

# CPA Practice Advisor

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Today's Technology for Tomorrow's Firm

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Creating a Structure for Innovation

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# Who's In Your Ecosystem?

IN YOUR LIFE, you probably use a great number of experts for your personal affairs, the people with whom you make appointments. You have a doctor, certainly, and a dentist. Maybe you have some other medical professionals as well depending on your or your family's health situation. You probably have a family lawyer, a hairdresser/barber, a veterinarian, a banker, an investment advisor, an ophthalmologist, a personal trainer, and an insurance agent. You might use a travel agent from time to time, and the occasional lab technician as well. And then there are the plumbers, electricians, landscapers, tree trimmers, builders, roofers, and other contractors in our lives. The one thing all of these people have in common is you.



You, or you and your life partner, are at the center of your personal or family ecosystem. You make the appointments, keep the wheel of life turning, all with one central goal – to provide you and your family with the best life that is available to you, however you define that life.

When we as CPAs meet with our clients, in particular our individual tax clients, we should keep in mind the fact that they too already have a collection of professionals with whom they make appointments, people who are helping to keep those clients' lives in order. And while your client is ultimately at the center of that ecosystem, to the extent that there are financial ramifications to consider, you also should hold a central role.

You prepare the annual tax return

and work with the client to make sure withholdings and estimated payments are appropriate, but what is your relationship with the client the rest of the year? Are you content to meet once a year and report on what happened last year, or do you want a more proactive role in your clients' financial lives?

I believe it's appropriate for the tax accountant to be at the center of the client's financial ecosystem, to oversee and even collaborate with other professionals who are a part of your client's lives. Helping your clients achieve their financial goals means being able to look at the big picture, the entire financial view of your clients' lives.

In order to best help your clients meet their goals, you might need to be able to recommend other professionals who can provide expertise that you don't possess. Having relationships with an attorney, an investment advisor, an insurance agent, and others

means you can join forces as a group to work together toward the same end – the wellbeing of your clients. And meanwhile, you remain at the helm, overseeing all of the pieces and parts to ensure your clients' financial needs are being met.

Your first reaction might be, "But what if I team with another financial professional and then they take my clients?" Obviously, you want to vet the professionals you work with and agree to not poach clients from each other. You also need to have confidence in your own skill set and your value to your client. When you provide value as a tax professional, and add to that the ability to help your clients see their complete financial picture so that they can achieve their personal life goals, you're not going to need to worry about losing clients. ■

— Gail Perry, Editor-in-Chief

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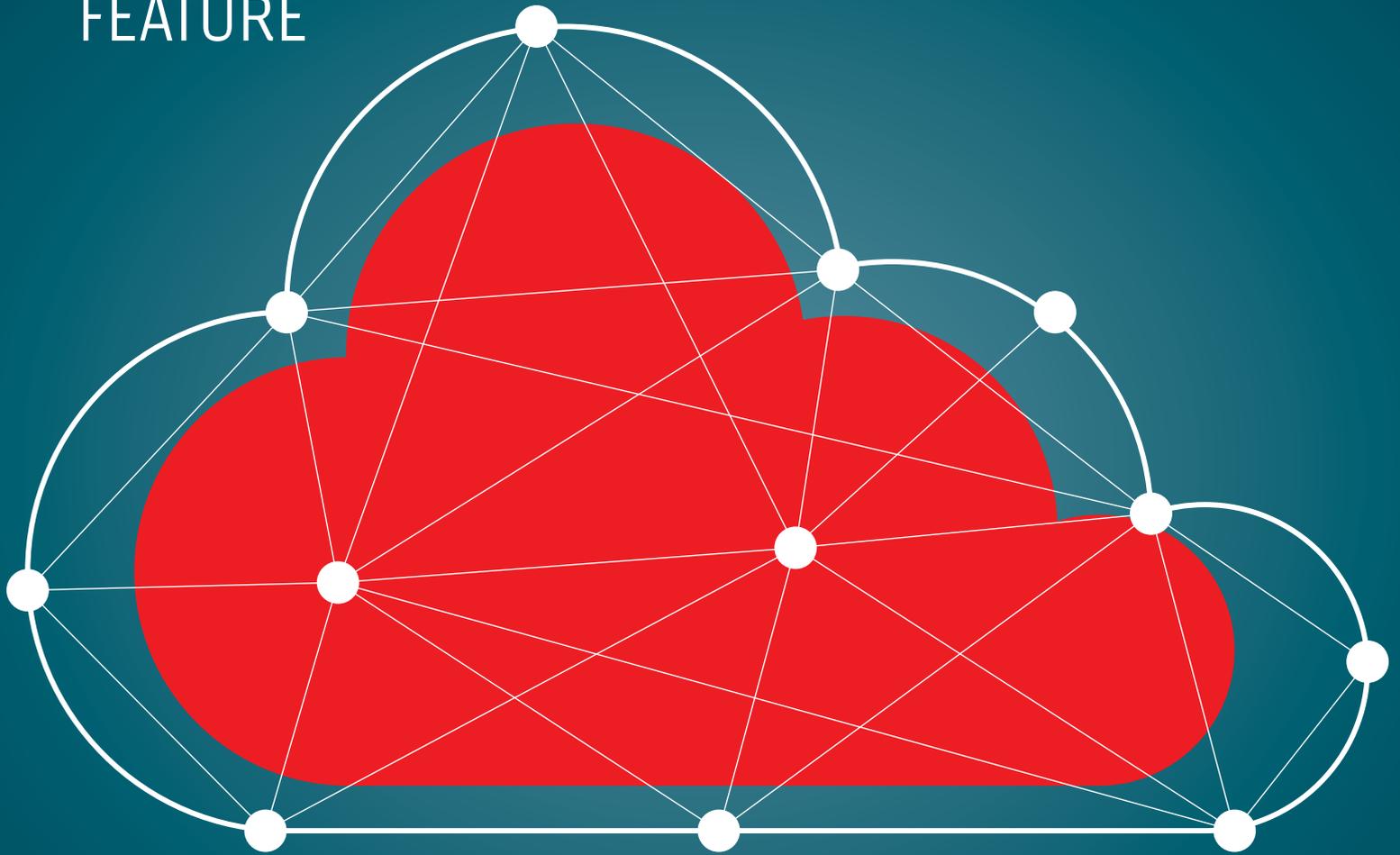
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FEATURE



# THE SaaS BUSINESS MODEL:

*Championing Cloud-Based  
Accounting for All*

*By Tim McCormick, SaaSOptics*

**AS A CPA, it's important that you stay on top of financial operations, trends and solutions, both for growing your practice and better servicing your clients. One such trend that is within reach and easy to adopt is cloud-based accounting. Today, traditional forms of managing a company's finances with manual entry, spreadsheets and general ledger software, are slowly becoming a thing of the past. For most businesses and their accounting partners, cloud-based technology can greatly simplify financial operations, reduce risk, simplify audits and provide the peace of mind that their data is protected.**

Despite these benefits, adoption still has a long way to go. A recent survey revealed that 55 percent (<https://bit.ly/2My13In>) of companies have neglected to implement basic automation technology such as online invoice approvals for accounts payable, and another 43 percent on the accounts receivable side are failing to send invoices electronically or set up customers with self-service portals. The study also reported that only 53 percent have a tool for automatic journal entry creation and only 31 percent have automated revenue recognition.

While these numbers are low, not all businesses or firms are slow to adopt cloud-based accounting solutions. Current adoption can be largely attributed to the increasing popularity of the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) business model – something that is not slowing anytime soon. As an accounting professional, it's likely that a growing number of your clients are SaaS businesses. By 2020, more than 80 percent of software providers will change their business models from “traditional” perpetual license and maintenance to subscription-based models (<https://gtnr.it/2kAKeMX>).

And today, Forbes is reporting that 84 percent of new software is delivered as SaaS.

The nature of SaaS financial operations makes automated, cloud-based financial operations a must-have. Managing the operations and finances of a traditional business versus those of a SaaS business are vastly different. As SaaS businesses grow, their financial operations become increasingly complicated, and traditional accounting methods leave the door open for errors, take too much time and simply don't work. For example, mistaking cash for revenue is a common pitfall. In accordance with U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), an entity cannot fully recognize revenue from a contract until the agreed-upon services have been delivered. With varying contract lengths, bundled services and the occasional non-standard service, SaaS businesses require the ability and the flexibility to recognize revenue in a manner consistent with their agreements and in accordance with GAAP.

The key to successfully managing the finances of a SaaS business is automation. Cloud-based solu-

tions can eliminate the need to re-key information or manually enter data. They can automatically turn closed opportunities into a GAAP-compliant customer, contract, subscription, revenue and invoice schedule, and that information can also flow automatically into the general ledger system. Most cloud-based solutions will also allow you to present polished, accurate revenue recognition and financial metrics that will inform operational decisions, streamline audits and satisfy potential investors or buyers.

Cloud-based solutions also mean that everyone touching the financial operations of a business is viewing the same information, in real-time. This drives faster, better decision making. Leveraging cloud solutions for managing financial operations makes it easier to access and maintain financial data. Pulling data or reports doesn't require laborious and time-consuming email correspondence, which is especially frustrating when trying to meet deadlines during the busy tax season.

By storing all of a company's financial information in the cloud, you'll minimize the risk of costly

accounting errors. Everyone will be accessing and working from the same information so that re-entry is not needed. This saves time and minimizes the potential for error. It also encourages collaboration and sharing of information for greater transparency.

When the time comes, storing a company's financial information in the cloud can take the headache out of an audit. It will ensure all supporting documents such as contracts, addendums, statements of work (SOWs), purchase orders, vendor contracts, invoices, batch deposit support and bank statements are organized in a central place. This will create a proper audit trail and allow you to quickly provide samples requested by auditors and avoid wasting time searching through documents.

It's likely you've thought about transitioning to the cloud. Taking that leap is not only beneficial for day-to-day operations, it also is a way for accounting professionals to work more efficiently, provide accurate data and capture valuable data that gives executives critical insight into the business for making smarter decisions to grow the business. ■

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*Tim McCormick is the Chief Executive Officer for SaaSOptics, an affordable and flexible subscription management platform for emerging and growth SaaS and subscription-based businesses. Founded in 2009 by entrepreneurs who lived the challenges of running their own SaaS business, SaaSOptics was developed as a solution that can scale with a growing business, providing the day-to-day financial management capabilities needed and the auditing, reporting and analytics that are critical for future growth.*



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## 4 Tech Trends Transforming Public Accounting

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTING LEADERS** must continue to prepare for the digital disruptions that will inevitably alter almost everything about the way their teams and their clients work. Much of this change will be positive, as breakthroughs help organizations become faster, more efficient and better able to meet business demands.

In a survey for Robert Half's Jobs and AI Anxiety report, more than three-quarters of senior financial managers said increased reliance on technology has had a very or somewhat positive effect on accounting and finance staff. Most companies are still at the starting gate with the newest tools, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, but that's about to change.

Here are four specific trends affecting accounting.

### 1. CLOUD COMPUTING IS BECOMING THE STANDARD.

The Robert Half research found cloud-based systems rank as the most commonly used technology in accounting and finance. Particularly now that security concerns about it have eased, the cloud offers many advantages, from the ability to view updated figures in real time to potential cost savings.

This tool presents an excellent means of interacting remotely with clients who use cloud-based accounting systems, as platforms like QuickBooks and Sage make it easy to share data securely. The cloud also provides access to intense processing power many organizations lack, which is vital when working with data analytics and AI.

### 2. AI WILL IMPROVE FINANCIAL FORECASTS.

Machine learning is one of the most commonly used forms of AI. Taking massive data sets and applying statistical models, such as regression analysis, to recognize trends and patterns, this tool can be used to identify financial irregularities, including fraud, and forecast future trends.

Increasingly sophisticated AI will be able to generate more accurate predictions and even offer advice on ways to maximize business opportunities. Along the way, executives also expect it to eliminate errors, reduce costs, increase employee output, and free accounting and finance professionals to focus on higher-value work.

...more than three-quarters of senior financial managers said increased reliance on technology has had a very or somewhat positive effect on accounting and finance staff.

### 3. AUTOMATION WILL HANDLE MORE DUTIES – BUT NOT ALL.

Automation is on the rise across organizations of all sizes, the Benchmarking Accounting & Finance Functions: 2019 report from Robert Half and Financial Education & Research Foundation found. Robotic process automation (RPA) is a next-generation version of this technology that uses AI and cloud computing to automate even the most complex processes. RPA can handle multistep jobs and even follow processes that branch in multiple directions. It may also add value when used for tasks that need to be completed with robot-like accuracy, such as compliance controls.

Although increasing in general, organizations haven't embraced automation for all functions. According to the benchmarking research, most businesses don't plan to automate processes like financial decision making and financial planning that require strategic-thinking abilities.

### 4. ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONALS WILL NEED NEW SKILL SETS.

For most firms, the biggest challenge isn't technology — it's people. In fact, 80% of managers in the

Robert Half survey said finding professionals with the requisite abilities will be at least somewhat challenging, and separate research found technology skills are the hardest-to-find attribute when hiring accountants.

In-house technology expertise is limited in many businesses, and the hiring market is fiercely competitive, leaving managers concerned about skill gaps on their teams. As a result, companies may need to upskill employees, such as by reimbursing staff for external professional development activities and bringing in consultants to provide on-the-job support.

As advances in technology take on more routine processes, accounting professionals will take on higher-value work. As a result, demand for soft skills, from critical thinking and business acumen to communication and emotional intelligence, is rising.

You're no doubt focused on staying current on trends affecting the accounting industry. Your efforts will enable you to help your staff build their skills and stay at the forefront of industry trends, while ensuring your firm can best serve clients as they adopt new technologies. ■

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# CLOUD COMPUTING 2019



## JOEL HUGHES CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Joel is responsible for setting the company direction and leading the successful execution of that strategy with the Right Networks leadership team. As part of that strategy, he led the successful acquisition of Xcentric, a leading cloud solutions company focused on managing IT for accounting firms. He has an extensive track record of building and growing businesses and has deep knowledge in corporate strategy and team building.

Prior to Right Networks, Joel was SVP of Emerging Business at Constant Contact (acquired by Endurance International Group) where he grew the SinglePlatform unit from \$2M to \$20M over four years. As CEO at NMS Communications, Joel led the transformation of a business unit into the stand-alone public company, LiveWire Mobile.

# Right Networks®

**RIGHT NETWORKS** provides a cloud hosting environment that gives accounting firms and accounting professionals in small and medium size businesses the freedom to bring together and connect best-of-breed solutions – desktop software and native SaaS solutions – to suit the needs of their business. The company offers the first, and only, hosted solution supporting 24x7 data transfer and synchronization between QuickBooks Desktop and the variety of third-party SaaS applications used by its diverse customer base. Its curated application ecosystem consists of 250+ best-of-breed applications, including QuickBooks, Lacerte and ProSeries from Intuit, Expensify, Bill.com, Avalara, SmartVault and Webgility. By providing critical, time-consuming application updates and backups and zero scheduled downtime, as well as 24/7 tech support and enterprise-class security, Right Networks customers achieve the flexibility that is critical to serving their clients and/or running their business.

## Q : What technology advances are having a meaningful impact on our industry?

**A :** In business, and really all aspects of our lives, there is an urgent need for more time in the day. Just like Alexa is automating our grocery shopping and Nest our home energy usage, there are technology tools automating the many manual tasks accountants have traditionally had to handle. By freeing up considerable amounts of time and resources, the adoption of automation tools is helping firms make the shift toward advisory services.

## Q : Can you share an example of how automation can impact a firm?

**A :** Countless tasks require access to, and sharing of, data. Sounds simple but data transfer can take an inordinate amount of time. That's what makes the recent introduction of Right Networks' "always on" platform, powered by Autofy, a game-changer. It allows applications to connect and share data without any human intervention.

Here's an example of how it works. Many people who use Expensify for expense management also use QuickBooks. If you're on the road and inputting your expenses, you probably don't want to also go through the process of putting it into a file and importing it into QuickBooks. With our "always on" platform, we allow Expensify to immediately deliver that data into the QuickBooks file. We do this by providing APIs that allow application developers to automatically synchronize their data directly to QuickBooks.

## Q : So you remove the need for human intervention in the transfer of data?

**A :** Yes, the applications talk to each other seamlessly. And you can set custom intervals for when you want data synchronized. It can be every 30 minutes, once a day, whatever works best for your business.

You can imagine the impact this 24/7 data transfer and synchronization between QuickBooks Desktop and third-party apps can have on productivity. Think about overnight inventory synchronization for manufacturing apps, or scheduled, automatic monthly financial reports used by banks and lenders.

## Q : What led Right Networks in this direction?

**A :** We are living into our mission to create a QuickBooks Desktop ecosystem that is as capable as the QuickBooks Online ecosystem. Historically, if you were not logged into your QuickBooks file on your Windows machine, you couldn't trade data with any third-party applications. The inability to automate transactions between all of a company's applications has, up until now, been a reason some companies have left the QuickBooks Desktop ecosystem. Now, whether you're logged into QuickBooks or away for the weekend, third party applications that need data in and out of your QuickBooks files can work in the background, 24/7.

## Q : From the "big picture" perspective, how can this technology fuel transformation for the industry?

**A :** There's so much talk about being replaced by robots and that's clearly not true. As a technologist, I can say we love to get ahead of ourselves, so let's look at what's happening now. Technologies like Right Networks' Autofy can automate processes to dramatically improve people's productivity. At the core of this is data: to feed the AI bots of the future, we need a lot of data. We can expect to see Autofy and other technologies liberating the data. Within Right Networks we have roughly more than half a million company files within our infrastructure. Imagine the richness of that data and how it can inform an advisor who's helping a specific client understand how they stack up against other companies in their industry in terms of growth or inventory turnover. This is the direction that we're headed in and this is how technology will enable advisory services.

## Q : Where can people find out more about Right Networks "always on" platform?

**A :** Visit [www.RightNetworks.com](http://www.RightNetworks.com) or call us at 1-866-607-3048.

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## Payroll Mistakes Can Result In Long Lines

FOR YEARS, EVERY other Friday, when paychecks were disbursed, co-workers would line up outside my office, thankfully not for me, but for our staff payroll person, whose office was down the hall from mine. It never failed, not a payday went by without the line appearing. Some weeks it was just a few people, other times the line curled around the corner. Many of the concerns were legitimate; hours worked that didn't appear on their check, or overtime miscalculated or even missing. But others were asking for explanations of deductions (why is my health insurance so much?), while a few wanted to know why their vacation time was so low, or why they didn't have any PTO left. The bottom line is that while other departments can make data entry mistakes and correct them with no repercussion, a payroll mistake will result in long lines and will require an immediate explanation.

Today, payroll departments have the added responsibility of paying both employees and contractors: some hourly, some salaried, some a flat fee. Deductions need to be entered and managed including standard deductions such as federal and state taxes along with a long list of voluntary deductions such as health insurance, life insurance, accident insurance, and supplemental insurance, along with retirement plan deductions, stock purchase deductions, HSA deductions, and a whole bunch more. Not only

do these items need to be deducted properly from an employee's gross pay, they also need to be paid to someone, such as an insurance company, a financial management company, the IRS, and other appropriate tax authorities. If that isn't enough, the payroll department is also responsible for tracking employee sick time, vacation time, comp time, and PTO. Payroll staff needs to be sure that employees

are paid properly if they work overtime, and it is the responsibility of the payroll department to ensure that neither the employee or the company is abusing federal labor laws.

Which is why more businesses are looking for one of two things: a payroll software that simplifies the entire process, or an accounting firm that offers payroll processing. But how do you know which payroll application is best for your needs, whether those needs be to enable your client to process payroll, or for your firm to offer payroll processing for your client?

In this issue, we've reviewed 17 payroll applications that suit everyone from the one-person office to the CPA firm that is handling payroll for multiple clients. While some products fit into one of those categories, others have a broader reach and can work in a variety of scenarios.

As with all of our reviews, we've included a chart that highlights common functions found in each of these applications, allowing you to narrow down your choices to the

products that offer many if not all of the features you're looking for.

Unfortunately, there is no real way to try out a payroll application prior to purchasing, so it's best that you do your due diligence before making a commitment. Yes, demos are available for many of the applications, and I always encourage folks to try them out if they can, but details such as tax remittances and payroll funding dates cannot be answered by a demo, instead they will need to be addressed with the vendor directly.

Whether you're looking for a payroll service for your client's small business, or you're looking for a comprehensive application you can utilize for your firm and clients, these payroll reviews should help to narrow the field down to the a few products that may be right for you. ■

Mary Girsch-Bock is a freelance writer specializing in business and technology issues and is the author of her first book, several HR handbooks, training manuals, and other in-house publications. She can be reached at [mary.girschbock@cpapracticadvisor.com](mailto:mary.girschbock@cpapracticadvisor.com)

	CLOUD VERSION AVAILABLE	MOBILE ACCESS	DASHBOARD DATA ENTRY	AFTER-THE-FACT PAYROLL	TAX TABLES FOR ALL 50 STATES	CUSTOM REPORTING	REPORT EXPORT	PAYROLL LIABILITY REPORTING	INTEGRATION WITH TIME-KEEPING SOFTWARE	INTEGRATION WITH VENDOR MODULES	INTEGRATION WITH THIRD-PARTY APPLICATIONS	CLIENT/EMPLOYEE PORTAL	CLIENT ACCESS TO PAYSTUBS & W-2'S	HR TOOLS	ROBUST ONLINE HELP SYSTEM
1099 FORMS FILER/AMS PAYROLL			X	X	X			X		X	X				X
CENTERPOINT PAYROLL				X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X
CHECKMARK				X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X
CREST PAYROLL	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CYMA PAYROLL	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DENALI PAYROLL	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
GUSTO	X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
INTUIT ONLINE PAYROLL	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
JUSTWORKS	X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ONPAY	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
PAYCHEX FLEX	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
PAYROLL MATE					X	X	X	X*	X	X	X				X
PAYROLL RELIEF	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
RUN POWERED BY ADP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SURE PAYROLL	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
THOMSON ACCOUNTING CS PAYROLL	X	X**	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
WOLTERS KLUWER TAX & ACCOUNTING PAYROLL			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X

\*LIMITED TO 5 STATES \*\*LIMITED TO PAYSTUB/W-2 ACCESS

## AccountantsWorld Payroll Relief

[www.accountantsworld.com](http://www.accountantsworld.com)

Designed specifically for accounting professionals, Payroll Relief from AccountantsWorld offers online payroll processing for firms that offer payroll services to their clients. Payroll Relief can be used as a stand-alone

application or integrated with other AccountantsWorld applications.

Like all AccountantsWorld applications, Payroll Relief is best suited for small to mid-sized firms. Payroll Relief can be used on any type of device, including desktop and workstation

computers, tablets, or mobile devices.

Payroll Relief handles multi-state payroll, multiple schedules and multiple checks per employee. Check printing options include printing and distributing checks to clients, or emailing a PDF of all processed paychecks for

★ **4.75** 2019 OVERALL RATING

clients to print on-site.

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107879](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107879)

## RUN Payroll for ADP Partners

[www.adp.com](http://www.adp.com)

RUN Payroll for ADP Partners is designed for businesses with between 1-49 employees. For accounting firms that are interested in providing payroll and related services to clients, Accountant Connect from ADP is available. Accountant Connect is a portal that

connects users directly with the clients that they are serving.

RUN is a cloud-based application, offering anytime, anywhere access from a variety of devices including desktop and workstation computers, smart phones and tablets. The product also offers excellent scalability,

with three plans available: Essential, Enhanced, and Complete.

Those interested can contact ADP directly to obtain a price quote for their business. For accounting firms that wish to offer payroll services to clients, Accountant Connect is available at no additional cost.

★ **5** 2019 OVERALL RATING

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107882](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107882)

## AMS Payroll 1099 Forms Filer/Payroll

[www.1099-etc.com](http://www.1099-etc.com)

1099 Forms Filer/Payroll (AMS Payroll) from Advanced Micro Solutions is an add-on module that is designed to be used with AMS W-2/1099 Forms Filer. The product can also be used with other AMS applications, but cannot be used as a stand-alone payroll

application.

The application supports up to 1,999 payers and up to 9,999 employees per payer, making AMS Payroll a good option for accounting firms that provide payroll services to clients. The product can be purchased and downloaded from the AMS website, and is installed on desktop computers

or workstations. A cloud version of AMS Payroll is not available, and the product does not currently offer mobile apps.

AMS Payroll is best suited for smaller businesses, and is currently available for \$129, with the required W2/1099 Forms Filer running \$129 as well. Any software purchased can be downloaded directly from Advanced

★ **4.25** 2019 OVERALL RATING

Micro Solutions website, and a free demo is available to download by submitting business details on an information sheet.

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107800](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107800)

## CheckMark Payroll

[www.checkmark.com](http://www.checkmark.com)

CheckMark Payroll is part of CheckMark's suite of accounting and payroll applications that are offered to both U.S. and Canadian businesses. Working on both Windows and Mac operating systems, CheckMark Payroll is an on-premise payroll application and is

designed to be used as a stand-alone payroll solution. CheckMark payroll offers complete integration with many popular third-party accounting applications. CheckMark Payroll is best suited for small businesses, but the product can also be used by accounting firms that currently offer payroll

processing services to their clients.

Currently, CheckMark Payroll Pro is \$429.00 while CheckMark Payroll Pro+ is \$499.00. Both plans offer access to program fixes as well as updated tax tables throughout the year. For those interested in completely outsourced payroll, CheckMark also offers various

★ **4.25** 2019 OVERALL RATING

payroll processing plans.

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107804](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107804)

## Cougar Mountain Denali Payroll

[www.Cougarmtn.com](http://www.Cougarmtn.com)

Denali Payroll is part of Cougar Mountain Denali, a suite of accounting and related applications. Denali Payroll is best suited for small to mid-sized businesses that already use or plan to use other Denali applications, though the product can also be used

as a stand-alone payroll application if desired. The product could be used by accounting firms that provide payroll services to their clients, but is better suited to business owners looking for an in-house payroll solution.

Denali Payroll was designed to be an in-house, on-premise payroll solu-

tion, though the product can now be hosted on the cloud if remote access is desired. Denali does not offer a mobile app at this time.

Denali is available in three versions: Basecamp, Ascent, and Summit, though users have the option to choose the modules they need. Those

★ **4.5** 2019 OVERALL RATING

interested in Denali Payroll can request a demo or pricing directly from Cougar Mountain.

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107826](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107826)

# REVIEW: PAYROLL SYSTEMS

## Crest Payroll from Payroll Logix, Inc.

[www.crestpayroll.com](http://www.crestpayroll.com)

Acquired by Payroll Logix Inc. in 2018, Crest Payroll is offered solely to accounting professionals that wish to offer payroll services to their clients. Crest Payroll is loaded with features and is an online payroll solution that can

be used with all common web browsers such as Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Opera, Safari, and Google Chrome. Updated mobile apps allow users to easily access Crest Payroll.

Crest Payroll offers a fixed monthly fee for each client that averages out to

around \$1.25 to \$1.75 per employee, per month, based on the features subscribed to. There are also no contracts necessary, with payment made monthly only for the subscribed services. Crest does not offer a demo at this time, but those interested can

★ **5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

download a brochure or request a price quote directly from Crest.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107809](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107809)

## CYMA Payroll Software

[www.cyma.com](http://www.cyma.com)

CYMA Payroll is a flexible payroll application well suited for small to mid-sized businesses with more than 25 employees. The application was originally designed to be used as an on-premise application, but it can also be hosted in the cloud if desired. CYMA Payroll can be used in conjunction

with the CYMA General Ledger and Accounts Payable modules for better tax management capability, though the product can also be used as a stand-alone payroll application if desired.

CYMA Payroll supports all common pay frequencies, including Daily, Weekly, Bi-Weekly, Semi-Monthly, Quarterly, Semi-Annually, and Annu-

ally, and can process multiple pay frequencies and multiple checks for employees simultaneously. Multi-state payroll is supported, and both direct deposit and EFT direct deposit is supported in the application.

Those interested in CYMA Payroll can download a 30-day free trial from the website, or contact the vendor

★ **4.5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

directly for a personalized demo or for a price quote.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107818](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107818)

## Gusto Payroll

[www.Gusto.com](http://www.Gusto.com)

Gusto is a cloud-based payroll application that is best suited for small to mid-sized businesses. Gusto is also a good solution for accounting firms that offer payroll to clients. Gusto can be accessed from any type of device

including desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and smart phones.

Gusto offers three plans: Core, Complete, and Concierge. The Core plan is for smaller businesses with just a few employees, and currently has a \$39 base price, along with a \$6 per employee charge. The Complete

plan also includes PTO policies, time tracking and employee offers and onboarding and currently runs \$39 a month with a \$12 per person charge. The Concierge plan is a good choice for businesses that need HR support. The Concierge plan is currently \$149 per month, with a \$12 per employee

★ **5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

charge. Those interested in Gusto can download a free 30-day demo.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107823](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107823)

## Intuit Online Payroll for Accountants

<http://Accountants.intuit.com>

Intuit Online Payroll for Accountants is designed specifically for accounting firms that are interested in offering payroll and related services to their clients. Intuit Online Payroll for Accountants can be used as a stand-

alone payroll application, but will offer greater functionality when used in conjunction with other Intuit or QuickBooks applications.

One of the best features about Intuit Online Payroll is the ability to set client user levels, with some clients only having access to payroll related

information such as paystubs and payroll registers, while other clients can be set up to enter payroll information and run payroll in-house, while the accounting firm handles taxes.

Pricing for Intuit Online Payroll for Accountants starts at \$45 per client, with a per employee charge of \$4

★ **4.75** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

assessed, with the price dropping as more clients are added.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107816](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107816)

## Justworks Payroll

[www.justworks.com](http://www.justworks.com)

Designated a Professional Service Organization (PEO), Justworks provides small businesses with a bundled product that includes payroll, compliance, HR, and benefits in a single application that is best suited for smaller businesses.

Justworks currently offers two plans, Basic and Plus, with both plans including payroll, compliance reporting, and HR tools and resources, with the Plus plan also offering access to a variety of benefit options including insurance and retirement plans. Justworks supports both salaried and

hourly employees, but automatically sets up salaried employees to be paid semi-monthly.

Basic costs \$49 per employee per month, and Plus costs \$99 per employee, per month. Designed to take the place of a dedicated HR department, Justworks can be a good

★ **4.5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

alternative for very small businesses, but pricing may become prohibitive for larger businesses.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107824](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107824)

## OnPay Payroll

[www.onpay.com](http://www.onpay.com)

OnPay is an online payroll application designed for small businesses, though the product can run payroll for businesses with more than 500 employees. OnPay also offers partner pricing for accountants, with the discount increased as the number of clients

increase. Accounting professionals who sign up for OnPay also receive a free payroll account for their firm as well as custom QuickBooks or Xero setup if needed.

OnPay Payroll offers full-service payroll, supporting an unlimited number of pay runs each month. Com-

pletely online, OnPay includes a mobile app for iOS and Android smartphones and tablets, so users can enter payroll at any time, from any location.

OnPay charges a base fee of \$36.00 plus a \$4.00 per person fee. For accounting firms that wish to partner with OnPay, a 10% discount is offered

★ **5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

for more than two clients, with a 30% discount given to firms with more than 100 payroll clients.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107822](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107822)

## Paychex Flex

[www.paychex.com](http://www.paychex.com)

Paychex Flex from Paychex is an online payroll processing application from Paychex. Designed for flexibility, Paychex Flex is a good fit for small to mid-sized businesses as well as accounting professionals who are interested in offering payroll services to their client

base. Paychex Flex offers four plans: Express, Select, Pro, and Enterprise, with users able to easily scale up, (or down) as needed. All four Paychex Flex plans include complete payroll processing, payroll tax administration, new hire-reporting, and a free mobile app. The Select, Pro, and Enterprise plans also offer additional features such as

New Employee Onboarding, Workers' Compensation reporting, and State Unemployment Insurance Service. In addition, Paychex Flex also offers AccountantHQ; an accountant-specific dashboard that allows firms to easily manage both payroll and HR from a single platform.

Paychex Flex prices vary, depend-

★ **5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

ing on the plan purchased. Those interested can contact Paychex Flex for a custom quote.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107878](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107878)

## Payroll Mate

[www.realtaxtools.com](http://www.realtaxtools.com)

Payroll Mate, from Real Business Solutions is an on-premise payroll solution well suited for small businesses as well as accounting firms. The standard version of Payroll Mate supports up to 10 companies, with a maximum of 75 employees per client, though an add-on module is available that will increase the number of companies supported to 100, and the number of employees per client to 1,000. In addition, Payroll Mate can be deployed in a virtual desktop environment, allowing users to access the application from any location. Payroll Mate does not offer a mobile app at this time, and there is no employee/client self-serve capability in the application,

so employees or clients cannot access payroll stubs or other payroll information from Payroll Mate.

Payroll Mate is currently available for \$119.00 per year, with add-on modules available for Direct Deposit, MICR Check Printing, Payroll Reporting, 1099s, and W-2s. Payroll Mate is a single user application, with 3, 5, and 10 user options also available as an add-on. Those interested in Payroll Mate can download a free demo from the Payroll Mate website to try out prior to purchasing.

**Read the full review  
for this product online at:**  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107880](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107880)

★ **4** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

"We are extremely pleased that we complete the payroll process about forty percent faster with CenterPoint Payroll than with our previous software."

*Pay day!*  
*Garry*

Miller, South Dakota

**Call today!**  
**800-732-9464**  
[www.redwingsoftware.com](http://www.redwingsoftware.com)



Read all reviews for PAYROLL SYSTEMS online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21106772](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21106772)

# REVIEW: PAYROLL SYSTEMS

## Red Wing Software CenterPoint Payroll

[www.redwingsoftware.com](http://www.redwingsoftware.com)

CenterPoint Payroll, from Red Wing Software, is available as an on-premise application or a cloud-based application. Both are identical, with users receiving the same selection of features no matter which deployment method is

used. CenterPoint Payroll is designed to work with other CenterPoint Accounting applications, though it can also be used as a stand-alone payroll solution. Best suited for small businesses, CenterPoint Accounting supports unlimited users and unlimited com-

panies, making it a good option for accounting firms that currently offer payroll services to clients.

Pricing for CenterPoint Payroll is customized for each business, with those interested able to request a quote from RedWing Software, with

★ **4.75** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

all add-on modules priced separately.

Read the full review  
for this product online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107813](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107813)

## SurePayroll for Accountants

[www.surepayroll.com](http://www.surepayroll.com)

SurePayroll – A Paychex company, is designed for small to mid-sized businesses with fewer than 100 employees. The company also offers SurePayroll for Accountants, a good fit for accounting firms that are interested in offering payroll services to clients.

The accountant's version can also be used to connect with clients that are already using SurePayroll.

SurePayroll is an online application, that includes a mobile app for both iOS and Android tablets and smartphones. The product has an easy-to-use interface, and the accountant version contains a dashboard where users can

manage payroll for all of their clients. In the past few years, SurePayroll has added a variety of features that are all designed to expedite the payroll process.

Pricing varies, depending on the number of employees that are to be paid, with special pricing available for resellers or those offering payroll

★ **4.75** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

services to clients. A free trial is also available.

Read the full review  
for this product online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107881](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107881)

## Accounting CS Payroll

<https://cs.thomsonreuters.com>

Accounting CS Payroll from Thomson Reuters is part of the CS Professional Suite. Accounting CS Payroll is designed for accounting professionals who handle payroll processing for clients, and it can be used as a stand-alone application, or in conjunction with

other Accounting CS applications for greater product functionality.

Accounting CS Payroll offers flexibility from the beginning, with the choice of on-premise or hosted deployment. In addition, a mobile app for both iOS and Android smartphones and tablets can be used with NetClient

CS Portals, which is what both clients and their employees will use in order to access payroll information.

Those interested can download a free-trial of the application to use prior to purchasing, or contact the vendor directly to obtain a custom quote for their firm.

★ **5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

Read the full review  
for this product online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107815](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107815)

## Client Accounting Suite with Payroll

<https://www.cchsfs.com/professional-accounting-software/payroll.aspx>

Client Accounting Suite with Payroll from Wolters Kluwer is well suited for smaller accounting firms that offer payroll and related services to clients. The payroll module is part of the Wolters Kluwer Client Accounting Suite, though it can also be used as a stand-alone payroll application. Both the Client Accounting Suite and the

included payroll module are designed exclusively for accounting professionals and are not offered to other businesses.

The Client Accounting Suite with Payroll includes a dashboard, where users can choose from a variety of options, including entering time data, calculating payroll, selecting payroll

checks to be processed, posting payroll, and checking account reconciliation. The dashboard is completely customizable, with users able to display only the features and functions needed.

Client Accounting Suite with Payroll is priced separately from the Client Accounting Suite, with pricing available directly from Wolters Kluwer.

★ **4.5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

Users can also request a demo of the payroll application from Wolters Kluwer.

Read the full review  
for this product online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107877](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107877)

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— **Matt Vaadi, PHR**

“**Have been using for over 2 years. Simply the best in automation of payroll processing, letting us focus on clients.**”  
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How has Payroll Relief made success stories like these possible? It has to do with our sole commitment to accountants.

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Your peers are doing very well by taking full advantage of what Payroll Relief has to offer. There's no reason why you can't do the same.



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from



## 5 CHILLING REASONS Why Employees Leave *By Jodi Chavez*

GHOSTS AND GOBLINS may spook you this Halloween, but what's far scarier for your business is the current talent shortage haunting the accounting industry. Still more frightful is the fact that employees today are more willing than ever before to seek opportunities elsewhere when their needs aren't being met. And in today's competitive labor market, skilled workers are bound to have options. Fortunately, you don't have to sit there shivering alone in the dark. Randstad has five factors to consider when refreshing your retention strategy, so you won't be haunted by the ghosts of recently departed employees.

### GHASTLY SALARIES

According to Randstad's study (<https://randstad.us/2p2cLjK>), 44 percent of U.S. workers leave their existing employers because they feel they are undercompensated, and 82 percent expect pay raises each year to stay. Have you assessed your pay rate against the competition? If not, the magic potion may be to check out Randstad's online salary guide (<https://randstad.us/2oe8jyb>) and see how you stack up. Offering fair and competitive salaries will help you retain best-in-class talent.

### SHRUNKEN HEADS

More than half of all employees say their jobs don't offer enough career growth opportunities. So don't try to shrink your employees' heads; instead, make sure every role includes a clear career development path. Lay a foundation to prepare your employees for the next stages in their careers by providing training opportunities to help them get there. It's also imperative to regularly check-in with your employees, and take proactive steps to address their concerns, before it's too late. Or else, your unchallenged employees could flee into the night.

### HORRID WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Thirty percent of employees say that issues related to work-life balance could cause them to leave their current employers. In fact, 62 percent of workers say they would take jobs elsewhere — even jobs they didn't love — if it meant having greater flexibility. But companies can act strategically today to prevent that. For example, new technologies and software that runs in the cloud should enable accountants and other professionals to work remotely at least some of the time. So try to create a schedule that not only allows your business to achieve its goals but also gives your staff the freedom to work from home every now and then.

### DREADFUL BENEFITS

Almost all employees (94%) want their employers to offer benefits that have a meaningful impact on their quality of life — for instance, benefits to help them pay off student loan debt or support more flexible work arrangements. When it comes to benefits and perks, of course, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Age, income level, gender and other factors all play a role in determining the benefits

that matter to employees. Investing in perks and benefits that your employees want and need can help significantly alleviate challenges related to employee retention.

### VILLAINOUS BOSSES

Almost a third of employees believe their organizations have poor leadership in place, and 60 percent are considering leaving their current jobs because they don't like their direct supervisors. Does this sound like your company? If so, management must heed the warning. Poor leadership reflects a deeper need for coaching and training — the absence of which often results in high turnover. As the saying goes, "people leave managers, not companies." So you should work with your human resources team to identify the challenges facing management and staff, and consider providing weekly training and coaching based on the feedback.

If your company is haunted by a retention problem, use these five strategies to improve retention rates — and avoid grisly setbacks. The ghostly departure of any employee casts a curse of unproductivity and knowledge loss for any organization with high turnover. Plus, when recruiting, hiring and training costs are factored in, it's clear just how frightful turnover is to your bottom-line. At the end of the day, Halloween is really no different than the rest of the year: Running a successful firm doesn't require potions and spells, but you do need to prioritize employee satisfaction. ■

*Jodi Chavez is Group President, Randstad Accounting and Finance, Professionals, Life Sciences & Tatum. With more than 22 years' experience in the staffing industry, Jodi oversees the field organization and provides direction for Randstad's life sciences, finance and accounting, human resources, sales and marketing and legal staffing capabilities. [www.Randstad.com/US](http://www.Randstad.com/US)*



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## Is a Business Suit Still Recommended for Job Interviews?

By Isaac M. O'Bannon, Managing Editor

WHILE CASUAL DRESS codes are gaining ground in the workplace, job applicants shouldn't put away their power suits just yet, according to new research from global staffing firm Accountemps. In a survey of senior managers, 37% of respondents said candidates should always wear a formal suit when interviewing for a job. A similar percentage (36%) felt proper interview attire depends on the position or department at the company.

Almost all respondents agreed how someone dresses for the job interview is significant: 52% reported it's very important, and 42% said it's at least somewhat important. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the research also shows recommended job interview attire varies by industry: Suits are more often preferred in finance, insurance and real estate (46%) than construction (28%) or retail (26%).

"Know your audience before going into an interview to ensure you not only look your best, but also look the part," said Michael Steinitz, senior executive director of Accountemps, a division of Robert Half. "It can be uncomfortable if you're underdressed – or extremely overdressed – for an interview. Whether the office environment is jeans and T-shirts or suits, ensure your outfit is one step above the hiring company's usual protocol in formality."

Steinitz added, "Ask your professional network, HR contact or recruiter, if you have one, for tips on what to wear. Staffing experts can provide coaching on creating a great first impression."

### Additional findings

- **Cities where you should suit up:** Miami, New York and Washington, D.C. (54% each) have the highest percentage of managers who said a suit should always be worn to job interviews.
- **Smart casual cities:** Phoenix (45%), Minneapolis (43%) and Charlotte (42%) have the most managers who said whether a suit should be worn to a job interview depends on the position or department at the company. Austin and Seattle (32% each) are the top markets where a suit may not be necessary if the candidate looks professional.
- **Size matters in suiting up:** At least 40% of managers at companies with more than 250 employees prefer candidates wear a suit to job interviews. In comparison, 31% of managers at organizations with 20 to 99 employees expect to see applicants don formal wear.

Steinitz noted, "Managers can improve the interview experience by removing the guesswork and letting candidates know the recommended attire ahead of time. That way, everyone around the table can concentrate on the substance of the interview, including whether the applicant's knowledge, experience and personality are a match for the role and company."

For more advice on how to dress appropriately for and ace a job interview, visit the Robert Half blog ([www.roberthalf.com/blog](http://www.roberthalf.com/blog)). ■



### An Industry in Transition: Trends in Accounting

Emerging trends and the changing needs of businesses are driving accounting firms to create new strategies, move beyond traditional services and add incremental revenue streams.

Partnering with a leading HCM provider can empower your firm to act as strategic advisors, attract new clients and grow your practice.

[Download the full research paper to learn more.](#)

[adp.com/accountant](http://adp.com/accountant)

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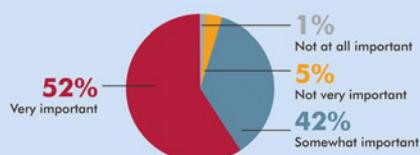
## UNSUITABLE?

Managers weigh in on what to wear to the job interview

### Should a suit be worn?



### How important is a candidate's style of dress during the interview?



**Accountemps**  
A Robert Half Company

Source: Accountemps survey of more than 2,800 senior managers at companies with 20 or more employees in the United States

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## Myths of Client Portal Systems

THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION involves a lot of paper. While that doesn't come as a surprise, what may come as a surprise is that there are numerous accounting firms out there that are not using client portals. While firms reluctant to offer portals typically offer a variety of reasons why they're not offering them, one of the myths that have continued to perpetuate is that they are just too complicated for both staff and clients.

If you spend just a few minutes looking at the products included in this review of Web Portals, you'll see that using a portal is relatively simple, and can provide a number of benefits that accounting professionals can truly appreciate.

Another myth is that web portals are only useful for larger accounting firms. And while they are certainly useful for larger firms, they can prove to be just as useful for smaller firms that have limited resources.

Web portals can drastically reduce the time it takes to obtain documents from clients. Instead of waiting until a client faxes in or emails a document, firms can provide their clients with a list of documents required, which the client, in turn, can simply upload to the portal, where they are accessed by firm staff. In addition to

providing preliminary work papers, firms can also share completed returns with clients via the portal, where they can access, electronically sign, and return the return for filing. Most portals today are compatible with mobile devices, so staff and clients can easily upload or download a document when necessary.

While increasing efficiency and productivity, web portals also reduce the mounds of paperwork that can bog down even the most efficient CPA office. Portals also eliminate the need to copy stacks of document and be sure those copies are routed to the correct staff member. While easier for accounting firms, clients also love the convenience of having access to documents at their convenience, as well the additional security that web portals offer. In office appointments and multiple

visits to drop off paperwork become a thing of the past, freeing up the schedules of staff members and clients, while the possibility of lost or misplaced documents drops to near zero.

In this issue, we reviewed several client portals, with many of these portals designed specifically for the professional accounting firm. The products reviewed include:

- AccountantsWorld Client Portals
- CCH Access Portal
- Citrix Share File
- ImagineShare from ImagineTime
- SmartVault
- Thomson Reuters NetClient CS

As always, a features chart is included in the review that indicates which features are found in each of the reviewed products.

Before you start looking

for a portal, it can be helpful to determine which features are most important to you. Do you want your clients to have unlimited access to the portal at all times, or do you want them to only access the portal at certain times? For accounting firms that process payroll for clients, it can be important that the portal offer access to both the client and the client's employees, so they can access important documentation such as W-2s or paystubs. Fortunately, all of the products included in this review offer a free trial, so you can try them out at your leisure, which can help tremendously when trying to decide which portal would work best for your firm, your staff, and your clients.

Don't believe the myths. Try one of these web portals out and see for yourself just how useful and easy to use web portals can be. ■

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	MOBILE APPS AVAILABLE	CUSTOMIZATION/ BRANDING CAPABILITY	USER INTERFACE OPTIONS	SUPPORTS LARGE FILES-10+GB	SUPPORTS MULTIPLE FILE TYPES	BI-DIRECTIONAL CAPABILITY	SECURITY AND ENCRYPTION	INTEGRATION WITH VENDOR MODULES	INTEGRATION WITH OTHER APPLICATIONS	SUPPORTS ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES	TRAINING AND SUPPORT
ACCOUNTANTS WORLD		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
CITRIX SHARE FILE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IMAGINESHARE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NET CLIENT CS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SMARTVAULT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CCH ACCESS PORTAL	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

## Cloud Cabinet Client Portals

[www.accountantsworld.com](http://www.accountantsworld.com)

Cloud Cabinet from AccountantsWorld offers both document management capability as well as client portals. Well suited for small to mid-sized accounting firms, Cloud Cabinet can be used as a stand-alone document management and portal solution, or ideally used in conjunction with other AccountantsWorld applications.

Cloud Cabinet offers an unlimited

number of client portals for one price, with each portal completely customizable, with firms able to create a custom structure for each client. Users can also opt to use the default file structure or choose to customize the portal for some clients, while using the default structure for others. Like the structure itself, folder rights can be customized for each client, with individual rights assignable to both folders as well as

any sub-folders. Users can set up client rights and permissions during product setup, or return to each client individually to add, edit, or delete permissions when necessary. Cloud Cabinet supports a variety of file formats including Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, as well as all common image formats.

Those interested in Cloud Cabinet can contact AccountantsWorld directly for pricing information or purchase the

★ **4.75** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

application directly from the AccountantsWorld website. Additional storage is available to purchase as well, and all AccountantsWorld applications come with a 60-day money back guarantee.

Read the full review  
for this product online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107795](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107795)

## Citrix ShareFile

[www.sharefile.com](http://www.sharefile.com)

Citrix ShareFile is a comprehensive file sharing application well suited for any business, including accounting firms, that need to share documents with clients or customers. Along with file sharing capability, Citrix ShareFile also includes document storage capability, a secure email, application, and file sync capability that allows users to sync a folder on a desktop or laptop and later sync the folder contents with ShareFile.

ShareFile offers excellent scalability, with three plans available, as well as the Virtual Data Room which is perfect for businesses that share highly confidential documents and desire additional security measures. A mobile app is also available for both iOS and Android devices. The ShareFile portal can be completely personalized and branded to include a business logo and color scheme.

Citrix ShareFile offers four plans, making the product well suited for

businesses, including accounting firms, of any size. The Standard Plan is \$10.00 per month and is a single-user plan. The Advanced Plan is \$77.00 per month and is a 5-user plan. The Premium Plan is \$122.00 per month, and is also a 5-user plan that offers custom workflow capability and the ability to request and send electronic signatures. Finally, the Virtual Data Room is available for firms sharing highly confidential documents, offering advanced document security options.

★ **4.75** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

With the exception of the Standard Plan, additional users can be added to any plan, and all plans offer unlimited storage capability. For those interested in Citrix ShareFile, a free trial for any of the plans is available from the Citrix website.

Read the full review  
for this product online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107791](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107791)

## ImagineShare from ImagineTime

[www.imaginetime.com](http://www.imaginetime.com)

ImagineShare is a new client portal now offered by ImagineTime, a comprehensive Practice Management suite of applications well suited for both the accounting and the legal profession. In addition to ImagineShare, ImagineTime also includes time and billing, due date tracking, a CRM, and reporting and analytics. Intended as a workflow and communication platform between client and firm, the client portal makes it easy share documents

with clients in a safe, secure fashion, providing a real time communications record for each client. A mobile app is also available for both iOS and Android smartphones and tablets, with users able to access, upload, and download documents from their device.

The ImagineShare client portal can be easily branded with any firm's identifying information including a logo and color scheme. Upon logging in to the portal, a list of all clients will be displayed, along with their contact

information. Once a client is chosen, a chronological view of all activity that has taken place between the firm and the client will be displayed. Other options that can be accessed include Taskflows, Files, Details, Contacts, Assigned Staff, Billing, and Integrations.

ImagineShare, the client portal recently added to ImagineTime is an excellent addition to a very strong application and will drastically reduce the amount of paperwork that needs

★ **5** 2019  
OVERALL  
RATING

to exchange hands. The ImagineTime Client Portal is available for \$25 per user, per month, based on yearly billing, or \$35 for month-to-month billing. The Full Practice Management solution includes the Client Portal, Time & Billing, and Due Date Management and is available for \$70 per user, per month.

Read the full review  
for this product online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/  
21107787](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107787)

Read all reviews for CLIENT PORTAL SYSTEMS online at:  
[www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21106771](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21106771)

## SmartVault

[www.smartvault.com](http://www.smartvault.com)

SmartVault offers branded client portals, along with online document storage and secure file sharing capability. Best suited for small to mid-sized businesses and accounting firms. SmartVault is particularly well suited for firms using QuickBooks Desktop, QuickBooks Online, Xero, or Lacerte applications.

SmartVault offers two versions: SmartVault for Business and SmartVault for Accountants, with all plans offering unlimited guests, secure file

sharing, a branded client portal, online document storage, complete product support, and an Outlook Plugin. A native mobile app is also available for iOS devices, though Android, Windows, and Blackberry mobile users will have to use a third-party app to connect to SmartVault.

The online document storage feature works in conjunction with the client portal to provide designated users with 24/7 access to files. The portal can be completely customized to reflect firm branding, and clients can link to the portal directly from the

firm's website. The SmartVault Dashboard offers easy access to most of the portal features including the ability to access any client, send files to clients, and client engagements. Users can also access both the internal documents or public documents folders, and both folder templates and email templates can be accessed from the dashboard as well. The client icon in the SmartVault dashboard is where users can add a new client, search for an existing client, and send an invitation to a client to sign up for portal access.

Accounting Pro plan, which

 **5** 2019 OVERALL RATING

currently runs \$40.00 per user, per month and includes 500 GB of storage and an unlimited number of guests. An Enterprise Plan is also available for very large firms with custom needs or a large number of users. For those interested, SmartVault offers a free 30-day trial for any of their plans.

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107790](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107790)

## Thomson Reuters NetClient CS Portals

<http://cs.thomsonreuters.com>

NetClient CS Portals is part of CS Professional Suite from Thomson Reuters. Designed to be used with other CS Professional Suite applications, NetClient CS Portals is a good fit for accounting firms of any size. NetClient CS Portals, like all CS Professional Suite applications, can be installed on-premise or delivered as SaaS or by using Virtual Office CS.

NetClient CS Portals includes a mobile app that works with both Android and iOS devices, making

it easy for both staff and clients to access and upload documents from anywhere. Fully functional, the mobile app provides access to documents such as tax returns, allows users to upload vital document, and provides access to account detail and messages. The mobile app also includes a time entry option as well as access to payroll data such as check stubs and W-2s.

NetClient CS Portals includes up to 1,000 base portals, making it easy to create a custom portal for each client, with the portals fully customizable to reflect firm branding. When used with

Accounting CS Payroll, clients that are provided with payroll services can use the portal to enter payroll information, eliminating the need for manual data entry methods. Portal access is through the firm's website, with all clients provided with an initial login and password to access the portal. Once they are in the portal, they can change their password if desired.

NetClient CS Portals from Thomson Reuters offers tremendous value to accounting firms using other CS Professional Suite applications, allowing easy sharing of documents with clients, and

 **4.75** 2019 OVERALL RATING

easy portal accessibility from other CS Professional Suite applications. 1,000 base portals are included in the monthly fee, with those interested able to request additional information and a custom price quote directly from Thomson Reuters.

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107792](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107792)

## CCH Access Portal

<http://cchgroup.com>

Designed for accounting professionals, CCH Access Portal is a module in the CCH Access cloud software solution from Wolters Kluwer. CCH Access Portal can be used as a stand-alone portal, or used in conjunction with other CCH Access modules for a more integrated practice management solution.

As a cloud-based application, CCH Access Portal is accessible from a desktop or workstation computer, as well as a tablet or laptop. A mobile-optimized website is also available

for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices. The CCH Access Portal is completely customizable, so firms can brand the portal as desired.

CCH Access Portal users can access the application from any web browser. The portal supports a variety of file types including PDFs, web pages, spreadsheets, Microsoft Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, and data files from a variety of software applications including QuickBooks. Along with documents from other CCH Access and CCH ProSystem fx applications, users can upload docu-

ments into the portal using the drag and drop interface. The portal also offers a document check-out option, that allows authorized users to edit the document while also preventing others from modifying the document while it's being edited. Users can also designate specific documents as Read Only in order to prevent any unauthorized changes to a document. In addition, firms can assign folder-level security options for additional security.

CCH Access Portal offers bi-directional capability, and offers excellent document search options, with users

 **5** 2019 OVERALL RATING

able to search for documents by file type, creator, keyword, or title.

CCH Access Portal prices vary, with users able to request a custom price for their firm directly from Wolters Kluwer.

Read the full review for this product online at: [www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107775](http://www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21107775)



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## DO YOUR BEST PAYROLL

IN THE GIG economy, how important is payroll? Just as much as ever! While many firms make the majority of their profits from compliance work in tax and audit, the firms providing Client Advisory Services (CAS) have discovered that payroll can be a profitable component of an attractive service offering. Traditionally, CPA firms have outsourced payroll to providers like ADP, Paychex and Ceridian, as a strategy to reduce liability, ensure that payroll taxes, 941's and W2's were handled in a timely fashion and that employees were paid on time. Further, requirements of various jurisdictions required software, tax tables and deductions to be updated frequently, usually before every payroll.

Then, something significant happened. It became notably easier to update software and to make employee information more accessible because of the internet. Downloading updates to local installations or simply using centralized cloud resources meant that software and other items that had to be updated could be taken care of in a single location. Self-service employee portals became more common, and timekeeping was enabled from web browsers and mobile devices. While I could not easily locate the number of payrolls currently run in the United States, consider that payroll runs occur weekly, bi-weekly, semi-monthly, and monthly. The number of people involved per payroll varies widely from one to tens of thousands. Most CPA firms handle payrolls of one to thousands of employees for their clients. Further, contractors are frequently paid for their work and receive 1099's annually, but my recent research tells me that contractors are frequently treated like employees and workers are misclassified for a variety of reasons. One thing is for sure, millions of people in the U.S. receive a paycheck that is generated by a variety of systems.

### SO, HOW DO WE RECOMMEND AND PICK THE RIGHT PAYROLL STRATEGY?

Philosophically, most CPA firms have recommended outsourcing payroll. That is part of how ADP, Paychex and Ceridian built the size and scale of their current businesses. Other CPA firms decided to run payroll service

bureaus, use or run professional employer organizations (PEOs) and used a variety of products:

#### Payroll Service Bureau Software

- Apex – Payroll Service Bureau Management
- Arcoro – Infinity HR
- CyberPay - AdaptaSoft
- CYMA – Payroll Service Bureau Software
- Execupay Payroll Suite - Execupay
- HK Payroll Services
- Polaris Payroll
- Sage People – HR and Payroll Services
- Thomson Reuters - myPay
- UBCC – Payroll Service Bureau

While it is never our intent to tell you which products to use or consider, we do like to recommend products that are working well. Realistically, with payroll software for smaller businesses, there are dozens of choices and as a buyer it is hard to discern which one will work the best although we have additional choices here. However, two approaches are clear: hosted (cloud) vs. in-house.

#### Hosted

- AccountantsWorld.com - Payroll Relief
- ADP - ADP Payroll
- ADP Accountant Community - ADP Small Business Services
- ADP RUN
- Intuit - Intuit Online Payroll
- myPay Solutions - Thomson Reuters
- OnPay Payroll - OnPay, Inc.
- Optimum Suite - Optimum Solutions
- Patriot Software - Online Payroll
- PayChex - Paychex, Inc.
- Paycom Payroll Services - Paycom
- Paycor Payroll Services - Paycor
- Payroll Services - Intuit

- Paylocity WebPay - Paylocity
- Sage HRMS - Sage
- Sage Payroll Center - Sage
- SurePayroll (owned by Paychex)

#### In-House

- 1099 Etc. A-T-F Payroll - AMS Payroll
- Accounting CS Payroll - Thomson Reuters
- CenterPoint Payroll - Red Wing Software
- CYMA Payroll & Human Resources - CYMA
- Payroll for Windows & Mac - Check-Mark Payroll Software
- QuickBooks Desktop Payroll - Intuit
- Sage 50cloud (formerly Peachtree Accounting) - Sage
- Payroll modules from accounting products such as Dynamics (GP=Great Plains, NAV=Navision), Open Systems TRAVERSE, etc.

#### More Commonly Used in CPA Firms

- AccountantsWorld.com - Payroll Relief
- ADP - run
- Intuit - Intuit Online Payroll
- myPay Solutions - Thomson Reuters
- OnPay Payroll - OnPay, Inc.
- Payroll CS - Thomson Reuters
- QuickBooks Desktop Payroll - Intuit
- SurePayroll (acquired by Paychex) - SurePayroll

While payroll is only one additional service offering, note that many of these software publishers also offer a human resources (HR) system, too. By the time most businesses reach 75 people, an HR system is helpful for compliance. Smaller businesses benefit from having integrated HR functions, too. Therefore, if you are looking at payroll as a client service offering, remember to consider if

you ever expect to add HR and consider products that have additional HR functionality for future adoption.

### ARE THERE DOWNSIDES AND UPSIDES TO OFFERING A PAYROLL SERVICE?

Absolutely! Clearly there are compliance risks and deadlines that must be met. You can't do payroll for a few clients and be successful. We suggest that your vision should be to have at least ten clients, but realistically, having one hundred or more clients on payroll would be ideal. Remember to use lower cost people to provide the service, not more expensive CPAs. While the work of many people producing payrolls can be monitored by a few professionals, it is hard to make appropriate levels of profitability if a CPA professional is doing the payroll work.

Providing payroll services has some upsides, too. Clients tend to be very sticky when you are running payroll for them. Payroll produces year-round recurring revenue. Payroll services allow you to expand into other offerings including HR, expense reporting and management, bill pay, accounting and employee benefits. Further, a professional practice that includes payroll services can be sold at a 3.5-4.5 multiple, which is far higher than a typical firm produces today. While we'd prefer that you stay in business, if you are planning an exit strategy, including payroll services can increase the price paid for your firm. ■

## Pet Care Clients: How to Become a Best-In-Breed Accountant

By Becky Livingston

**DID YOU KNOW** in the U.S. alone, nearly \$76 billion dollars is spent annually on pet expenditures?

If that's not enough to make you howl at the moon, how about this? There are TV programs for dogs, a dog-person's dating app, high-end pet services (e.g., spas, massages, limo rides), monitoring tech, and mobile grooming stations...just for pets!

I can tell, you're drooling.

The opportunities in this space are limited only by your imagination. If your firm is considering supporting pet care and dog walking clients, here are some fun ways to harness them.

### THE PLAN

In order to reach clients in this space, you need a plan. Here are seven common marketing steps with a pet-centric twist to help you get started.

- **Create a plan.** Identify what you're willing to do to gain these clients. Will you attend events, speak at conferences, get involved with causes, spend money on advertising, create compelling website content, develop website landing pages, and more? If you answered, "Yes!" then keep reading.
- **Identify your target** market geographically and by client type—know who you want to attract; where they are located; what type of services they offer; and identify their pain points.
- **Decide if you need a new brand** or sub-brand for your existing practice. If you'd like a new brand, consider working pets or dogs into the branding effort, from the domain name to the imagery. If it's a sub-brand be sure to segregate part of your website to the sub-brand with its own content, landing pages, look and feel, and more.

- **Classify the services** you want to offer this particular audience. Will it be the same services you offer to other clients, or will it be unique to this client base?
- **Create blog, social media, and website** content that will draw in the clients. Also, identify the type of media they consume to help you create the content they prefer. Using a pet- or dog-related, fun call-to-action will resonate with them too, such as "Avoid barking up the wrong tree. Call us today!," "It's meow or never. Registration is limited!," "Don't be a fish out of water. Get the tools you need to succeed.," and "Scrap going cold turkey. We are here to help."
- **Spend a little to make a lot.** Add a marketing budget to your plan and spend it wisely. Think strategically about where your audience spends time. Then, spend money there. It might be on websites, or events, social media, or in magazines.
- **Hussle.** Clients are not going to come knocking on your door because you hung a sign outside. You have to get involved and be active in the industry you want to attract. It's okay, they don't bite.

### WHAT WOULD A MARKETING CAMPAIGN LOOK LIKE?

In order to have a successful marketing campaign, you must begin at its end. What is your goal or why are you doing this? Once that's defined you will know what you need to do to make it successful. Here is an example.

- **Goal:** Generate 15 leads from the pet care industry over a period of the next three months.

- **Audience:** Pet Care industry franchisees and small business owners with revenue between \$250,000 - \$1 million in the [name] geographic region.
  - **Brand:** Main brand with a sub-brand for the pet-care industry on the existing site (i.e., unique landing page(s) and content are needed).
  - **Services:** Payroll, tax, and software services.
  - **Content topic:** Blog article/Checklist about small business accounting software tool; case study video/podcast of existing client's use of our accounting software tools; plus, a lead generation page for accounting software services you provide with links to the blog and case study. [This step will be repeated over and over for each service line and topic you plan to cover.]
  - **Ads/Budget:** Spend your budget (\$150 - \$350) on social media channels, like Facebook and Instagram, or Google's display network placement for specific websites for a two- to three-week period. The ads would link to your landing page.
  - **Hussle:** Research local events you/your team can get involved with, such as speaking at the Chamber of Commerce, attending or sponsoring a pet-related event, hosting a talk at the local library or pet-friendly location, etc. Remember to bring along a promotional item that "speaks" their language, such as t-shirts, bandanas, frisbees/toys, or post-it notes with a slogan and your brand on it, such as "Stop chasing your tail. Leave the accounting to us!"
- Now that you have a plan and an example, avoid the wild goose chase. Focus your efforts, know your audience and their pain points, and become a best-in-breed, pet-industry accountant. ■



Becky Livingston has over twenty-five years' experience in marketing and technology in financial services and engineering firms. She is the President and CEO of Penheel Marketing, a boutique marketing firm specializing in social media and digital marketing for CPAs. In addition to being a marketing practitioner, Becky is also an adjunct professor, author, and speaker.



# Is Branding Just for Large Accounting Firms?

By Jean Caragher

**WHAT IS BRANDING, really?** It is often misunderstood and associated with huge dollar investments - or it is thought to be simply redesigning a firm's logo or meant for only large accounting firms. None of this is correct.

Brand development is a strategy that can be used by CPA firms of all sizes because it can accomplish many important objectives simultaneously, such as:

- increase a firm's visibility in the marketplace;
- differentiate a firm from its competitors;
- deliver more consistent messages to clients, contacts, and staff;
- focus a firm's marketing program;
- enhance recruiting and retention efforts; and
- integrate marketing and communications after a merger.

Branding is not just the use of a name, term, logomark, or design to identify a product or service, but it is also the development of a personal relationship between the client and the product or service. Your brand name conveys a set of expectations and associations and conjures up the personality of your firm. Simply put, it is who people think you are, from the way a person answers the phone, to the way you do business, to the look of the invoice.

Positioning drives branding strategy. A market position is a promise between your firm and the client. For example, what comes to mind when you think of Volvo? For most people, it is "safety." Volvo's early brand positioning focused on keeping drivers safe from accidents with safety-glass windshields and steel cages. Safety at Volvo now works in new ways. Preventative safety helps us avoid accidents in the first place. They have also addressed increasing concerns about crime with their personal safety initiatives: building features into the car that help make you safe as you enter and exit your car.

So, what's your position? The CPA brand is often associated with attributes including integrity, competence and objectivity. Marketing research commissioned by the AICPA supports these attributes. But since these attributes are inherent in all CPA firms, the key to successful brand development for your firm is to determine its unique characteristics, personality, and culture. Think about your particular set of values, programs, culture, assets/skills, or the people who deliver a service. Then determine a unique position.

## FIVE ELEMENTS OF A CONSISTENT BRAND

- **Logo.** Your logo is possibly the most important element of a brand identity. It is usually the most recognizable element of a branding system, since it is typically used in all materials. A rectangular-shaped logo is ideal. In one glance people should know who you are and what you do. Do not make too many variations of your logo. This will weaken your identity. Create a logo library that includes a color version, black and white version, square logo (for social media) with and without your tagline.
- **Tagline.** A tagline is a slogan or a short set of words used to associate with your firm or brand, conveying the most important attribute or benefit that you wish to communicate. A tagline should support your positioning and be short, simple, and clear. A tagline that raises questions is not effective.

- **Colors.** In order for your brand's colors to become associated with your firm, it is important that the same colors are used throughout all materials. By selecting Pantones (and their corresponding RGB/CMYK colors), and enforcing their usage, you ensure that the colors used in all of your firm's print and digital pieces remain consistent.
- **Fonts.** Similar to colors, it is important to select specific fonts that should be used throughout your firm's materials. Limit this selection to as few fonts as possible. Additionally, it is important to select a corresponding web-safe font to use if your firm fonts are not already web-safe. Choose fonts that reflect your firm's image and mesh well with your logo and other style elements.
- **Imagery: Illustrative and/or Photographic Style.** Select one imagery style, illustrations or photography. All imagery should have a consistent look and feel, whether printed or online.

## CONCLUSION

Building your accounting firm's brand is an investment of time and dollars. However, your new brand and positioning can increase your firm's visibility; differentiate it from competitors; deliver more consistent messages; focus your marketing program; enhance recruiting and retention efforts; and, integrate marketing and communications after a merger. ■

*Jean Marie Caragher is president of Capstone Marketing, providing marketing consulting services to CPA firms. She is the author of The 90-Day Marketing Plan for CPA Firms: How to Create the Roadmap for Your Firm's Growth and Gear Up for Growth: The Marketing Trends Manual for Accountants. For more information contact her at 727.210.7306 or jcaragher@capstonemarketing.com.*

# CPA Firms and the #MeToo Era

By Joseph Wolfe and Lindsey Pilla

FEDERAL, STATE AND, in many instances, local laws prohibit sexual harassment and employment discrimination. These laws hold employers responsible for maintaining a non-discriminatory workplace free of harassment, intimidation and retaliation. In 2006, the “Me Too” movement was founded by Tamara Burke to aid women who have been victims of sexual violence. This movement shed a light on many high-profile accusations against men and women in politics, business and entertainment. Increasingly, this has raised questions in the minds of business owners about how to maintain a non-discriminatory workplace, which is further complicated by the extensive use of both personal and business technology by firm personnel.

## UNIQUE FACTORS IMPACTING CPA FIRMS

Accounting firms increasingly operate virtually, with employees working from home, client locations, and firm offices, which may be in different cities, counties, states, and even countries. This presents unique challenges regarding compliance with employment discrimination laws. “Firms need to have robust policies and training, and a simple process for employees to inform human resource personnel about potential problems, without fear of retaliation. Prompt escalation and investigation can prevent bigger problems later”, says Ana Shields, a principal at the law firm of Jackson Lewis who practices exclusively in employment law. “Training should be conducted for all employees, including remote workers.”

Some firms are actively engaged in merging or acquiring other professional service firms. Both employment practices and the “tone at the top” regarding maintenance

of a non-discriminatory and safe workplace can vary substantially from one firm to the next. Qualified and experienced human resource professionals should participate in due diligence on these matters prior to initiating negotiations to merge or acquire another practice. “Due diligence is critical,” said Shields. “Be strategic about the information requested. Ask about both pending claims and complaints as well as prior claims that were resolved. Is the alleged harasser or complainant still working there? Was the alleged harasser or complainant a member of management? How do they conduct investigations? Review their policies and get details on harassment prevention training.”

Consult with an experienced employment law attorney about obtaining and reviewing this information. While the ability to investigate these matters may be limited by law, confidentiality obligations and circumstances surrounding negotiations, such con-

sultation will provide important background information relevant to mitigating risks and managing insurance costs, as well as post-transaction integration of firm personnel.

Accounting firms that provide outsourced tax and accounting services also need to conduct due diligence before placing their employees in a client work environment, and promptly investigate any complaints about harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Firms that lease employees to other businesses also need to conduct training and maintain adequate controls over these operations to avoid running afoul of employment discrimination laws. Several harassment lawsuits filed by the EEOC in 2018 involved staffing companies. “Ensure that your staff understands that no matter how big the client is, your firm as an organization will not tolerate harassment or discrimination,” said Shields. “There may be resistance to reporting harassment at a major client; set the appropriate ‘tone at the top,’ and if there is a complaint, respond in a meaningful way.”

## IN CONCLUSION

Maintaining a non-discriminatory workplace requires ongoing effort. Consult with qualified human resource personnel to monitor and update training, policies and procedures for compliance with applicable law, and to prevent both sexual harassment and other types



of employment discrimination. It is also important to set the right “tone at the top” through management words and actions, and to provide employees with the training and resources needed to identify inappropriate behaviors and report them to human resource personnel for investigation and response. In the event a complaint is received, consult with a qualified employment practices attorney prior to taking any disciplinary action, and promptly report any claims to the firm’s employment practices liability insurer. ■

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# Mileage Tracking Feature

## Now Available in QuickBooks Online

THE DAYS OF clients giving you dog-eared pages with unintelligible scrawls of mileage driven for business is now a thing of the past. Manual, written logs are neither effective for automated workflow, nor are they necessarily accurate, especially if a client forgets to record their mileage right away and guesstimates it at a much later time.

The mileage tracking feature — which allows your clients to track their mileage, simply and easily while on the go -- is now available in QuickBooks Online and QuickBooks Online Advanced. Previously only available in QuickBooks Self-Employed, this feature is available in the United States and will soon be available in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

Chantal Evett, a product manager who oversees the mileage tracking feature, says Intuit heard loud and clear from its small business customers, and from accountants who work with them, that this feature was needed in QuickBooks Online. She explained that many small business owners wanted the ability to track mileage, but they needed the

higher-level functionality of QuickBooks Online versus QuickBooks Self-Employed, which is designed for businesses of one.

“Mileage deduction can be one of the biggest deductions that a self-employed or small business owner can claim to reduce their tax bill,” says Evett. “Now that mileage tracking is available in QuickBooks Online, our hope is that it’s easier than ever for small business owners to manage their mileage and get bigger deductions, allowing them to hopefully keep more money in their pockets at tax time.”

### A SIMPLE SWIPE ENABLES MILEAGE TRACKING

With small business owners and staff having little to no time left to spend on administrative matters, one of the

key advantages of the new mileage tracker is its built-in automation. The mobile QuickBooks Online app uses GPS, cell towers and Wi-Fi to triangulate a user’s location, providing pinpoint accuracy and automatically recording the miles driven for any business-related trip.

“This is a huge benefit for users who don’t want to manually add their information into QuickBooks Online,” explains Evett. “For

example, with only a simple swipe – a typical smartphone gesture all of us are very familiar with – QuickBooks Online can keep a very clear record of business mileage you can claim on your taxes.”

Let’s say your client provides home and commercial contractor services, with the need to visit multiple job sites in person. If the contractor travels between San Diego and Los Angeles, the contractor simply navigates to the mileage tab on the mobile app to track a trip. The contractor can also save a customized name to a specific address as a “favorite,” making it easier to remember which trips are business and which are personal.

It’s also worth noting that if a QuickBooks Self-Employed user finds a need to switch to QuickBooks Online, then the miles entered into QuickBooks Self-Employed will carry over.

“Intuit continues to add the technology and features I need to run my business all in one place,” says Heather Satterley of Satterley Training & Consulting. “The new mileage tracking feature in QuickBooks Online offers the same great functionality found in QuickBooks Self-Employed and MileIQ, but it’s now right inside my QuickBooks Online account!”

### MANUALLY ADDING MILEAGE

Manually entering mileage is also available if clients are tapping into QuickBooks Online on their desktop via the Mac or PC app, or over the internet. Users click on “mileage” on the navigation bar, put in the beginning and end locations, and miles driven, then classify the trip as personal or business. QuickBooks

instantly shows the dollar amount based on current IRS mileage rates (always updated) and what the tax deduction would be. For example, on a trip of 3.9 miles between point A and point B, the tax deduction would be \$2.26.

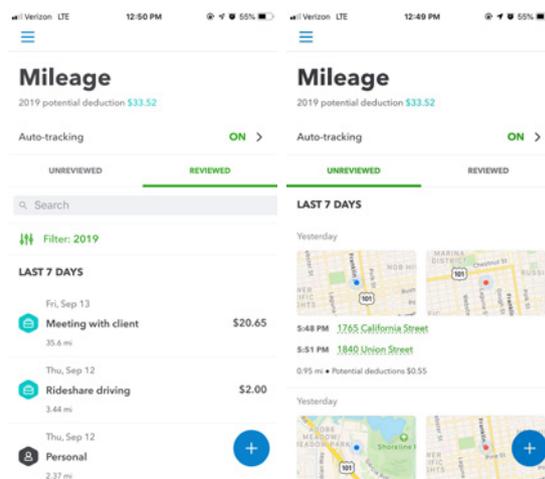
“While \$2.26 may seem insignificant to the user, we know that multiple trips can add up to big deductions come tax time,” says Evett. “QuickBooks Online generates a mileage report that can be reviewed and easily put into tax preparation software. That saves time for the user in not having to keep manual logs, while automating the workflow for the accountant.”

### NEXT STEPS FOR MILEAGE TRACKING

Currently, only the master administrator for a QuickBooks Online account has access to mileage tracking, but Evett reports that this will soon change. In addition, the development team is adding on features for Android and iPhone users to enhance the feature, such as location-based rules a user can set to classify the same frequent trips as business.

“Location-based rules will be great for the user who hasn’t checked the app in quite some time because no work will need to be done to record older trips,” says Evett. “We want to make mileage tracking one of the most useful features in QuickBooks Online, not only for the accountants, but for their clients as well.” ■

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## How Pressure Can Strengthen or Weaken an Accounting Firm

PRESSURE, AS IT goes in the song by Queen: “Pressure, pushing down on me, pressing down on you...”

Just as Freddie Mercury’s popular refrain sticks in your head, both good and bad pressures get inside every organization. Those pressures can push people to do the right thing faster and better, or press people and organizations into making bad decisions.

The ultimate question is, inside your organization, is pressure pushing people to excel or crumble? Or has pressure’s character led your people toward negative, even unethical behaviors?

### PRESSURE

The best study of negative pressure’s impacts was done in the 1950s by Solomon Asch. Asch tested the effects of group pressure: 75% of the subjects knowingly went along with obviously wrong answers to a simple question – demonstrating group pressure at work. Asch’s study tasked participants to say which of three lines was the longest. The test subjects were asked second to last which of the three lines was the longest. The plants, everyone in the group aside from the test subject, would advocate to the group that the longest line was in fact the shortest. 75% of the time, the subject went along with the group’s wrong answer.

When asked about this afterward, the subjects consistently replied, “I did not want to go against the group.”

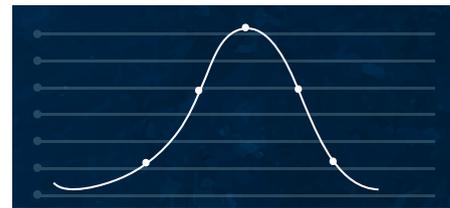
If a group of random strangers can exert this type of pressure on others, what type of pressure does your organization exert? If you combine the normal power of

group dynamics with the additional pressure of the authority of a boss, you can easily begin to see the unintended effects of pressure, pushing people in the wrong direction.

Organizations of all sizes have gotten into major trouble when the pressure goes the wrong way and promotes and even encourages unethical behavior. Remember Enron?

If unspoken pressure can lead to unethical and negative behavior, let’s understand what behaviors create pressure, both good and bad, and take intentional steps each day to make sure the pressure is going in the right direction.

No matter your title, your behaviors contribute to the group dynamics where you work. Do you show up on time to work, on time for meetings, and do you text during meetings? What does this tell others about the culture or your image as being “above the law”? Are you creating more bad pressure each day?



Then, there are the clearly big things: how do you treat your co-workers when times are tough? Do you do the right thing, even if no one seems to be looking and it is not the path of least resistance? These decisions get projected into the collective, and gaps and disparities in values inflate the pressure, positive and negative.

### PRESSURE’S SLIPPERY SLOPE

If we apply a standard bell curve to this concept of pressure, once we move past the 50% threshold for good vs. bad pressure, we quickly drop off and fall further down the curve. This is where the power of group dynamics really comes into play.

If your organization lets those little and big decisions go the wrong way more than 50% of the time, doing the wrong thing is an everyday thing. Enron didn’t decide one day to perpetuate a massive fraud. Top-down, they fostered the wrong pressures onto their people, until group dynamics took over, and the rest is history.

How can we take intentional steps to foster the right type of pressure and demonstrate what is right versus what is expedient or easy to others?

The first step starts with those at the top of the organization. If the partners or executives inside an organization are not committed to “good” pressure, all is lost. As a leader you need to say the right things, as hard or tiring as it seems—because you set the tone for everyone else. Consistent demonstration of the right pressures—and the right behaviors under pressure—make an indelible, lasting imprint.

The second step is to recognize when those in the group take the correct actions when faced with tough decisions. Did someone make the correct and accurate accounting entry, even though it may mean



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missing a client’s expectation? Or were they encouraged to “plug” the number? Hopefully, everyone reading this expects those they work with to record the correct entry each time. What we see in fraud and ethics issues are good employees succumbing to pressures that lead everyone down the wrong path.

Finally, when those at the top embody the right tone, and group members make the right decisions, the final step is acknowledging people when they do the right thing.

### GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

This isn’t about rewarding people for just doing their jobs. You are re-enforcing the right behavior by publicly drawing a clear line in the sand through leadership by.

The research on group dynamics shows time and time again that people feel pressure to conform to the group – even when conformity means going with the flow of things that are obviously off-kilter. To ensure the success of our organizations, we need to apply leadership by example when pressure is coming down on our people—to keep us on the other side of the Dark Side of the Force.

What do your actions show each day? Are you applying pressure encouraging those around you to make the right or wrong decision, making your own choice and impacting the group in the right way? ■



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## How to Seek and Find Professional Development

IT'S ALL TOO easy to feel stagnant in your career, no matter how much success you've achieved. You could be a partner at a major firm and still suffer from a sense of wanting more. You know the story. You have a great job, opportunities to move up, your work is valued, but something just doesn't feel right. You begin to wonder if your sense of listlessness is the result of falling out of love with your profession. I've gotten everything I've wanted, but I'm still feeling unsatisfied. What's wrong with me?

*"A passive approach to professional development will leave you by the wayside."*

~ Tom Peters, Author of  
*"In Pursuit of Excellence"*

The truth of the matter is that these feelings are perfectly normal and are not at all related to your position or the value you provide to your team. When it comes to our careers, advancement and development are not the same thing. It's entirely possible to advance without learning new things, adding new skills to your repertoire, or growing in your ability to do what you do well. Oftentimes, the moments when we lose focus on our development are precisely the moments when we feel directionless and without professional validation. In other words, it's essential that we make our jobs feel meaningful and rewarding.

When I talk about professional development, I'm not talking about the required continuing education credits many of us have to com-

plete.. Instead, I mean learning opportunities that help us with our growth, outside of compliance, that make you a more capable team member and a more agile contributor to your organization. Learning begins with having a mindset that you're still a beginner and have a thirst for knowledge. It may also involve ditching bad habits that keep you from pursuing new opportunities. Always, though, it begins with an honest impetus from within you. Unlike a promotion, nobody can tap you on the shoulder and give you development. It's important to identify what we need and find it, so we can feel fulfilled.

### WHEN TO BE COMFORTABLE IN THE UNCOMFORTABLE

People are leaving their jobs at higher rates than any time in recent history, many of them seeking out better compensation doing a similar job at a similar company. The story of the one-company worker is becoming more and more of a rarity, and with good reason. Studies indicate the workers who change companies can earn as much as 15 percent more when they switch. Some experts even recommend switching jobs regularly in order to have the most fulfilling career.

It's important to note that chances for development may be no better just by virtue of switching jobs. Sure, you'll have the first six months when everything feels new and fresh, when you're learning the systems and every day is a new challenge, but what happens after that? We can't run away from who we are, the skills we have, and the gaps we need to conquer. It's up to us to step back in any situation that we are in and be more of an observer and study it. If you believe with the right support and educational opportunities you can reach your desired milestones, then jumping ship doesn't necessarily solve it. Being able to approach a manager or leader and discuss your aspirations is key in ensuring you are in the right place and the company wants the best for you as well.

### THE AVENUES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Here's the good news when it comes to development: Once you decide to seek it out, there are countless places you can find it. Mentorship is one of the surest sources of development. Seek out people who are leaders in your field, both inside and outside of your workplace, and ask them for guidance. That may sound

like an intimidating prospect, but mentors want to help people who are passionate and willing to learn. Demonstrating your interest in receiving guidance from somebody can lead to massive growth.

Additionally, books, podcasts, and other passive resources can be hugely beneficial for development. Try subscribing to a few podcasts that focus on topics you'd like to improve, whether they are technical skills, technological awareness, or interpersonal relationships. Of course, real development is only going to come once you've taken the time to define what success looks like to you. If development is going to be real and lasting, it can't be cookie-cutter or done in an attempt to appease somebody else.

The beauty of our information-saturated age is the breadth and depth of resources available to you. Most of the time, simply motivating yourself to take the first step is the hardest part. Once you can do that, you can unlock a world where work is never boring and the only question you start ask is, "How can I get better today?" ■



# PETS

WE ALL LOVE our furry friends – so are there apps that can help us take care of our pets and share our lives with our pets? You bet! Here are some apps that are destined to be your next best friend.

Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? The **Puppr** app helps you, the person, teach your dog a variety of tricks and skills with step-by-step examples and a built-in clicker you can use for reinforcement. There are basic tricks like sit, stay, down, and then there are silly tricks, circus tricks, agility tricks, and useful tricks like teaching your dog to fetch a leash or ring a bell to go outside. Some of the more advanced tricks are locked behind a paywall, but most of the app can be accessed for free.

Pups aren't the only animals that can be trained. The **Cat Training Tips** app provides practical tips for training your cat to come when called, accept medications, and get comfortable with a cat carrier.

If you've ever worried about the things your pet is eating, you'll want to download the **APCC** (Animal Poison Control Center) app from the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). The app helps with medical problems for dogs, cats, birds, and horses. From there you can look up foods, plants, medications, outdoor hazards and household hazards which your animal may have consumed. You can find

out the toxicity level and recommended treatment for ingestion. The list is not exhaustive, but there's quite a bit of useful information here.

The American Red Cross also provides an app called **Pet First Aid** which provides veterinary advice for dogs and cats including steps to take in the event of emergencies. And for those who like to be proactive, there is an early warning sign checker for preventative care. There are even instructions and videos on how to perform CPR in the event your pet is not breathing.

I use **Strava** to track my dog's walks. There are other GPS walking apps specifically created for animals (such as **Dog Walk**), but I was using Strava for my own exercising anyway, so I just set up an account for my dog. I can track the exact route of the walks we take, upload pictures from the walk, and add comments. I can share Strava with my dog-walking friends so we can see each other's progress.

Another app I recommend is **Next Door** –

again, not a pet-specific app, but if there is a Next Door app active in your neighborhood, you can post information about lost or found pets and get alerts on your phone. The neighborhood where I live is very engaged



with the app, especially if there is a pet that has wandered off.

Working pet parents can arrange for dog walkers to step in when they are away from home with the **Wag** app. Wag dog walkers are bonded, and GPS tracking lets you see where your dog is at all times. The

most recent rates I've seen are \$20 for a 30-minute walk and \$30 for a 60-minute walk. You can also sign up for boarding, pet sitting, and daycare through Wag. Wag operates in all 50 states, but not necessarily in every locale.

There are apps that show you where to find dog parks and dog-friendly trails and rest stops. **Paw Parks** is user-generated, so if your nearby park isn't on the app, you can add it.

Finally, the **BringFido** app is a must-have when traveling with your pets – find pet friendly hotels including information on deposit amounts for renting a hotel room with your pet. The app also provides information on pet-friendly restaurants, dog parks, and other attractions. ■



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# Creating a Structure for Innovation

AS THE PROFESSION continues to move forward with business transformation, firms are being tasked with becoming more innovative. Innovation may come naturally to some, but many firms we speak to don't know where to start. At our recent Boomer Technology Circles Summit, one of our sessions was on the Process of Developing a New Service. We presented a framework for creating a new service, but the process applies to more than just launching a new service. It can be used for any internal or external innovations, including new processes, new services and new technology.

If you're looking for a better way to encourage and implement innovation in your firm, consider this five-step process.

## STEP 1: THE IDEA

Ideas can come from many different directions.

■ **Market intelligence** from the accounting profession and others provides an understanding of market trends. When you are aware of disruptive technologies, you can identify opportunities to leverage those technologies to better serve your clients.

■ **Client needs.** Have more conversations with clients. They will have a clearer idea of their future and the future of their industry than you. Get comfortable asking questions beyond their current financials. Listen to their answers and look for ways you can develop solutions and add value.

■ **Staff experience and ideas.** Educate your staff about why your firm needs to innovate and how being innovative will affect the firm and its clients. Put yourself in a position to hear what people are talking about and ask them where they are getting their insights.

Start by creating Idea Factory. Not just a suggestion box, but a method of gathering innovative ideas from team members or clients. When people submit an idea, they begin the process and complete an Idea Form that:

- Describes their idea,
- Estimates the additional revenue generated, cost savings or other benefits, and
- Estimates the cost to implement.

Incentivize ideas by entering submissions into a prize drawing. In our firm, any ideas that are submitted, documented and implemented within the previous 12 months are eligible for a cash drawing during our annual strategic planning retreat.

## STEP 2: VET YOUR IDEA

Once they've completed an Idea Form, the individual (or a collaborative group) needs to continue to vet the idea to ensure they can prove to themselves that the concept is a good one. In our firm, we have two tools that help our team walk through this process.

- An Executive Summary that discusses the need the idea addresses and what we will be able to accomplish by implementing the idea.
- A Project Filter that addresses:
  - What the project will accomplish
  - The difference it will make in the firm or to our clients
  - What an ideal outcome from the completed project looks like
  - How to measure the success or failure of the project

It may seem like requiring these forms puts unnecessary red tape around innovation, but they are crucial to the process because they force participants to prove to themselves that the idea is a good one.

## STEP 3: PROOF OF CONCEPT

Once your firm has accepted an idea and made the decision to move forward, it's time for proof of concept.

Talk to your existing clients (internal or external) about your idea and

gather feedback. Recruit a handful of early adopters. This proof of concept process addresses the questions of:

- Who will buy or use it?
- How much will they pay for it, or what value do they see in it?
- How often will they buy or use it?

If the innovation will be offered to clients, this is a good time to loop in marketing for a marketing plan draft.

Your proof of concept serves two purposes: it demonstrates the feasibility of implementing this innovation and increases your team's comfort level around using the innovation and/or selling it to new clients.

## STEP 4: LAUNCH!

Once you get positive results from Step 3, it's time to get final approval from your Executive Committee and launch.

Previous steps in the process involved a small number of employees. Now it's time to roll it out to the entire firm. Incorporating your team into the launch of the innovation makes a huge difference in its success. Typically, employees who feel ownership in a product, service or process take pride in its outcome, and that pride leads to an increased effort in ensuring a successful launch.

Educate your employees by letting them use the innovation so they can make informed recommendations about it. Their input can spur further discussions about the product, service or process's implementation and ways to improve its marketing. Without education, people tend to feel like innovation is happening to them as

opposed to being a part of it.

## STEP 5: AFTER ACTION REVIEW

You may feel like the launch is over and that's it. However, you need to continually look at your innovation to improve the process, the marketing, and other aspects of the initiative to ensure you get it right.

The After Action Review process was developed by the military as a way to learn quickly from soldiers' experience in the field. With this system, your team talks about what happened during the launch and why. You transfer critical lessons and knowledge immediately to get the most benefit. The focus is on learning rather than blaming, so it leads to an improved understanding of your innovation, your launch team's performance, and it helps people think about how to best work together to produce better results on the next project.

Deliberately designing your innovation process will systematize and structure an otherwise chaotic process, shorten the time to market, more quickly detect flops and increase the success rate of innovation in your firm. Keep in mind, innovation involves failure. Be prepared to fail, but learn from your failures and fail fast and forward. Creating a structure around innovation can't guarantee that every idea will be a success, but it can guarantee the thoroughness of the innovation process by ensuring that critical steps aren't forgotten or neglected. ■

## BUSINESS EXECES HAVE DIMMER VIEW OF U.S. ECONOMY

The AICPA Economic Outlook Survey polls chief executive officers, chief financial officers, controllers and other certified public accountants in U.S. companies who hold executive and senior management accounting roles.

Their most recent survey shows that only 42 percent of survey takers expressed optimism about the U.S. economy's outlook over the next 12 months, down from 57 percent in the previous quarter. As recently as 2018, 79 percent indicated they were optimistic about the economy.

The global economy was viewed in an even worse light, with less than a quarter (24 percent) of executives expressing optimism, down from 35 percent last quarter, citing uncertainty over U.S.-China trade and tariff conflicts and the resolution of Brexit in the United Kingdom.

Other key survey findings include:

- Availability of skilled personnel remains a top challenge, as it has been since Quarter 3 of 2017
- Domestic economic conditions and political leadership joined skilled personnel as the top three business challenges for the quarter
- The percentage of U.S. executives who remain optimistic about their own company's prospects fell from 62 percent to 58 percent ■

### Discussion Paper Tackles Materiality in Attestations

A new discussion paper from the AICPA discusses the challenges of determining materiality in an attestation engagement when subject matters cannot be quantitatively measured.

Materiality Considerations for Attestation Engagements Involving Aspects of Subject Matters That Cannot Be Quantitatively Measured, was developed by a Working Group of the AICPA Assurance Services Executive Committee (ASEC), highlighting challenges that practitioners may face when making professional judgements about materiality.

The AICPA is seeking feedback on the issues discussed in the paper and would like to hear from those with experience in attestation engagements. Interested parties are encouraged to submit their feedback to Sherry.Hazel@aicpa-cima.com by October 31, 2019.

## AICPA AWARDS 2019-20 LEGACY SCHOLARSHIPS

The AICPA granted more than \$650,000 in academic scholarships to 129 students as part of the AICPA Legacy Scholars program. The scholarships help students pay for college while providing opportunities to succeed in the accounting profession.

The Scholarships that comprise AICPA's Legacy Scholars Program are:

- AICPA/Robert Half Student Scholarship Award, which provides \$10,000 to up to four undergraduate and graduate students who intend to earn their CPA.
- American Woman's Society of CPAs (AWSCPA) Scholarship Award, which offers \$5,000 to up to four outstanding women pursuing a degree in accounting.
- AICPA John L. Carey Scholarship Award, which gives \$5,000 to up to five non-accounting or business degree holders pursuing a graduate degree in accounting.

■ AICPA Scholarship Award for Minority Accounting Students, which offers \$3,000 to \$5,000 to approximately 90 outstanding minority students to encourage their study of accounting.

■ AICPA Foundation Two-year Transfer Scholarship Award, provides \$5,000 to up to 25 students transferring from a two-year school to a four-year program to complete their accounting degree.

The complete list of recipients is available at <https://thiswaytocpa.com/alsrecipients/>. The AICPA will once again be offering scholarships for the 2020-2021 school year. Students interested in becoming one of the AICPA's Legacy Scholars should review the eligibility criteria and submit their applications through [www.ThisWayToCPA.com](http://www.ThisWayToCPA.com) starting December 1, 2019.

## AUDITING STANDARDS BOARD PROPOSES AMENDMENTS TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The AICPA Auditing Standards Board (ASB) has issued an exposure draft of a Proposed Statement on Auditing Standards (SAS) Amendments to AU-C Sections 800, 805, and 810 to Incorporate Auditor Reporting Changes From SAS No. 134.

In the ASB's effort to conform Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS) to the new auditor reporting standards, the proposed SAS aligns:

- AU-C sections 800, Special Considerations—Audits of Financial Statements Prepared in Accordance with Special Purpose Frameworks, which addresses audits of financial statements prepared in accordance with a special purpose framework.
- 805, Special Considerations—Audits of Single Financial Statements and Specific Elements,

Accounts, or Items of a Financial Statement, which addresses audits of a single financial statement, a balance sheet or an element of a financial statement.

■ 810, Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements (the AU-C 800 series, which addresses audits of summary financial statements derived from financial statements audited in accordance with GAAS.

The SASs are combined with the reporting provisions of SAS No. 134, Auditor Reporting and Amendments, Including Amendments Addressing Disclosures in the Audit of Financial Statements, and other recently issued SASs. Auditing Standards Board Proposes Amendments to Financial Statements. ■

## ASB ENCOURAGES AUDITORS TO EXERCISE SKEPTICISM

The American Institute of CPAs' (AICPA) Auditing Standards Board (ASB) has issued a Proposed Statement on Auditing Standards (SAS), Auditing Accounting Estimates and

Related Disclosures, to supersede SAS No. 122 section 540, Auditing Accounting Estimates, Including Fair Value Accounting Estimates, and Related Disclosures, and amend

various other AU-C sections in AICPA Professional Standards.

The proposed SAS is intended to help auditors appropriately address the complex scenarios that can

occur with the new accounting standards. Those interested can submit their feedback to Sherry.Hazel@aicpa-cima.com by November 22, 2019. ■

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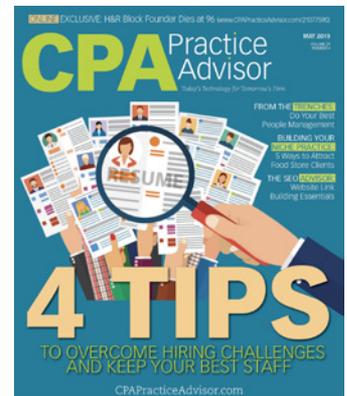
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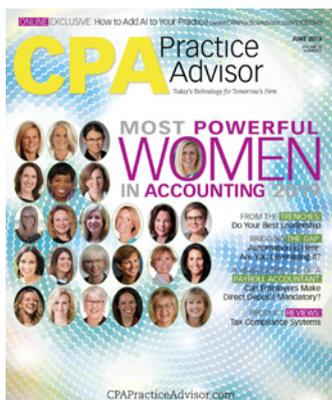
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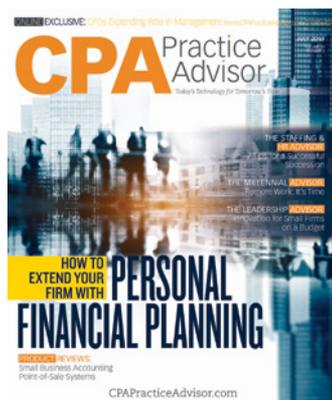
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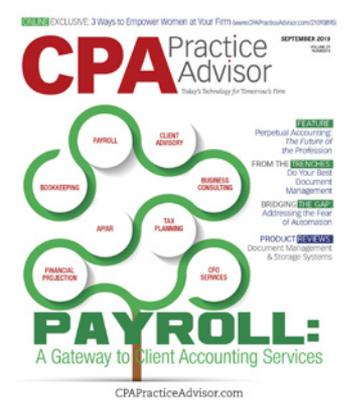
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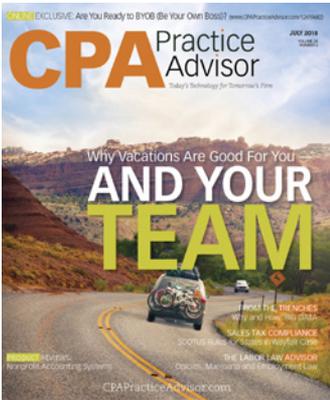


September 2019

2018

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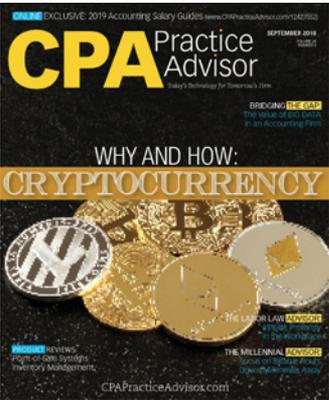
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July 2018



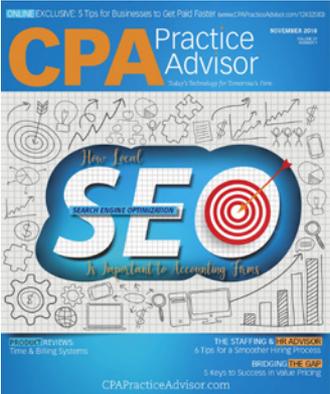
August 2018



September 2018



October 2018



November 2018



December 2018