in promo code **OTP000** during signup and you will be automatically entered to win.

Sign up now at rightnetworks.com/otp000

For complete rules and details about the offer please visit rightnetworks.com/otp. Offer expires on December 31, 2012.



SEEING THROUGH THE CLOUD



CHRISTY ROSS

VP of Strategic Partners
Bill.com

Christy Ross brings more than 20 years of demonstrated success across a variety of industries including financial software, banking and ecommerce. Prior to Bill.com, Christy spent several years at Intuit and First Interstate Bancorp where she successfully launched new businesses. At Intuit, Christy worked in product marketing where she launched and managed Quicken.com and introduced online banking services into the QuickBooks and Quicken platforms. While at First Interstate Bancorp, she worked in Cash Management product management and operations where she managed the introduction of a new corporate financial payment system. Christy also founded Great Entertaining.com, an e-commerce retailer which won multiple press accolades, most notably the Forbes Best of the Web award and was declared a top 40 web site in 2000.

Christy holds an MBA from the Harvard Business School and a BA in economics from the University of Arizona, with a minor in molecular biology.

Seeing through the Cloud Headline

Q How does Bill.com increase my revenue?

A By eliminating all manual tasks such as data entry, envelope stuffing, client visits and check runs, Bill.com gives you the ability to serve more clients without growing staff or costs. Increase your efficiency with 24/7 online access to all documents.

By automating bookkeeping and eliminating paperwork, you can free your time, shifting your focus to higher-level services, for which you can charge more.

Q How can cloud accounting help me be more efficient?

A With Bill.com, you can see all your clients in one day (actually, in less than a minute!) simply by logging in to your Accountant Console. Just click on any client's name to view and manage all their cash flow, receivables and payables processes and data.

This not only eliminates paperwork, extra trips to client offices and other hassles, it's a rich source of in-depth knowledge about each client's finances. Now you can give your clients the full benefit of all your training, providing uncanny insights and sage advice based on your years of experience and expertise.

With all this secure, controlled visibility into your client's finances online, it's now as easy to serve clients across the country as across the street.

Q Is cloud accounting, and Bill.com, secure?

A Bill.com is 100% safe and secure, with enterprise-level security just like your bank. Your staff members have varying levels of access too - each according to the role you assign. For example, one might see only bills that have been approved for payment, while others see and manage much more. Bill.com provides an extra robust fraud protection service, too.

Q Is it easy to start?

A You can be servicing clients with Bill.com in less than an hour! It's cloud-based, so there's no software to install. Simply upload your logo, and you've branded the power of YOUR Bill.com's award-winning technology as your own.

Bill.com syncs with all major accounting software and all banks - saving time and trouble when you're balancing the books. Important lists like vendors, customers, items, chart of accounts are automatically entered and revisions are kept up to date in Bill.com and your accounting software automatically. Plus, it keeps copies of all bills, cancelled checks, contracts and other documents, all electronically filed for fast, easy access from anywhere, any time.

We don't take you to the leading edge just to leave you there by yourself! With Bill.com, you, and your clients, are never more than a phone call away from our award-winning, knowledgeable service. Our team of onboarding specialists is here to smooth the path for you and your clients. They're your guides to our complete library of training materials and webinars on a variety of topics. Focused one-on-one coaching is available when you need it, too. And our advanced online certification courses elevate your expertise to even higher levels.

Bill.com makes you even more essential to your client's business.

To accounting professionals, it's the most advanced client service solution online.
To your clients, it's you. Giving what's simply the best service they've ever received, branded with your logo, delivered through your website.



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OUTSOURCED ACCOUNTING SERVICES: Improving the Profession & Strengthening Businesses

Outsourced accounting services are going to change the way entrepreneurs handle their accounting initiatives in the next two to three years because of the benefits it brings to the table.



W. Michael Hsu, CPA.CITP, is the founder and owner of DeepSky Accounting (www.DeepSky.co) in Irvine, California, and a frequent speaker at professional educational events and conferences. He has organized his firm around the concept of virtual accounting services, providing business clients with an option for replacing their full in-house accounting departments.

Client accounting services. Outsourced accounting department. Whatever name you want to call it, is going to change the way entrepreneurs handle their accounting initiatives in the next two to three years because of the benefits it brings to the table. So what are they and how is it going to affect those who are involved?

From the View of Entrepreneurs

Having an outsourced accounting department means that CEOs now have a team of dedicated accountants who've got their back. Good CEOs may not need to know how to do the actual accounting, but it is vital for them to know, understand, and integrate the numbers of their business to what they do, day in day out.

What is our profit per FTE (full time equivalent)? How did the last big deal we closed affect our bottom line? How much money do we have in the bank and is it in line with our expectations? Who's paying us on time and who isn't? These are just some questions that CEOs should have answers to so they can navigate their company to hit their targets. Guess what? It is the accounting department that is in charge of making that possible.

A truly valuable outsourced accounting department should deliver much more than "timely and accurate" financial information. That's just table stakes. Sure, having a team of accountants and well-defined systems and processes means that

the mechanics of accounting are being done right, which is a lot more than what most entrepreneurs can say about their existing arrangement. But, more importantly, the high value benefits of an outsourced accounting department lies with helping the entrepreneurs understand these numbers in the context of their business.

It is only when the numbers are understood in the context of the business can the entrepreneur even begin to attempt to change them. We call it internalizing the numbers. We call it moving the needles. After all, this is what the entrepreneur buys in accounting, not just pieces of white papers with black numbers on them and certainly not the accountant's billable hours.

From the View of Accounting Firms

So how is this beneficial for the accounting professionals of the world?

The new model of an outsourced accounting department combined with cloud technologies elevates accountants from the role of order takers (after-the-fact, borderline irrelevant-in-the-world-of-business) to a position with real potentials of becoming, or returning to, a truly valuable and integral part of clients' businesses. With better data from the beginning it allows us to amplify our expertise no matter what our core competency is.

In the world of taxation, having access to a team of accountants and a set of solid reportable numbers means less time in the trenches cleaning up and explaining what you

seek, and more time on tax strategy, planning and filing. This means adding true value to your clients and actually making a positive impact on their business and their lives. Look, the tax code is complex and hard to understand even for non-tax focused accounting professionals, and it's not going to get any easier. We need tax experts who spend their time learning and growing their tax knowledge base and



IN THE CLOUD

clients will gladly pay for their expertise. But no one is really out to buy a set of tax returns.

A&A firms have developed a core competency in audits and attestation. Auditors are not even allowed to be in the trenches cleaning things up, even if they see a client absolutely struggling at understanding just exactly what a roll forward schedule is. The worst audit engagements are those that are dragged out forever and feel like they are never going to end, with the result being that everyone at the client site is angry because the auditors are interfering with their “real work” because of the auditor’s “silly” schedule requests and questions. Meanwhile, the audit team

IT IS ONLY WHEN THE NUMBERS ARE UNDERSTOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BUSINESS CAN THE ENTREPRENEUR EVEN BEGIN TO ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THEM. WE CALL IT INTERNALIZING THE NUMBERS.

of six is getting flustered in the conference room built for four. Not to mention it always feel like it’s either Antarctica or the Sahara Desert in there. What if, just what if, the client’s accounting team actually operated a lot like an audit team and understood all of the weird auditor terms we use like roll forward and PBC and open items and tickmarks? Wouldn’t every audit engagement be like a

dream? We may even be profitable again at these engagements.

Focusing on Core Competencies

Now this is not a battle cry for every accounting practice out there to start an outsourced accounting department. It is my vision on how the new outsourced accounting model will transform the lives of the entrepreneur and accountant, and my perspective on the benefits that this paradigm shift will bring to us simply by allowing us to focus on each of our own core competence areas.

In the new knowledge economy, it is no longer about being a one-stop-shop or being all things to all people. It is about finding your core competencies, finding your passion and becoming really kick ass at it. Entrepreneurs will return to doing what they do best, building businesses, only this time they will be equipped with better financial insights to help them navigate through the rough sea of entrepreneurship. Accountants? For once we will have a real shot at being relevant in the world of business again. Then, we can move on to bigger and better things. ●



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How the Cloud is Helping Change Payroll for the Better



Michael Alter is President and CEO of SurePayroll, where he is responsible for the overall business model development, strategic planning and day-to-day operations for SurePayroll, the Online Alternative and a wholly owned subsidiary of Paychex.

Let's face it, payroll isn't sexy. It isn't a task that most small business owners get excited about. Most consider it a "time-suck" – something that sucks up an entrepreneur's time when they should be focused on growing their business. And it certainly hasn't been something that small to mid-size accounting firms looked to as a means to grow their revenue. Handling payroll manually means countless hours of administrative work and keeping a keen eye on ever-changing tax laws – on the state, federal and local level. Considered tedious and time consuming, payroll offered little in the way of return on investment.

"To be quite frank, I hated payroll. However, if my clients need help with payroll services it's my job to help them," notes Robert Clayton, CPA.

Of course Clayton and others also know that there are many advantages for accountants when it comes to providing payroll services. Handling a client's payroll can open a window of opportunity. To a small business owner, payroll is not just numbers and bank accounts. There is an emotional tie to the owners' business and employees. There is a sense of contribution to families and society. Payroll can build a relational bond that lends to a true loyalty between accountant and client. Not to mention that an accountant has a constant window into the financial health of the business which offers opportunity to cross-sell other services or see potential issues before they become a problem.

Like scores of his peers, Clayton needed to find a way to reap the advantages of providing payroll that wouldn't eat into his profits. "I realized that unless I chose the right solution

for my firm and my clients, I might risk my firm's profitability if I had to add staff to manage the process."

Technology Ushers in Convenience and Profitability

In today's digital age, rapidly advancing technology is changing the way people do business. Research shows that the majority of small business owners run payroll on their own. Many turn to software and some even do it the old fashioned way – calculators, ledger books and paper checks. It's a lot of work – even using software requires constant updates and often causes frustration when the program cannot accommodate a specific need or there is an unexpected glitch.

Clayton saw some red flags with common software applications that clients might purchase to manually run payroll. "Because QuickBooks can go into a client's accounts and make automatic changes, I had serious concerns about recommending this software for clients."

Technology is constantly changing the way small business owners operate. In the case of payroll, there are online providers that offer an easy, convenient and efficient means to handle payroll.

An online provider with technology that automates tax calculations, filings and payments can reduce errors and alleviate much of the traditional workload. Accountants and small business owners don't have to be tax experts. After set-up, the whole process can be as simple as logging in to a secure website portal, entering hours, previewing payroll and then approving it. Many online providers also offer direct deposit, which is a tremendous convenience for everyone involved. The entire process can be

done from anywhere with Internet access at any time. Some providers even offer mobile apps making the process even more convenient.

Some payroll service providers, like SurePayroll, have added an extra layer of technology allowing accountants to take advantage of the online product while growing the accountant's reputation as a trusted payroll advisor. A customized portal allows the accountant to label the product with his/her business name and logo, as well as host the product from their own website. These online products offer accounting software integration that also makes the transfer of data immediate and seamless. Thousands of accountants are taking advantage of this technology today to resell the payroll service at a profit.

Clayton is one of them. After doing his research, he discovered that becoming a payroll reseller was a flexible and profitable option.

Of course not all solutions are equal and as accountants are looking for a payroll provider there are many items that should be considered, including:

- Integration with existing software.
- Automation of processes including information backup.
- Accuracy in data processing.
- Flexibility and scalability.
- Security of client data.
- Disaster recovery.
- Service and support.
- And overall costs.

There is no better time to look at payroll as a viable option to grow your business. I've seen thousands of accountants grow their brands and become more profitable by taking advantage of the easy automated online payroll systems available today. ●



Unlock the Power of the Cloud

Intuit Tax Online lets you prepare client tax returns anytime, anywhere.

Our secure web-based tax application is perfect for professionals seeking a more flexible, mobile way to save time and spend less time in the office.

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*Depending on mobile network availability and after installation of the app.

intuit
ACCOUNTANTS

New Plans, Flipboard and Confirmations to Go

This month, we cover major changes to standard mobile plans by AT&T and Verizon, a data speed testing utility, the Flipboard visual social media app, and the Confirmation.com audit inquiry mobile tracking tool.

New Phones and New Plans

Summer has turned to fall, and many of you are thinking about the new mobile devices. As I write this column in late July, current pundit speculation has Apple releasing the next iPhone (the “iPhone 5”, “new iPhone”, or whatever they decide to call it) in mid-September. Before you fall hopelessly in love with this new device (or any other new device), you should review carefully the significant changes carriers are making to service plans. The price increases and fundamental

changes to how plan usage is measured may make you think twice before upgrading your existing cell phone and getting one of the “new” plans.

The mobile communications companies have figured out that their future is in charging for data, especially since you can use tools like Tango, Google Voice, Skype, and others to get around the metering and incremental charges for voice and text conversations. Mobile data (and what you can do with it) is one of the more revolutionary areas in technology. We have gone from having dial up internet speeds as a goal to LTE service which rivals wired high speed internet connections in under ten years, and plans have to change to reflect this new reality.

As I was contemplating paying my incumbent provider an obscenely large early termination fee this summer (to get faster data service on another network), I learned that new cell phone plans on AT&T and Verizon have changed their family shared plans. For example, the Verizon Share Everything Plans in my area charge a flat device access fee for all text messaging and voice usage (from \$10 to \$40 per device. The data charges with these plans start at \$50 for a paltry 1GB of data traffic up to \$100 per month for 10 GB of shared data network usage, and as you might expect, this results in a higher overall bill for me. The result of all of this is that users with “unlimited data” on their existing plans who want to keep this benefit will want to confirm that the “unlimited data” benefit will carry over to the new device.



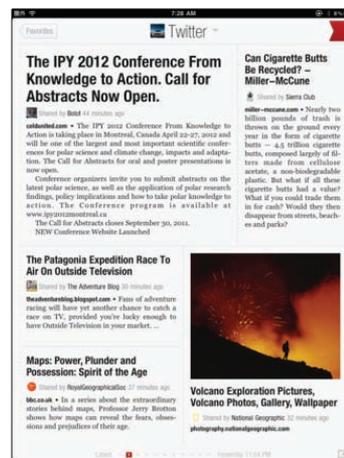
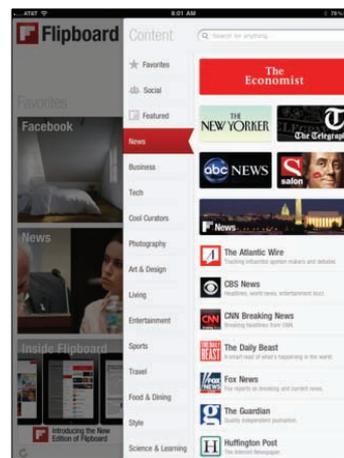
Brian Tankersley, CPA.CITP, Technology Editor

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.

Flipboard

Flipboard is an excellent tool for Android and iOS which creates a categorized visual interface for the pictures, links, and stories shared by those you “follow” or “friend” on social media sites. Flipboard links into Twitter, Facebook, and Google Reader/Google+, and allows users to “flip” through stories as one would flip through the pages of a magazines. Categories and stories are navigated by using a finger to “flip” to the next page, and individual stories can be read by clicking on the excerpt from the story which appears in the app. Stories can be forwarded, “liked”, and shared with others from within the



Flipboard allows users to read, share, and comment on articles in a visual interface

application. While the app is useful on smartphones, it is a “must have” app on the larger screens of tablet and slate devices.

Flipboard is a free app for iOS and Android devices, and more information is available at www.flipboard.com.

Mobile Data Speed Testing

If you plan to work out of the office for an extended period of time, you may need to evaluate your data speeds at the spot where you will work. Electrical lines, buildings, and geography can make certain areas in buildings which appear to have perfect wireless voice and data service “dead spots”. Before you unpack your mobile gear in a location with poor wireless data coverage, I encourage you to test your connection speed using the



My smartphone results using the Speedtest.net testing app for android

Speedtest.net mobile app. I recently used this handy utility to test wireless connections available in my office, (and the comparative results are shown above). Users can test performance with the nearest test server (automatic), or with a selected test server location to determine the best way to connect.

The SpeedTest.net internet connection testing app is free (ad-supported), and is available for devices running Android (from the Google

Play Store) and iOS (from the iTunes App Store).

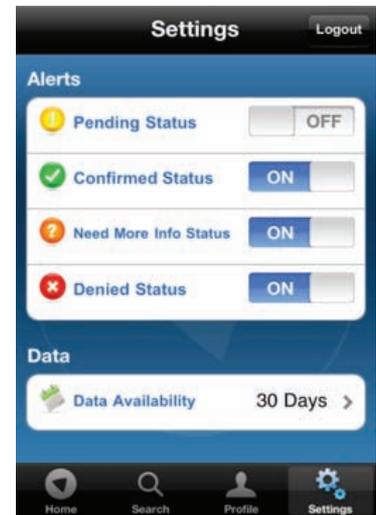
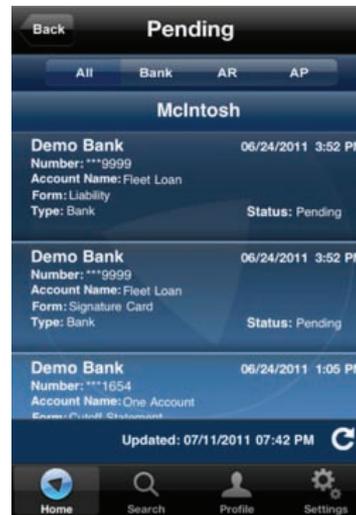
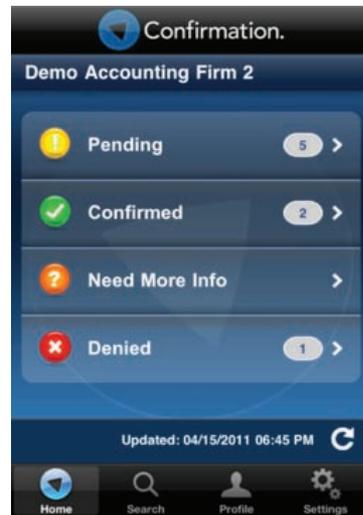
Mobile Bank Account Confirmation

Confirmation.com is a service provider to the accounting profession which, over the last ten years, has created a market for secure electronic audit confirmations. The service operates a secure website (www.confirmation.com) which allows auditors to request confirmation of a wide range of balances, including cash, accounts receivable, accounts payable and loans. These services can be accessed through direct, in-application links from within major engagement management applications from industry leaders such as CCH, Thomson Reuters and Caseware. The app allows staff and managers to see the status of their

confirmation requests from iOS devices such as the iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad. Those responsible for managing confirmation responses for banks or

companies can use the app to obtain real time status information on pending and in-process requests, including requests dated for future periods.

The Confirmation mobile app for iOS is free from the iTunes App Store.



CPA Practice Advisor 20 Most Powerful Women in Public Accounting

Help *CPA Practice Advisor* recognize the women who are having the greatest impact on the tax and accounting field. Professionals who are emerging as the next generation of firm leaders, whether through new technologies, practices, workflow or dynamic work environments.

The ideal candidates for *CPA Practice Advisor's 20 Most Powerful Women in Public Accounting* honors will share the following traits:

1. She has been the driving force to create a culture of innovation or excellence within a practice, or if a vendor, has helped to develop the technologies that will empower firms to be more productive and profitable.
2. The candidate should be at a management level within a firm or technology vendor (not necessarily partner or executive level), where her leadership has had a demonstrable effect upon the practices and success of the organization.

Who is eligible for nomination?

All nominees must be women who currently work in roles that promote the tax and accounting profession, including firm operations staff, marketing professionals and technology vendors that serve the profession.

How will the nominations be evaluated?

+ 50% of the evaluation process will recognize the nominee's contributions to the accounting profession
 + 25% of the evaluation process will consider notable contributions the nominee has made to her company. Such contributions need not have been made from an executive level position - but rather initiatives and actions that have made a difference within the organization.

+ 25% of the evaluation process will recognize the nominee's actions in personal leadership, community involvement, and mentoring of future women leaders.

Who will select the winner?

An independent panel of judges comprised of professionals with backgrounds in accounting will select Most Powerful Women in the Profession.

When can I submit my nomination?

Award nominations can be submitted now through Sept. 14, 2012 at www.cpapracticeadvisor.com/wia. The winner will be announced in the November issue of *CPA Practice Advisor*.

In partnership with the **ASWA**
 American Society of Women Accountants

CPA Practice Advisor
40RTY
UNDER
40RTY

Tomorrow's Leaders Today:

The 2012 40 Under 40 Honorees

By Taija Jenkins, Associate Editor

The leaders of tomorrow aren't born tomorrow. They are already among us, making moves today. They have the skills, passion and tools to ensure success in the future. They recognize good ideas and implement sound strategies. They are determined and persistent. They are this year's 40 Under 40, and they aren't waiting until tomorrow to lead.

This year's 40 honorees come from all over the country and they enjoy various hobbies from wine tasting to hiking. However, they all share one common quality: they're excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for the accounting profession, largely due to the impact of the cloud and social media. They know the road to creating a firm of the future starts in the present.

Armed with innovation, commitment and vision, the honorees are already making waves in the accounting profession – some have received this award before, while others have been named a *CPA Practice Advisor* Thought Leader and still more have received countless awards and honors during their career thus far. These 40 professionals are committed to increasing productivity and efficiencies for their customers and clients and providing excellent customer service, all while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. They are leveraging the latest and best technologies to consistently meet their clients' needs.

"It's extremely gratifying to realize that, over the last seven years, hundreds of our profession's young leaders have been celebrated as members of the now famous *CPA Practice Advisor* "40 Under 40," said former Executive Editor Greg LaFollette, CPA.CITP, Vice President of Product Strategy for CPA2Biz. "The announcement of the awards has become a much anticipated event in the public accounting world and those that have been named are clearly proud of their important designation."

The ongoing efforts of this year's 40 Under 40 honorees have been recognized by the vendors, consultants, thought leaders, peers and clients with which they do business daily. They are held in high regard by those directly affected by their contributions to the public accounting profession.

Congratulations to each and every one of you on receiving this prestigious honor!



Jim Boomer – 36

CPA.CITP, MBA
 CIO/Shareholder,
 Boomer Consulting, Inc.
 Manhattan, Kansas



Kacey Johnson – 32

MBA
 Executive Vice President,
 Cloud9 Real Time
 San Diego, California



Anthony J. Nitti – 37

CPA, MST
 Partner, WithumSmith+Brown
 Aspen, Colorado



Aubrey Lynch – 37

CPA
 Tax Principal, CS&L, CPAs
 Bradenton/Sarasota, Florida



Jennifer Pierce Cook – 28

CPA
 Owner/Partner "Creator of
 Awesomeness"
 Hardee Accounting, PC
 Hendersonville, Tennessee



Srinivasu Maradana – 36

MCP, SCJP
 Senior Manager A&A of Accounting,
 Audit & Workflow,
 CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business
 Wichita, Kansas



Shayna B. Chapman – 37

CPA.CITP, CGMA, Hold Series 7 and 66
 Managing Member,
 Chapman & Burris CPAs LLC
 Gallipolis, Ohio



Sean Hanthorn – 33

MBA
 Director of Education Services,
 RootWorks LLC
 Van Buren Township, Michigan



Joyce M. Washington – 39

CPA
 Founder/CEO, Common Cents Consulting
 Baltimore, Maryland



Bryan Hoeft – 37

Web Marketing Director,
 Thomson Reuters
 Dexter, Michigan



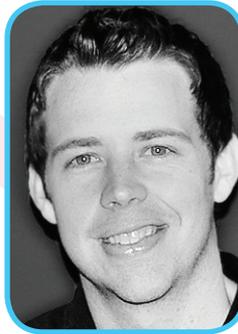
Byron K. Patrick – 35

CPA.CITP, CGMA, MCSE
 Co-founder/CEO,
 Simplified Innovations Inc.
 Baltimore, Maryland



Samir Khosla – 39

MBA
 Director, Product Management -
 Accountant Customer Segment,
 Intuit, Inc.
 Mountain View, California



Roy Keely – 31

Vice President of Market Strategy,
 Xcentric
 Alpharetta, Georgia



Cara R. Newhouse – 37

CPA
 Senior Accountant, Lohman Accounting
 Lewiston, Idaho



Robert Baumann – 34

Chief Architect - ProSystem fx SaaS,
 CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business
 Reno, Nevada



Peter Miele – 36

Vice President of Sales, SurePrep, LLC
 Irvine, California



Chris Farmand – 33

CPA, CTP, MBA
Energy Farmer,
Chris Farmand + Company
Jacksonville, Florida



W. Michael Hsu – 28

CPA, CTP, MSA
Founder & CEO, DeepSky | Entrepreneurs'
Accounting Department
Irvine, California



Christian James – 34

COO
Xcentric
Alpharetta, Georgia



Merrill J. Taylor – 33

CPA
Tax Manager, Wisan, Smith,
Racker & Prescott, LLP
Salt Lake City, Utah



Daniel T. Moore – 35

CPA
Owner, D.T. Moore & Company
Salem, Ohio



Melanie Carol Geist – 36

CPA
Partner, Porter & Geist LP
San Antonio, Texas



Dan Nicholson – 31

CPA, CGMA
Founder/CEO, Nth Degree CPAs, PLLC
Seattle, Washington



Louie J. Calvin – 36

Product Manager – Accounting CS,
Thomson Reuters – Tax & Accounting
Dexter, Michigan



Liz Alexander – 38

CPA
Owner, Elizabeth Alexander CPA
Arlington, Texas



Julio E. Garcia – 37

CPA
Managing Member,
Alonso & Garcia, PLLC
Plano, Texas



Kim Hogan – 29

ECMP, CAPTUREp
Director of West Coast Operations,
XCM Solutions, LLC/ Xpitax, LLC
Irvine, California



Dan Zitting – 30

CPA, CTP, CISA
Vice President of Product Management
and Design, ACL Services Ltd.
New York, New York



Dustin Wheeler – 33

CPA
Tax/IT Manager, Wallace Neumann &
Verville LLP
Las Vegas, Nevada



Jason Lawhorn – 37

CPA, CTP, MAcc
President & CEO –
Lawhorn CPA Group, Inc.
Knoxville, Tennessee



Thomas Fantin – 35

CPA, CTP
Manager, SS&G, Inc.
Akron, Ohio



Kasey Bayne – 30

Accounting Ambassador, FreshBooks
Toronto, Ontario



Jennifer M. Lowe – 39

JD
Director of Federal Tax Publishing,
CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business
Riverwoods, Illinois



Joe Lauzen – 36

CPA
President, Lauzen Accounting
Warrenville, Illinois



Jennifer Warawa – 36

Vice President of Partner Programs &
Channel Sales, Sage North America
Lawrenceville, Georgia



Joey Brannon – 39

CPA
Founder & President, Axiom CPA
Bradenton, Florida



Brian Fox – 39

CPA, MBA
Founder, Confirmation.com
Nashville, Tennessee



Adam Kupperman – 37

Vice President & Head of ONESOURCE
Firm Edition
Thomson Reuters
Hoboken, New Jersey



Noel Abdur-Rahim – 29

CPA
Manager, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Atlanta, Georgia



John Crosslin – 38

CPA, MBA
Principal, Crosslin & Associates, P.C.
Nashville, Tennessee

InFirm: Benefits of Hosted Solutions

The “Cloud” and hosted solutions continue to garner interest amongst accounting firms, but there is a lot of confusion about the types of hosting, available applications, and the overall reasons for firms to consider hosted solutions. Our definition of what comprises a hosted solution revolves around firms using the applications, equipment and personnel of an external service provider who’s operations are located in a data center outside the firm’s office, with firm personnel accessing the hosted applications via the Internet.

This is different from a firm building a private cloud, which many firms are doing today and staffing with their own personnel, either in their own facilities or an offsite colocation facility. Whereas, with hosted solutions, firms get the application, an entire support infrastructure and automatic updates and backups.

Just about every firm today is already using some hosted applications, such as online banking/payments and payroll processing, as well as tax and accounting research and forms. Firms are already using or looking at Microsoft’s hosted Exchange at \$4/user per month instead of building and maintaining their own Exchange server.

According to a recent Software as a Service Survey conducted by the Asso-

ciation for Accounting Administration (CPAAdmin.org) the two leading hosted applications that have contributed the most to optimizing firm productivity are Xpitax’s XCM workflow solution and Thomson Reuters’ GoFileRoom document management.

In addition, CCH is expanding their listing of hosted applications and Thomson Reuters’ Virtual Office offering hosts their entire suite of accounting productivity tools along with QuickBooks and Microsoft office, so the combination of what applications that firms want to run in a hosted environment are almost endless. Firms are even having their entire network hosted by an independent local network integrator in their own data center and national integrators like Cloud9 Real Time and Xcentric host the entire network infrastructure and all the firms’ custom applications in their facilities.

In general terms, when the cost of a hosted application is less than what the firm is paying to run it themselves, and that application is more secure and better supported, the firm should consider transitioning to the hosted application and below are ten benefits provided by hosted applications for firms to evaluate.

REDUCED COSTS: Hosted solutions have the ability to bring together enterprise resources which can be shared and reallocated as needed to a larger number of clients, which can be delivered at a cost that is less than what a firm would pay to build and maintain the same server infrastructure. All the servers, storage, connectivity and licenses are managed by the vendor so this reduces the administration required within firm to do so onsite.

MANAGED CASH FLOW: Hosted solutions usually charge a fixed monthly fee per user for access, which helps firms manage their cash flow better and simplify their budgeting process. This allows them to pay just for the services they use instead of incurring significant capital expenditures. Since the functional window of a server is four or more years, firms project the maximum capacities they could require which often leads to over-buying some components that are not fully utilized or having to add components that were not planned for at a later time.

SCALABILITY: Most hosted providers have “utility pricing” which allows the firm to easily add additional licenses and users when needed such as during busy season, as well as reduce the user count when those licenses are not needed during the summer. This can be very valuable when considering a merger as a large number of new users can be installed into the firm’s hosted applications on very short notice to insure a faster integration into the firm’s operating environment.

FASTER UPDATES: When application updates are released, they are done for all users simultaneously, compared to having internal IT departments update individual servers and workstations when they have the time available and physical access to machines, which can be a problem for consultants and auditors that are in the field sometimes creating conflicts when application versions are different and those users are trying to collaborate.

REDUCED INTERNAL STAFFING AND EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS: Since hosting providers manage the network applications, updates and maintenance, the firm’s technical personnel requirements are significantly reduced for those applications that are externally hosted. This also reduces the firm’s requirements for onsite personnel including salary, benefits and office space. Also, because applications are accessed and run through a browser, the workstations within the firms may not have to be as robust as standalone computers nor updated as frequently as applications maintained internally by the firm.

INCREASED MOBILITY: Most hosted applications can be accessed not only on the firm’s computer, but through a browser or mobile application on the user’s home PC, tablet or smart phone anywhere that they have a usable Internet connection. This helps firms promote flex time and virtual office capabilities, as well as retain the services of staff that move away, effectively creating a global platform for firm work.

ENTERPRISE TECHNICAL SUPPORT: Hosted providers develop expertise of managing an application for multiple clients and have more depth of staff than most firms can afford. This nurtures faster response times with better technical support and knowledge available for more personnel, usually with extended hours beyond what internal IT personnel can cover.

DISASTER RECOVERY: Most hosted providers have multiple data centers where the applications and the firm’s data are duplicated for real time redundancy. In the event of any failure, the entire infrastructure can be cutover to the backup system in near real time, which is cost prohibitive for most firms.

ENTERPRISE SECURITY: Most hosted applications have teams of IT personnel that are constantly monitoring network performance and system trends, including a focus on security and enterprise tools. Very few internal network personnel have expertise in optimizing security properly on an ongoing basis and fewer firms have even had an external security audit performed whereas most hosted solutions are in certified data center and have been through such audits.

LEVEL FIELD: Smaller firms and individuals can access the same applications and resources as the larger firms which were traditionally cost prohibitive for a smaller number of users to buy the license and manage the application.

By comparing the firm’s capabilities in each of these areas against those offered by the hosted solution providers, firms can make a better informed decision as to whether the benefits outweigh the concerns of not having control of those applications. ●



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.

REVIEW SECTIONS

BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

- General navigation/ease-of-use
- Designed for accounting professionals
- Scalability
- Hosted version/SaaS app

TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES

- Timesheets, timers, multi-staff views
- Multi-staff entry
- Time tracking by project/job
- Approvals/sign-off process
- Support for various hourly rates

INVOICING FUNCTIONS

- Expense tracking options
- WIPs, budget-from-estimate
- Accounting interface cash or accrual
- AR management
- Customization

MANAGEMENT FEATURES

- Dashboard overviews (aka snapshots)
- Managerial reporting analysis
- Security features/user roles

INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT

- Data output options
- Integration w/payroll & professional accounting systems
- Report writer or customization tool
- Integration w/other apps (tax software, e-marketing, portals)

HELP/SUPPORT

- Built-in support features
- System updates
- Support website/documentation
- Live support

Time Management is Essential to Productivity, Whether Billing by the Hour or Not

The past decade has seen monumental changes in the way accounting practices run. What initially started as the ideal of the paperless office, evolved into a workflow revolution that has seen increasing use of electronic communication with clients, online collaboration, automated workpapers and, more recently, a change in how firms bill their clients.

With a few exceptions, until a decade or so ago, most in the accounting profession traditionally charged by the hour for their services, based in part on the skill level and role of the staff member performing a task, the perceived value of the final product to the client, and the prevailing rates in a particular city or region. Clients weren't always billed *directly* by the hour, however, but the rates for even most flat-fee services were primarily based on the anticipated or budgeted time to be spent, in addition to the other factors mentioned above.

Increasingly, however, many firms are charging flat rates for more than just a few specific tasks or services, with the "value pricing" paradigm moving many practices to charging a set fee for a combination of services they provide on a client-by-client basis.

Whether a firm is using value pricing or the more traditional hourly-focused method, a time and billing system or practice management program that includes time tracking and invoicing functions

should still be a central component of the firm. First of all, they still obviously need to bill their clients. As for the second point, even if not billing by the hour, tracking time can give firm management information on firm, staff and group productivity, as well as on the appropriateness of the rates that are being charged.

There are a number of technologies on the market that are dedicated to these two premises: Tracking time (for either billing or productivity assessment), and then actually billing your clients. We divide them into two categories: Practice Management and Time & Billing systems, with the first group providing more of an overall engagement management, marketing, communications and client collaboration tools, and usually also providing time and invoicing solutions.

The second category, Time & Billing systems, are programs geared squarely on these two functions, and is the focus of this review section. The 2012 review of Practice Management programs is available at www.cpapracticadvisor.com/10724816.

Producing client invoices and managing and analyzing the time spent by firm staff requires several key functions, primarily time and expense data entry, the ability to manage multiple engagements or projects per client, accounts receivables management functions, reporting and the ability to invoice via multiple methods such as progress, by budget, periodically or by other factors. For client and firm data security, firms generally also expect time and billing systems to include multi-level user access rights

that restrict clients or specific features to authorized users.

Some of the programs reviewed here also offer additional features, such as managerial dashboard views of key business indicators, advanced sign-off and review processes, and even human resources functions for tracking paid time off accruals and offering integration with payroll programs.

For practices moving more of their functions to cloud-based systems, several totally web-based time and billing systems are available. These can decrease IT requirements, as well as give users anytime access to program features. Many of the programs in this review have also added mobile apps.

As with any program as core to a firm's productivity and management, the selection of a time and billing system should reflect how the firm currently manages its services, clients and staff. To achieve the best results from any such program, such as tighter control of billing and firm productivity analysis, all staff at a practice, from partners down, need to use the program reliably and consistently. ●



Isaac M. O'Bannon,
 Editor

AccountantsWorld Practice Relief

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Small practices seeking a fully web-based suite that includes time and billing functions, along with optional add-ons for write-up, client book-keeping, payroll, document management and their firm's website.

STRENGTHS

- Full integration with other programs in the AccountantsWorld suite
- Intuitive web interface and anywhere access with mobile app
- Client communications tools, calendaring and client portals

888-999-1366

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Invoice customization options are limited (greatly minimized in combination with Accounting Relief)
- No attaching of scanned receipts to expense entries (greatly minimized in combination with Accounting Relief)
- Minimal project management capabilities

SUMMARY & PRICING

Practice Relief seems designed for smaller practices from one to about

10 users, but can handle more. Its time and expense tracking features are easy to use, and the web-based nature of the system makes it suited to frequently mobile professionals. Its feature set is more comprehensive when combined with other programs in the Power Practice suite.

Firms can use the system for \$40 per month on a month to month basis, or for a discounted annual rate of \$395. Either method supports any number of firm users and clients.

★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES
★★★★★	INVOICING FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	MANAGEMENT FEATURES
★★★★☆	INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10755583

www.accountantsworld.com

Sage Timeslips 2012

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Small and mid-sized professional services firms (accountants and other professions) seeking a time management and invoicing solution that integrates with accounting, practice management solutions and Microsoft Office products.

STRENGTHS

- Integration with several professional programs
- Easy to use Sage Timeslips eCenter for remote entry of time and

800-285-0999

expense data

- Customizable dashboard views of key firm information

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Limited built-in tracking of accruals and other HR matters
- Project management tools may require training

SUMMARY & PRICING

Sage Timeslips provides comprehensive time management and invoicing functions for firms billing

by the hour or on a flat fee basis, giving them in depth reporting and analysis that helps manage productivity. The system's AR and collections utilities, along with the optional remote access Sage Timeslips eCenter, provide excellent functionality for firms with demanding time management needs. The single-user version is \$499, with upgrades costing \$399. Additional users can be added for about \$250 each. The eCenter costs \$19.95 per user per month.

★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES
★★★★★	INVOICING FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	MANAGEMENT FEATURES
★★★★★	INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10754094

www.sagetimeslips.com

Timesheet.com

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Medium and large firms and businesses seeking a cloud-based time and expense tracking, management and invoicing solution.

STRENGTHS

- Web-based solution allows remote access and lessens IT burdens
- Highly customizable user interface and reporting options
- Strong project management tools
- Intuitive, informative management dashboards
- Includes PTO accrual management

877-483-6769

functions

- Integrates with several accounting & payroll solutions

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Feature set is designed for practices with more than 10 users, even supporting over 1,000.
- User training recommended for optimal productivity

SUMMARY & PRICING

Designed for mid-sized and larger organizations, Timesheet.com is a powerful project management-

focused time and expense management application, offering extensive cost and budgeting control functions, along with built-in personal time management calendaring and PTO accruals management. Pricing for the Express Edition, which is geared toward firms or businesses with 10 to 30 users, starts at \$10 per user per month, and varies depending upon specific modules and integrations. Versions of the system are also available for organizations extending to over 1,000 users.

★★★★★	BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES
★★★★★	INVOICING FUNCTIONS
★★★★★	MANAGEMENT FEATURES
★★★★★	INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT
★★★★★	HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10755589

www.Timesheet.com

BillQuick

Time Tracking | Engagement Management | Billing | Accounts Payable

- 
Over 400 Customizable Reports:
 WIP, Aging, Write Up/Down,
 Staff Utilization, etc.
- 
Unlimited Bill Rates per employee
- 
Handles most Billing Arrangements:
 Hourly, Fixed, Recurring and more!
- 
Access Anytime, Anywhere:
 Track time and expense remotely



Hendricks CPAs Inc.
 2601 Airport Drive, Suite 380
 Los Angeles, CA 90505
 Tel: (555) 555-1212 Fax: (555) 555-2121
 admin@hendrickscpa.com
 www.hendrickscpa.com

Invoice

Invoice Date: Apr 30, 2011
 Invoice Num: 1352
 Billing Through: Apr 27, 2011

Denise Savage
 Lloyd Savage Construction
 P.O. Box 2345
 Los Angeles, CA 90021

Federal & California Corporate Income Tax (Lloyd Savage:2011-txp) - Managed by (WB)

Professional Services:

Date	Timekeeper	Description	Hours	Rate	Amount
4/11/2011	ROBERT	Federal Tax Returns Preparation of Federal income tax return containing various schedules and supporting statements; preparation of estimated tax payments for the new fiscal year, where required.	6.75	\$130.00	\$877.50
4/22/2011	ROBERT	State Tax return Preparation of California State income tax return containing various schedules and supporting statements; preparation of estimated tax payments for the new fiscal year, where required.	4.50	\$135.00	\$607.50

Total Service Amount: **\$1,485.00**

Amount Due This Invoice: **\$1,485.00**
This invoice is due upon receipt

Account Summary

D	Last Inv Num	Last Inv Date	Last Inv Amt	Last Pay Amt	Prev Unpaid Amt
	1351	3/8/2011	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00

Total Amount Due Including This Invoice: **\$1,985.00**



BillQuick 2011 - Version: 12.0.36.0

File Edit View Engagement Time-Expense Billing Reports Settings Utilities Integration Accounting Add-Ons Window Help

Company Navigator Engagement Simple Time Card Expense Log Billing Review Invoice Review Accounting

Company

Timekeeper Client Services Expense
 Engagement Consultant Invoices Payments

Utilities

Security Backup
 Restore Tutorial

Charts

Load on Startup Billable Hours for Year 2011

Recent Reports

- Employee Time Card Summary(weekly)
- Work In Progress(detail)
- Aging Report(Summary)(dd)
- Aging Report
- Aging Summary with Credits
- Click Here For More Reports ...

Workflow

Submitted Time, Expense & Invoices
 View by Engagement

- Submitted Time
 - Mark Kerns
 - Curtis James
- Submitted Expenses
 - Mark Kerns
 - Curtis James

Spotlight

- BillQuick Blog
- Online Knowledge Base
- BillQuick Consulting
- Default

Hendricks CPAs Inc. -- C:\Program Files (x86)\BillQuick2011\Sample_Datafile2011_Accounting.mdb Security Off

Integrates with



Microsoft Outlook



Peachtree

Call us today for a **FREE** Trial Copy

 www.BQE.com/CPA | (855) 687-1024

TIME & BILLING

BillQuick 2012

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Small and mid-sized accounting firms or other professional services businesses with a need for time, billing, and project management.

STRENGTHS

- Industry-specific versions, including for accounting firms
- Optional online version of program
- Optional HR and various add-ons
- Mobile apps
- Integration with virtually all small business accounting systems

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- No built-in calendaring feature, but integration with Outlook enables creation of timeslips from appointments.
- The user friendly system may require some training to fully benefit from all of the program's many features.

SUMMARY & PRICING

BillQuick offers a comprehensive time and billing system, with excellent support for project man-

agement, detailed control over time and expense tracking, good AR and AP functionality and extensively customizable invoicing functions. Although a powerful tool, the system maintains a user friendly interface and navigation features. Pricing for the 2-user Basic version of BillQuick is \$495, with the ability to add users at a cost of \$145 each. The Pro version, with up to five users, starts at \$1,295.

- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES
- ★★★★★ INVOICING FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10754086

www.bqe.com

ImagineTime Practice Management

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Small and mid-sized professional practices looking for integration of time and billing with their tax compliance system.

STRENGTHS

- Integration with many professional tax systems and QuickBooks
- Interface and navigation similar to Microsoft Office programs

- Calendar and appointment syncing with Outlook
- Multi-staff calendar views

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- No vacation accruals management or payroll integration

SUMMARY & PRICING

ImagineTime offers strong scheduling and project management features, with impressive reporting and

customization options. A single-user version of the program starts at \$295 per year. A five-user version, which can be installed on any number of actual computers on a network, starts at \$795. The new hosted version of ImagineTime costs \$40 per user per month. The optional e-payment and tax data import functions are offered at an additional cost.

- ★★★★★ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES
- ★★★★★ INVOICING FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★☆ INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10753702

www.imaginetime.com

Chrometa

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

BEST FIT

Professionals and firms seeking automated time keeping, whether for time-based billing or productivity management.

STRENGTHS

- Automatically tracks tasks a user performs on a computer and assigns to projects
- Multiple integration options for online accounting systems and other programs
- Completely web-based allows anywhere access and no IT requirements

- New apps for tracking calls and work on mobile devices
- Email time tracking for Outlook and Gmail

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Base level client management functions
- Limited invoicing options, but integrates with third party billing systems

SUMMARY & PRICING

For accurate and almost hands-free time tracking, Chrometa is exceptional, monitoring virtually everything performed on the user's

computer (when Chrometa is turned on), and providing incredible detail. Also handy is the ability to set rules that allow the system to automatically assign certain tasks to specific clients or projects. The system's invoicing and management functions are pretty basic, but for firms or individual professionals wanting an accurate assessment of their work activities, Chrometa is unsurpassed. The system is offered in tiers priced at \$19, \$29 and \$49 per user per month, with increasing functionality, exporting, number of devices and data storage at the higher levels.

- ★★★★☆ BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES
- ★★★ INVOICING FUNCTIONS
- ★★★★★ MANAGEMENT FEATURES
- ★★★★★ INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT
- ★★★★★ HELP/SUPPORT

Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10754080

www.Chrometa.com

888-340-6425

Abak Software - Abak 7.5

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★☆

BEST FIT

Professional services firms of any size, including the accounting, legal, engineering and consulting professions, who either use time-based billing or track time for productivity management.

- Automated alerts
- Mobile app

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Lacks full accounts receivable module
- Navigation in built-in help resources could be more intuitive.

STRENGTHS

- Three-level approval system for time & expenses
- Web-based interface time and expense entry
- Broad integration capabilities

SUMMARY & PRICING

Abak's strongest features are in its time and expense data entry and reporting, as well as project management capabilities. Although the

system lacks a true accounts receivable module, it offers ample customization of invoices and can integrate with most common small business accounting programs. The option to use Abak as a hosted solution makes it a good option for firms wanting to avoid the management of IT resources. Pricing for a five-user system starts at about \$840 per year. Additional fees may be required based on integration needs and advanced training.

888-849-8059



Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10754091

www.abaksoftware.com

TPS Time & Billing

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★☆

BEST FIT

Small and mid-size professional accounting practices with fixed rate or hourly billing, and seeking the customization functions offered by integration with Microsoft Office.

- Graphical views of daily time per activity per user
- Built in AR and full billing functions

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- No SaaS version or mobile apps available, but can be hosted by ASP
- Limited online resources

STRENGTHS

- Intuitive navigation and processes designed by accountants
- Extensive integration with Microsoft Office and QuickBooks

SUMMARY & PRICING

With integrated AR, full billing

functionality and integration with QuickBooks and Microsoft products, TPS Time and Billing provides a streamlined approach to managing client engagements and invoicing, particularly for smaller firms looking for an all-in-one system. The initial cost of the program is \$399 for a single user, plus \$149 for each additional user. Annual renewals are discounted.

888-877-2231



Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10754096

www.tpssoftware.com

Broadway Billing Systems — Bill4Time

2012 OVERALL RATING ★★★★★☆

BEST FIT

Professional accounting practices seeking a cloud-based solution for time and expense tracking and billing.

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Import of client data requires technical support
- No accruals management, but PTO and misc time can be tracked

STRENGTHS

- Integration with QuickBooks
- Group calendaring with Outlook and Google synch
- and project management
- Mobile apps for Apple, Android & Blackberry devices
- Online payment acceptance
- Rates can be set client, project, activities or time entries

SUMMARY & PRICING

Bill4Time offers an intuitive and easy to learn interface, with the web-based time and billing system providing comprehensive tools for managing time and expense data, projects and clients. Its integration with QuickBooks will be helpful to many firms, as well as the ability to accept payments through PayPal.

The company offers a basic version for free, with support for only one user, three clients and five projects. The Lite version, at \$19.99 per month for the first user and \$9.95 for additional users, supports up to 20 clients and 30 projects. The Pro version can support any number of clients and projects, with a price of \$39.99 per month for the first user and \$19.99 for additional users (currently discounted to \$9.99 per month for additional users).

877-245-5484



Read the full review of this product exclusively online at www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10755584

www.Bill4Time.com

A CPA & Social Media Master:

How Dustin Wheeler Shares his Passion for Accounting & Business Technology

Most successful accountants have to be somewhat tech savvy. Dealing with a multitude of tax and accounting programs in their firm, as well as with the various bookkeeping and business management systems their clients use, is a core component of the job.

So, too, is keeping up with new technologies as they appear on the market, since these tools may be able to help either the firm or its clients, or both, to be more successful. In the still tough economic times, finding better, faster or more efficient ways of doing things before others do can give a strong competitive edge.

consulting, IRS representation and helping clients with accounting technology issues, from needs analysis and implementation, through establishing internal controls, training and support.

Since joining the practice in 2005, Dustin has helped guide its transition into a more technology-focused practice, including helping implement a fully paperless workflow across the firm. Since then, they've also introduced client portals, a blog and have established a significant social media presence, with the focus squarely on enhancing the productivity of the firm, improving its services, and strengthening client relationships.

similar practices. It also offers suggestions for how firms can improve.

"Working at a firm where the partners respect the staff and are open to new technologies and processes is the reason we've been successful in transforming the practice," he said. "Also, the culture and atmosphere are casual and relaxed. We genuinely like our coworkers as friends, and everything overall is very transparent."

Dustin knows that he's fortunate at his age to already have a significant role with the practice, and says that the firm's respect and encouragement of its staff are among several reasons he enjoys working at Wallace Neumann & Verville. The firm of 16 frequently hosts employee bonding and morale functions, including group lunches on Fridays, dinner parties following tax deadlines, summer family parties and picnics, Christmas parties and various outings for skiing, golfing, paintball, go-cart racing and even zip-lining.

Frequent readers of this magazine will likely recognize him either as a multi-year 40 Under 40 Honoree, or as one of the professionals who performs accounting software reviews for us. In addition to managing the IT resources at the firm, helping clients with their technology needs and spending some of his free time pursuing technology for us, Dustin also is an ardent blogger on his firm's website (www.wnvcpa.com/blog) and his own (www.dustinwheelercpa.com).

In addition to being a regular attendee at the AICPA Practitioners Symposium and Tech+ Conference, he is active in the local technology and business community and attends several entrepreneurial events. Last year, Dustin attended the Las Vegas Startup Weekend, which the firm sponsored. The event invites entrepreneurs to pitch start-up ideas and receive feedback from peers.

After selecting the top ideas, groups work to create a business model and develop the coding and design for the technology, then test market validation. As a finale, the groups offer presentations to local entrepreneurial leaders and venture capitalists for critical feedback and potential investing. One recent success story from the event is an app that went on to receive a half million dollars in funding. Other entrepreneurial events he participates in include WordCamp and Vegas Jelly.

IDAHO ROOTS

Originally from Caldwell, Idaho, Dustin had discovered his interest in accounting while in high school, where he would go on to compete in accounting competitions with the Business Professionals of



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FAVORITE VACATION LOCATIONS: Peru (Lima, Cuzco and Machu Picchu).
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plus.google.com/u/0/107944863541638894104/posts

PRODUCTIVITY SCORE™
418

While some professionals bemoan the rapid changes in technology and the challenges in keeping up with them, some seem to be energized by it. The perfect example of this is Dustin Wheeler, a CPA at the Las Vegas firm of Wallace Neumann & Verville LLP (www.wnvcpa.com), where he serves in the roles of tax manager and IT manager.

The practice has more than 500 business clients across a broad array of industries, specializing in tax compliance and planning, audit and review, business

In addition to conducting staff technology training and helping to implement efficient workflows, one of Dustin's latest initiatives has been getting many of his small business clients to use cloud-based accounting systems. He says this gives him greater access to client data, which helps him provide a better service to the clients. He's also able to more quickly help them when they need assistance or troubleshooting.

While most of their clients are in the southern Nevada region, through the use of web-based technologies and screen-sharing sessions, which he also helped set up, the firm is able to service some clients from across the United States and other countries. Some clients have even been found through social media, without ever having met them in person.

With this young, but very savvy and ROI-driven CPA helping to guide its technology decisions, Wallace Neumann & Verville scored a 418 on the Productivity Survey (www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/productivity), a free online tool that helps firms gauge how their workflow practices and technologies compare to



Eli Tanimoto, Dustin Wheeler, CPA and Mike Verville, CPA.

WHERE DOES YOUR FIRM STAND?



The staff of Wallace Neumann & Verville, LLP, CPAs. Las Vegas, NV.

America club and ranking fourth in Idaho and in the top 20 in the nation.

“Dissecting frogs grossed me out from becoming a doctor, but accounting seemed to come easy to me,” he said. It also helped that his grandfather was an accountant, and he worked in his parents’ music store doing clerical and bookkeeping duties.

Dustin moved to Las Vegas in 2003, after earning a degree in accounting from Brigham Young University – Idaho. The business market in Las Vegas was booming at the time, and his sister, who already lived in the area with her family, helped persuade him to move south. He initially worked for a large local firm, then joined Wallace Neumann & Verville. He recently finished his Masters of Accounting from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas and received his CPA credential in 2011.

Although it might seem Dustin has his hands full with technology, much of it is cloud-based, which allows him to spend quality time with his family. With his wife Monica, formerly a structural engineer, the Wheeler’s have two children, five year-old Bryan and 16 month-old Luke. Bryan is just getting active in soccer and baseball, while Luke is busy being a handful around the house.

The family is active in their church and, when the Las Vegas sun heats up and time allows, they like to escape to nearby Mt. Charleston. The nearly 12,000 foot peak, with lodges and camping areas around it, overlooks the city and offers a nearly 30-degree difference from the summer heat. They also take occasional weekend trips to landmarks like the Grand Canyon and Bryce Canyon National Park. Having lived south of the border for awhile following high school, he also hopes to take the family to the Chichen Itza ruins in Mexico. ●

Take the productivity survey today at
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What We’ve Learned

(an interesting stat)

PRODUCTIVITY SCORE AVERAGES

- ▶ Regarding wireless in the office: Over one-third of firms indicate that they provide wireless access in their offices. Unfortunately, 10% don’t seem to encrypt and/or hide the SSID.



THOMSON REUTERS

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

The 7 “Must Do’s” to Build a Solid **MARKETING** Program

Nobody likes another list of “to do’s.” With all that’s going on in the profession, we all have enough, well, to do. If it makes a difference, the list presented in this month’s Marketing In Practice is a must do and was developed as a step-by-step guide to create a successful marketing program. Hopefully, that does make a difference, because this column is packed with great tips to help you plan your marketing for positive results.

For this issue, I teamed up with Jennifer Katrulya, CPA.CITP, CGMA and owner of BMRG, an accounting advisory and mentoring firm. Combined, we have worked with hundreds of firms and have years of expertise coaching accounting professionals on marketing strategy. With so much exposure to the profession, we’ve identified a very clear and very common denominator—an aversion to marketing,



Kristy Short, Ed.D

Kristy Short, Ed.D., is partner and chief marketing officer at RootWorks (RootWorks.com) and president of rwc360 (rwc360.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. Reach her at kristy.short@cpapracticeadvisor.com.

which is often based on fear of the unknown. And that’s understandable.

Marketing doesn’t tend to fall within a firm’s core competencies, and it’s still a fairly new concept to a predominately referral-based profession. The fact is that no firm should expect to create a comprehensive annual marketing program in one sitting. Marketing is a “slow grower.” It takes time, attention, and lots of tweaking over several months before you get to a place where you feel your marketing groove. Marketing should be taken in small, guided steps.

The following 7 Must Do’s were designed to offer a roadmap for firms just starting out with marketing efforts. Hit each item on the list and you will be well on your way to establishing a solid marketing program for your firm. With that said, throw on your most comfortable shoes because we are hittin’ the ground runnin’.

1 Determine Your Vision—Can you clearly articulate your firm’s vision? If you can’t, than you are not ready to begin marketing. Marketing is all about telling your story and relaying a defined message to your target audience. What story is there to tell if you haven’t defined who you are and what you offer? These are two key elements of your firm’s vision. “There are many factors that firms have

to consider: what services they offer, do they operate in the Cloud, and are they targeting certain niches,” explained Katrulya. “Once you have a clear vision for your firm, then

you can begin to craft your marketing initiatives. If you don’t know who you are, you can’t articulate it properly, and that means you can’t expect prospects to understand what you are all about either.”

2 Plan Your Strategy—Before you invest in marketing, do some thoughtful planning to ensure a reasonable return. The quickest way to get frustrated is to spend a lot of time and money on an elaborate campaign that offers very little ROI. Ask yourself, “What are the specific results I want to achieve from my marketing efforts?” Katrulya explained further. “For example, if you’re trying to land clients for a one-time training engagement, you’ll want to plan an economically sound marketing initiative. Save the bigger events, like an open house or advanced print campaigns, for leads that promise ongoing, higher-rate revenue.”

3 Name a Marketing Champion—Don’t expect your marketing program to be successful if you don’t assign a gatekeeper. Your marketing champion is your central point of contact for all marketing activity and the person accountable for ensuring your program prospers. If you are a sole proprietor, then this role most likely falls to you. “It’s highly recommended that firm leaders assign this role to someone with the capacity to handle marketing throughout the year—that *excludes* professional preparers. We all know how busy preparers are, especially during busy season. Whether it’s an intern, an



Jennifer Katrulya
CPA.CITP, CGMA

outsourced marketing professional, or an administrative employee, your champion should have the bandwidth to follow-through with marketing efforts all year,” explained Katrulya.

4 Build Out Your Marketing Materials—When you are ready to market your services, you will need professional marketing collateral to support your efforts. Be prepared; build your arsenal early. Katrulya recommends developing a comprehensive marketing kit. “Firms need to go beyond a basic kit that usually contains a business card, letter, and maybe a brochure. A ready-to-go expanded kit is far more effective. A professional kit should include client case studies, client letters of reference, and niche-specific materials along with the basic items.” Firms can outsource this task to ensure marketing materials that are professional, consistent with their brand, and written in the voice of the firm with the proper messaging. There are creative firms out there with both marketing and accounting niche expertise. And don’t forget that your website and social media sites are also part of your arsenal.

There’s more to read.
For Kristy and Jennifer’s final tips, go to:
www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/10754886

Are you a Cobbler?

This issue is all about cloud technologies and how they can help you grow your practice while making your customers more satisfied and successful. There is no denying that this is the platform for technology going forward and yet

I am often surprised to learn that many firms have yet to adopt

cloud technologies in the simplest of ways. More surprising though is that I have noticed many firms adopt some cloud technologies for some of their clients and yet have done nothing in the cloud to manage their own back office. Hence, the reference to the cobbler and the old saying that the cobbler's children don't have shoes.

I presume that the reason the cobbler's children don't have shoes is that he is too busy making shoes for "paying customers". It is not that he wants his children to be deprived and run barefoot. Imagine though that if the cobbler made the time to make shoes for his children and then paid attention to how the shoes wore over time on a daily basis. Undoubtedly he would get

suggestions from his kids. He would learn something about making shoes that he could extend to all his customers, thereby getting happier customers and making more money.

This type of intimate product knowledge is at the core of everything I do. It is how I learn to make better things for our customers. It is where I get my best ideas. My belief is that you should do the same as you and your firm transition to this new technology



ence from a personal perspective. At both PayCycle and Bill.com, I put our 401k, accounting, payroll, bill management, filing cabinet and email in the cloud. You can do the same.

By the way, putting your accounting package in the cloud through a hosted solution is not the same as using a cloud-based solution for your accounting. While you get remote

tackle one area at a time. Our most successful customers do this by developing a schedule for adopting certain technologies over time. This way they make measurable progress and don't get overwhelmed or left behind. If your firm is big enough, assign someone to the task of getting the cloud integrated into your firm. For that matter assign someone under 40. They are already more connected to the cloud and will see lots of opportunities to move forward. You can even highlight their efforts internally and externally. Who knows maybe they should be on *CPA Practice Advisor's* 40 under 40 list next year. See a list of this year's recipients on pages 30 & 31.

Being able to talk passionately and from experience about the cloud will make all the difference to your customers. They will feel your energy and your guidance will exude more confidence. You wouldn't go on an African safari without a guide who knew the way so don't let your customers go into the cloud without your first hand knowledge.

So don't be like the cobbler. Experiment with the Cloud in your own back office and learn first hand the benefits that your customers can enjoy too. ●

BY TESTING OUT APPLICATIONS THAT ARE CORE TO RUNNING YOUR BUSINESS, YOU WILL BE EXPOSED TO ALL SORTS OF FEATURES AND BENEFITS THAT COULD ALSO BENEFIT YOUR CUSTOMERS.

called the cloud. Adopt services that you need to run your firm first before having your clients use some new tool. In the process of adopting, you will experience what your customers will experience and will be better able to serve them through the transition.

By testing out applications that are core to running your business, you will be exposed to all sorts of features and benefits that could also benefit your customers. This will allow you to leverage your knowledge and experi-

access from anywhere, there are a number of features that are missing. The experience is completely different. Today there are a number of cloud based accounting applications from Xero, to Quickbooks Online Edition to Intacct or Netsuite. So unless there is a specific feature missing, I strongly encourage a cloud solution to automate the entire general ledger.

Moving your back office processes to the cloud is a big project so unless you are starting your firm from scratch,



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.

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HAVE YOU NOMINATED THE MOST POWERFUL WOMAN YOU KNOW?

Award nominations can be submitted now through Sept. 14, 2012 at
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The winner will be announced in the November issue of *CPA Practice Advisor*.

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Develop Talent: Invest in Your Firm's Future!

Talent development should always be a top priority! When we talk to firms across the country, most would agree. Unfortunately, the actions of many firms the last few years have not supported this sentiment. Several have cut back on their Training & Learning budgets and the challenging economy forced some difficult decisions that placed talent development at the front of the line to the chopping block and eliminated the Training & Learning professional position altogether.

This is a short-sighted approach that has already begun to dig a hole that will be difficult for firms to climb out of. There has been significant investment in building a Training & Learning culture in firms across the country over the last several years.

Sadly, it took very little time to wipe out much of this investment in favor of short-term savings. Our people are our #1 asset and talent development needs to be our top priority so I think it's time

for a refresher on why a Training & Learning culture is so critical to your firm's success.

Building a Training & Learning Culture

When we talk about talent development, firms' first instinct is to start to gravitate toward technical skills and compliance with CPE requirements. There is so much more involved in building a Training & Learning culture though. You can add the "soft skills" like leadership, management and communication to the mix and you're getting closer, but you need to go deeper to set your firm and people up for long-term success.

A true Training & Learning culture is one where everyone teaches, everyone learns and everyone enhances their unique abilities. This requires full buy-in from firm leadership and they must make a commitment to developing the culture by sharing their ideas and values about Training & Learning.

And, their actions (including investing the necessary dollars) must support those ideas and values. The benefits are many and here are just a few of the top paybacks to the firm.

The idea that everybody teaches is an important one. When people are required to teach, they will inherently want to know the topic inside and out. Encouraging people to teach forces them to let down their guard and make themselves vulnerable to their peers discovering what they don't know. Once the guard is let down, the barrier to that collaborative learning is removed and the teacher can focus not only on delivering the knowledge they possess but also learning from the experiences and knowledge of others. This is when true collaboration begins.

Training & Learning Professional

The Training & Learning professional has become a critical role in many firms, and as previously mentioned, many firms have made cutbacks on this position in recent years. This person typically provides the missing interface between the IT technical personnel and the end-users. In most cases, technical personnel don't make the best trainers. When this role was eliminated, it set firms back 5-10 years in the process of building a Training & Learning culture.

This was highlighted during our last round of Boomer Technology Circle meetings when the discussions moved to "who is responsible for training?" The communication bridge that had been built in so many firms is now gone

and it's creating confusion about roles and responsibilities. The good news is that several firms we've talked to have admitted they made a mistake and are committed to righting the ship.

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is

Most firms tell us that talent (or people) is their number one asset. However, cutting Training & Learning opportunities is not an action that supports those words. While your team might not have voiced concerns over the last couple years, they were making note.

The resource supply is cyclical and we've been in a period where employers had the power. It's not likely that things will remain that way and we're entering another battle for talent. Investing in talent development in good times and bad (especially bad) sends the message that professional development is a priority and it is non-negotiable.

When your firm builds a Training & Learning Culture and continually invests in the development of talent, they no longer have to worry about retention and attraction. The best and brightest are naturally drawn to the firm. And, your star performers won't be tempted to stray when you are continually investing in their futures.

Culture starts at the top of the firm. Without the commitment of the CEO and firm partners it is difficult, if not impossible, to build a Training and Learning culture. Partners must "talk the talk and walk the walk" to ensure the future success of the firm. ●



Jim Boomer, CPA.CITP

Jim Boomer is a shareholder and the CIO for Boomer Consulting, Inc. He is the director of the Boomer Technology Circles™ and an expert on managing technology within an accounting firm. He also serves as a strategic planning and technology consultant and firm adviser in the areas of performance and risk management. In addition, Jim is leading a new program, The Producer Circle, in collaboration with CPA2BIZ and the AICPA.

Develop leaders at every level of the firm	You have capable people at every level of the firm ready to step in and lead a team.
Attract and retain the best and brightest	Intelligent people are always on a quest for knowledge. A culture dedicated to this quest is a magnet to these individuals.
Increase productivity	Skilled workers are always more efficient and efficiency has a direct impact on your firm's financial performance.
Succession planning through a leader/teacher pipeline	When adding or replacing partners, you don't have to go outside to look for candidates. You have a pool of qualified successors in your own backyard.

“Excellent. I’ll give your accountant a call.”



2012-0197-7

A Moment of Truth: When people really believe in you, they’ll stake their reputation on it. So what happens when clients refer someone to your firm?

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