

CPA Practice Advisor

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NUMBER 1

Today's Technology for Tomorrow's Firm

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Do You Have a Clear
Technology Vision

THE STAFFING &
HR ADVISOR:

5 Tips to Prevent
Staff Burnout
During Tax Season

BRIDGING **THE GAP:**

6 Steps to a
Growth Mindset

3 SECRETS TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL (AND PROFITABLE) CLIENT MEETINGS

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It's Really the 21st Century Now

WE'VE SPENT THE past 20 years trying to figure out what to call the decades of this new century. The Oughties? The Teens? Finally we can get into some decades that are easy to identify as we slide into the '20s (I don't think they'll be "Roaring," but maybe another adjective will catch hold).

I began this year and this new decade, as I usually do, spending a lot of time reflecting on the year just ended and contemplating the year ahead, considering future plans, making some general resolution-type to-do list items, and putting together a general vision of things I expect/hope to accomplish in the short term. But 2020 isn't just about the short term. This is the opening ceremony for a new decade, and so it is fitting that we look at the bigger

picture, spend some serious time anticipating where we expect to be in 10 years when this decade closes and how we are going to get there.

I've started working with my clients to help them develop 10-year personal finance plans for the new decade and have quickly found how few people really, seriously look that far ahead. And while 10 years isn't a lifetime, it's a good place to start for a solid future plan.

Your clients, your practice, your colleagues, and your family, could all benefit from a 10-year analysis and game plan. There are some solid advantages to looking at a bigger chunk of time instead of just trying to plan for the year ahead.

Major projects require time. You might have a vision of where you would like your career, your business, your personal relationships, your health to be in the future. By turning major life-changing goals into a one-year resolution, you're

likely dooming yourself to failure. One year just isn't enough time to make major changes. Instead, take the time to map out a long-term goal with interim steps that can be accomplished at intervals over the course of the next decade. A decade gives you the luxury of spreading out the tasks required to get where you're going, checking in on your progress as you go, and fine-tuning your goals as you reach annual milestones. And with a 10-year span in front of you, if there are setbacks, you have plenty of time to adjust your schedule.

This is not a quick assignment. Take an appropriate amount of time to consider your future goals, discuss them with others who will be impacted, and put those goals in writing along with a timeline for the decade that is in front of you. Create intervals when you will check in on the status of your progress as well as the steps needed to get you where

you're going, and put those check-in dates on your calendar so that you can hold yourself accountable.

One way to get started is to think about where you were 10 years ago and where you hoped to be today. Were you successful? Did you make a plan for that decade, and were your goals accomplished? If you didn't record your goals for the decade and the processes necessary to accomplish them, it's possible you haven't progressed as much as you hoped you would.

Here's your chance to make a fresh start – picture the you you want to be 10 years from now, how you will get there, and how you will look back on this decade. Look at all the accomplishments you will have made! The '20s are waiting for you! ■

— Gail Perry, Editor-in-Chief



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ALTHOUGH THIS PUBLICATION does not mandate a theme for my columns, if you look back, you'll note that year-by-year there has been a focus on important current technologies for accounting professionals. While the topics have included emerging technologies, and routine product offerings like practice management, document management or accounting software, this year of "2020 vision" requires refined thinking and a clear technology vision.

Consultants to the profession, as well as some vendors, are more concerned about your choice of their vision rather than one that fits your clients well. Enjoying a little bit of decompression time over the holidays has rejuvenated enthusiasm for technologies for you and your firm. In 2020, you can expect coverage of client advisory services (CAS) in some depth as well as coverage of improved automation in compliance services. While these columns never stray far from the premise that the technology must be ready to implement, this year should provide a clearer, simpler strategy so you can work your own vision. With that in mind, the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) this

year delivered the most impressive wave of hardware technologies in some time. Let's look at the best of the best for accounting professionals.

SO, WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT IN 2020?

Most impressive at CES this year was hardware for real world problems. We'll discuss each of them, but I was impressed by new generation laptops, monitors (including a second portable monitor), scanners, keyboards and mice. While 5G cell phones and WiFi6e technologies were impressive, they are not covered in this article.

Let's start with Lenovo, which had multiple laptops for demonstration.

Particularly useful to accountants was the Lenovo 13" folding PC known as the ThinkPad X1 Fold, which starts at \$2,500, available in the second half of 2020. Intel has been showing some prototypes like this unit with 15"-17" folding screens. There was extensive engineering by Lenovo using carbon fiber and special hinges to keep the screen from breaking or creasing.

The Fold can be used partially folded, like a laptop, and a touch-screen keyboard is available, so the detached keyboard becomes optional. The Fold has a case built around it for protection, and the size and weight when folded is smaller and lighter than an

iPad Mini with a Zagg Keyboard. The Fold allows operations across the fold, too. The product comes with a stylus that retracts when folded and is exposed when the screen is flat. If you are looking for impressive technology to use with a client, this is it!

For 2020 laptops, the newest Intel Core 10nm+ mobile processors code-named "Tiger Lake" include optimizations spanning the CPU, AI accelerators and discrete-level integrated graphics based on the new Intel Xe graphics architecture. Tiger Lake will deliver double-digit performance gains, AI performance improvements, a jump in graphics performance along with 4X the throughput of USB 3 with the new integrated Thunderbolt 4. During CES, Intel Vice President Lisa Pearce provided insight into the progress on the new Intel Xe graphics architecture, which will provide huge performance gains in Tiger Lake, and she previewed Intel's first Xe-based discrete GPU, code-named "DG1." Intel also covered the Project Athena laptop initiative which included 25 designs rolled out in 2019, and Intel expects partners to roll out 50 new designs in



ThinkPad X1 Fold at CES 2020

2020. Key attributes include:

- Modern Connected Standby and Lucid Sleep features implement fast wake with a simple lid-lift, push of a button or fingerprint recognition.
- Intel Core i5 or i7 processors, Intel Core vPro i5 or i7 processors with Intel Dynamic Tuning Technology, ≥8GB DRAM dual channel mode and ≥256GB NVMe SSD, including Intel Optane memory H10 options.
- Adaptive Intelligence: Features such as far-field voice services and support for OpenVINO. Designs based on 10th Gen Intel Core processors codenamed “Ice Lake” will bring broad scale intelligent performance to the laptop with Intel Deep Learning Boost.
- Fast-charging over USB Type C, integration and optimization of low power components, co-engineering support for power efficiency, along with platform optimization.
- Connectivity: A fast and persistent connection with Intel Wi-Fi 6 (Gig+) and optional Gigabit LTE. Connect to USB Type C devices with Thunderbolt 3, the fastest and most versatile port available.
- Touch displays, precision touchpads, and more sleek thin-and-light 2 in 1 design with narrow bezels for a more immersive experience.

Radical improvements in monitors were announced at CES. While we recommend purchasing 8K television products because of their upscaling capability, office monitors had notable breakthroughs, too. The HDR standard added a new level of brightness and clarity with the HDR standard. Refinements in the standard have solidified our recommendation to purchase HDR 600 monitors for your desktops and HDR 500 certified laptops. While there were dozens of impressive monitors for business, the winner of this CES was the HP S430c 43.4-inch Curved Ultrawide Monitor.

A single 43” monitor with two separate virtual screens, and a built-

in USB hub lets this monitor serve as a KVM to TWO separate devices (Win/Mac OS/Ubuntu/Android) using any USB-attached keyboard/mouse. The monitor favors USB Type C, but also has a single DisplayPort, and a single HDMI input as well. The technical specifications are impressive at 3840x1200, 600 Hz; 350 nits’ brightness; 65W of power to devices over the USB-C hub; a pop-up Windows Hello compatible webcam (1080p); and a built-in microphone. You can see the full spec sheet online at <http://cpate.ch/s430c>, and it is a fine value priced at \$999. The size, features and comfort of this monitor makes it a real winner for accounting professionals.

Just as impressive was a portable second monitor from Espresso Displays. This company has made different size monitors including a mobile 13” or 15” touch-screen monitor that has a stand (picture on previous page), and a wall mount for the office. At 5mm thick (0.2”), the monitor has an innovative magnetic mounting system with wall mounts and stands that use magnets to hold the monitor in the desired position. The monitor supports USB-C, HDMI, PC/Mac, consoles, some iOS devices, some Android devices. There are plans for 17” and 19” models as well.

We knew that another innovation cycle was due in scanners, and Fujitsu did not disappoint with the new \$700 Fujitsu fi-800R series scanner. The fi-800R Automatic ADF Image Scanner sports a Dual Path Mechanism featuring Return Scan, perfect for reception use - scanning passports, thick plastic cards and folded documents. Return Scan captures hard cards and passports up to 5 mm thick. With Automatic Stacking Control, the stacker automatically extends when U-turn Scan starts, then retracts when scanning is complete, returning scanned documents to the input tray to save space.

Automatic Skew Correction



Athena Laptops presented at CES 2020.

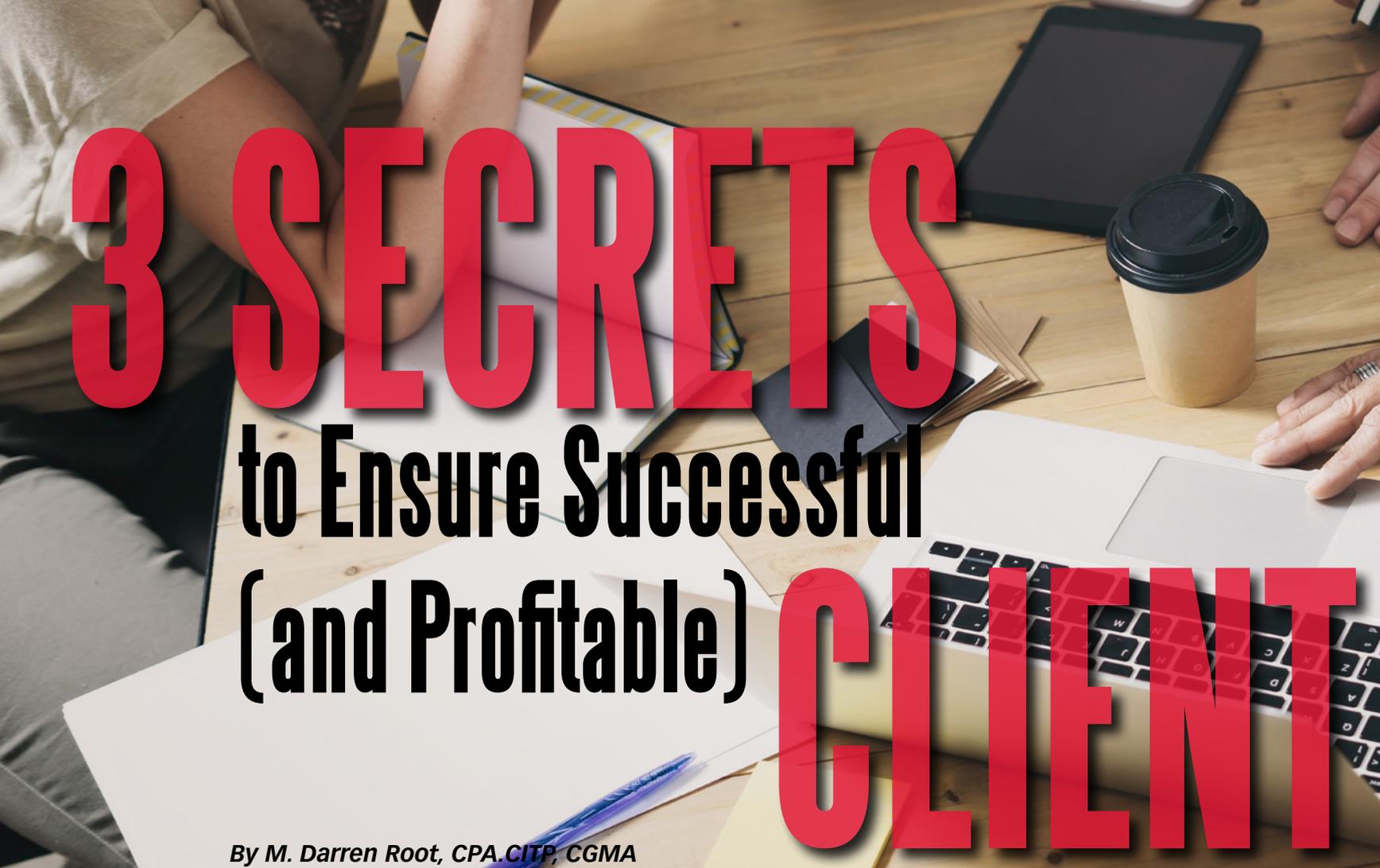
straightens each document before scanning, Active Separation applies the optimal pressure to documents, according to paper thickness and condition to prevent multi-feed, and Front Side Detection recognizes faces on ID cards or passports. Even if documents are scanned face down, PaperStream IP automatically rearranges images so that scanned pages are organized in the correct order. Information contained in the Machine-Readable Zone of a passport, like number, name and nationality, can be extracted by PaperStream Capture to efficiently manage customer information. We were told that all issues reported using PaperStream had been resolved, and plan to test this with technicians in the first quarter of 2020.

To make all things technology work well, there must be a reliable base of hardware. 2020 is starting off with a major wave of innovation to enjoy now and for years to come.

CAN YOU SEE THERE ARE MANY NEW HARDWARE PRODUCTS TO CONSIDER IN 2020?

This article did not cover even a tenth of the products introduced at this year’s CES. Other favorites like SwiftPoint mice (www.swiftpoint.com) and Matias keyboards (www.matias.ca/products) were back with new models and updated features like iPad support for the mice and programmability and improved ergonomics for the keyboards. Other products like SSDs, NAS storage, backups and more had notable improvements announced at CES, too. We were also impressed with continued improvements in HDMI fiber optics from Silicon Line (<https://www.silicon-line.com/home.html>) and DisplayLink’s incorporation of the Logitech Tap meeting room touch screen controller which works with Google Hangouts Meet, Teams/Skype, and Zoom. The Tap uses a small form factor computer (e.g. a NUC or similar) and can add conferencing cameras and a display to have a complete easy-to-use meeting solution.

To make all things technology work well, there must be a reliable base of hardware. 2020 is starting off with a major wave of innovation to enjoy now and for years to come. ■



3 SECRETS to Ensure Successful (and Profitable) CLIENT

By M. Darren Root, CPA, CITP, CGMA

WE ARE IN the business of building relationships. No matter how advanced technology becomes, at the heart of the accounting profession, we are people of our people—our clients. That means face-to-face meetings with clients are still (and will likely always be) a mainstay component of a firm’s business model. And now well into busy season—the one time of year you can bank on seeing clients in the office—firms need to make the most of “live” time.

Having clients onsite, live and in-person, represents a golden opportunity. Firm partners and staff who have mastered the client meeting understand that a successful meeting is about so much more than providing a rich experience. Of course, you want clients to feel special and loved, but you also want to use this time to collect data and get to know your clients on a much deeper level.

So, why is data collection so important? The answer is fairly straightforward: Because data is the gateway to providing a superior client experience—one where the focus is on making the client’s life better overall. Think about it, if we understand clients at every level, we are far better equipped to proactively offer services and advice that align with their life goals. It’s about digging deeper and uncovering not just the clients’ needs (bookkeeping, payroll, etc.), but also unearthing their wants. Do clients want to retire by age 55 and travel the world, to save for their children’s education, to grow their business by 30% and

expand into new market spaces? Data offers us far more detailed insight into our clients’ lives.

THE 3 SECRETS ...

Data is at the heart of the three secrets that ensure a successful and profitable client meeting. Data is the glue that holds the broader business model together. So, for your next client meeting, consider applying these tested and proven concepts:

1.

**GO IN WITH DATA
COLLECTION AT THE TOP
OF YOUR LIST**

It’s all about the data! While you may think you have adequate information on your clients, trust that there is always something you don’t know. This is why you should be actively collecting data



MEETINGS

throughout the year...and definitely during tax season when you are face to face with clients. My best guess is that some firms might have basic data on record, such as the firm services and products the client is using...and maybe even the technologies that support them. (I would also speculate that much of this information is maintained in the heads of key staff and not within a dedicated CRM system.) These are examples of “just-scratching-the-surface” data. After all, what does this information really tell you about clients' wants—their goals and dreams? How can you ever expect to work proactively with clients when you don't have the right data in hand?

In my firm, we run an “Insights” report before we meet with any client. This provides a panoramic view of what we know about the client...and the information gaps that need to be filled. With this knowledge, we go into a meeting with data collection in mind. We not only fill the gaps in data—such as determining if clients are using the current version of QuickBooks or using our payroll services—but also, do they want more guidance on setting up 529 plans for their kids, do they have an established 401(k) or ROTH IRA, what are their retirement goals, and do they desire deeper tax planning to improve

their current situation? This is prime time to ask such open-ended, exploratory questions as: “What do you really want from us?” and “What are your life goals?”

The key here is to have deeper conversations than you've ever had with your clients. You'll be surprised at the volume of data you can collect.

2. GO IN WITH A PRODUCT MINDSET

Based on knowing as much as you can about a client (all that valuable data), go into your meeting armed with ready-made tools (such as a sales presentation) to present value-add products that can benefit the client. This is how you are truly able to work proactively and take steps to make the client's life better! For example, if the client is using a credit card for business expenses that is not offering the best rewards, pitch your firm's credit card advisory product. If your client desires to retire by age 55, pitch your retirement planning product that will help reach this goal.

We are accountants and advisors first, but we are also entrepreneurs. Business growth is essential to survival, so make sure you are

prepared to talk about the products that can improve a client's life when you meet.

3. NEVER GO IN ALONE

This is some of the best advice I received over my 30-plus-year career. For partners, going into a meeting alone can create a few potential challenges, specifically in terms of firm growth and your quality of life. First, going in solo sets the expectation that you are going to do the work because you are the one building the relationship. Second, it puts the onus on you to pass client information along to the staff members who will actually perform the work. This leaves room for error and will drain more of your time. Lastly, going in alone can suck the life out of firm growth because your staff will not feel empowered to take on the responsibility of growing client relationships.

START GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CLIENTS BETTER ... IN ORDER TO SERVE THEM BETTER

As a profession, we have an immense opportunity to improve our game. The time has come to move past simply providing a good experience to proactively working to make our clients' lives better. When you understand the importance of data...of getting to know your clients at a much deeper level...you can start to serve them in a proactive manner and, ultimately, witness results that are transformational.

When you take the time to identify and track client goals, to ask more profound questions about their true wants, you can offer far more personalized services that help clients not only achieve their goals but also enrich their lives overall and for the long-term. Make it your goal to go into your next sit-down armed with these three secrets to running a successful and profitable client meeting. ■

Darren Root, CPA.CITP, CGMA is former executive editor of CPA Practice Advisor, and is the co-founder and CEO at Rootworks, the business model for the Modern Firm®. Rootworks supports its members with turnkey client products, a smart CRM platform, strategic coaching and the support of an established peer network. Learn more at rootworks.com. Subscribe to Darren's Better Every Day podcast on iTunes or listen from the Rootworks website at rootworks.com/podcast for a deeper dive on the topics discussed in this article and more.



CES 2020 Highlights: New Workstations for Accountants

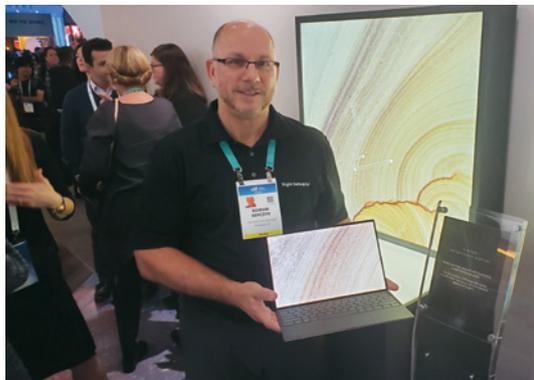
THE NEW DECADE got off to an exciting start with our attendance at the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) held in Las Vegas January 6-9, 2020. CES is the largest trade show in the world with an excess of 4,500 consumer product/service vendors spread out over 2.9 million square feet of exhibit space, vying for the attention of more than 170,000 attendees from around the world. While most of the media coverage is focused on home and automotive technologies, we perused the venues looking specifically for products that would be utilized by accountants in their practices



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LAPTOP WORKHORSE

Dell announced their latest Latitude 9510 model which they touted as the world's smallest and lightest 15" laptop. By reducing the bezel around the screen, the InfinityEdge display fits into a traditional 14" chassis which can be ordered in either a traditional clamshell or 2-in-1 laptop form factor. The Latitude 9510 can be ordered with Intel's 10th Generation processor (code named Ice Lake) which extends battery life up to an incredible 30 hours utilizing Dell's Optimizer application.



LAPTOP MOBILITY

Dell once again caught our eye with an updated XPS 13 9300 model having an even larger screen and keyboard fitting into the same size chassis as their previous model. This was accomplished by expanding the 13.4" InfinityEdge display into the bottom bezel so the new version has an overall screen to body ratio of 91.5% (16:10 aspect ratio) and can come in either a 1080p or 4K version. Individual keyboard key sizes were also increased by 9% and the touchpad by 17% to provide a larger keyboard feel in a form factor that easily fits on an airplane tray table.

LAPTOP INNOVATION

Another great laptop was the HP Elite Dragonfly G2 which had some cool future features including an integrated Qualcomm 5G modem and a built in "Tile" tracker which helps you locate the device if stolen. The laptop also had some privacy features that we've had to find workarounds for including the Sure View Reflect which makes your screen unreadable from the side, similar to the 3M privacy filters we've carried for the past decade. They also built in a physical privacy shutter that covers the camera instead of the tiny covers (or tape) that are manually stuck on.



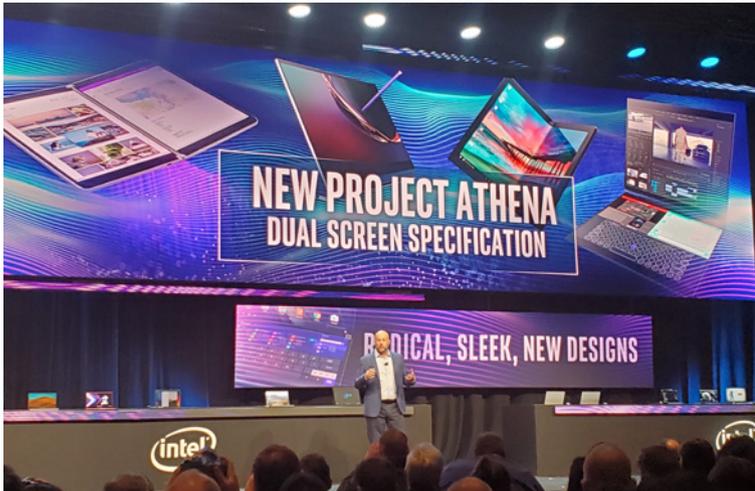
HP Elite Dragonfly and Spectre laptops with SureView privacy and Tile security integration.

DISPLAY

For accountants, the bigger and crisper the display, the more you will be able to see and work with multiple programs concurrently. Dell delivers on this challenge with its latest UltraSharp 42.5" 4K (U4320Q) display that is height adjustable and integrates USB-C connectivity. While somewhat pricey at \$1,050, Dell has reduced the price of its previous 43" Ultra HD 4K model (P4317Q) to \$675 which is more in the budget range of most accountants. Dual oversize monitors are also very popular in firms and two slightly smaller displays can actually provide more screen real estate than a single large one. Dell's newest 27" Ultra HD 4K model (U2720Q) was announced at \$710, driving down the price of the previous model (U2719C) to \$400, which would again be cost effective for adding two new displays.

FUTURE DESIGN ATHENA

On the innovative side, Intel rolled out specifications for its next generation of Ultrabooks, dubbed Project Athena, which will provide all day performance under “real world” conditions, instant resume (less than a second to wake up from sleep mode including fingerprint or face recognition), 5G connectivity, quick charge (four hours charge in less than 30 minutes), and included, for the first time, dual screen specifications. Athena design will incorporate Intel’s latest 10th Generation Ice Lake processors which are already available on devices including models of HP’s EliteBook x360, Lenovo’s Yoga S series and Samsung Galaxy Books. Intel also displayed its “Horseshoe Bend” concept laptop which points to its promotion of bendable screens without a seam. Lenovo announced they will actually be shipping its Thinkpad X1 Fold this summer which was slightly bulkier than we would want but will probably be the first working entrant into this category to see if it will take off.



INTEL announces Project Athena at CES 2020 incorporating dual screen specifications and all day battery life.

FOLDABLE FUTURE

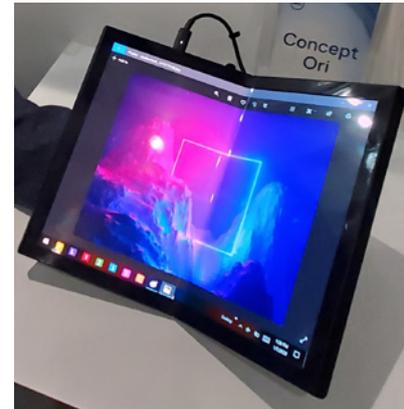
Folding was the rage this year and Dell also showed off two conceptual laptops that have dual screens connected by a hinge that could be utilized in either traditional laptop mode or flipped side-ways to be viewed similar to holding a book. The Duet appeared to consist of two separate 13” displays and had an ultra-thin detachable keyboard that could sit on top of the screen while the Ori concept appeared to be made with a single 12” display that could bend to be closed to the size of a book. This concept looked remarkably similar to Lenovo’s X1 Fold which includes a wireless keyboard that can be attached to work similarly to the traditional laptop or separately so the entire display can be utilized in either portrait or landscape mode.



Dell Concept Duet at CES 2020.



Lenovo X1 Fold at CES 2020.



Dell Concept Ori at CES 2020.



Dell 43 monitor at CES 2020.



Roman Kepczyk, CPA.CITP, CGMA at the HP station at CES 2020.
All photos courtesy of Roman Kepczyk, CPA.CITP, CGMA

Give Leads the Attention They Deserve

RELATIONSHIPS. WHETHER YOU sell a product, or as a CPA, your services and expertise, you need a way to develop and nurture relationships. Potential leads, like relationships, have a way of fading away if they're not given the attention they deserve.

Today, many accounting firms have ramped up marketing programs for their firm, including a more prominent social media presence, more aggressive direct mail advertising, and increased email marketing campaigns hoping to drive new business to their firm. The end result of such a campaign usually results in a slew of names and email addresses. But what are you doing with those names and email addresses? Anything?

While collecting names is always a good first step, those names and email addresses mean nothing if they remain untouched on a spreadsheet. They will never develop into a relationship.

Maybe your firm is at its max, and you're not taking new clients. What are you doing to ensure that your current clients are happy, and remain so? Any-

thing? Do you engage them throughout the year, or only during tax season?

That's why CRM (customer relationship management) software can be particularly useful for your firm.

Traditionally used by businesses selling products, CRMs are now becoming a staple in service businesses as well, allowing you to keep track of potential clients, while also helping to ensure that your current client base is kept happy.

If you're interested in a CRM for your firm, be sure to check out our reviews in this issue. We took a look at four CRM applications that may be a good fit for your firm. Those applications include:

- Accelo
- ResultsCRM
- Insightly
- Zoho CRM

Additional CRM Add-On Tools:

- Office Tools WorkSpace
- Microsoft 365 - People

While each application is different, they all provide you with the ability to manage both potential and current clients easily. It's up to you to decide what specific features your new CRM application needs. Here are a few other features to consider:

- **Online accessibility** – This should be a must, since it's likely you or other firm employees will be entering information while out of the office.
- **Mobile app available** – See above.
- **Ease of implementation** – Do you have the time and resources to spend on a long and (sometimes) costly implementation, or do you want to be up and running fast?
- **Scalable** – Can the product grow with your firm? Can you add new users at any time?

■ **Integration** – Is it important for your CRM to integrate with other applications your firm uses?

■ **Reporting** – What kind of reports do you want to create? Does the application you're interested in create those reports?

■ **Import/export options** – Can you easily import or export client lists?

■ **Help/support** – Help and support are important for new CRM users. Does the product you're looking at offer support options that work for you?

That's all a lot to think about, but knowing what your firm needs up front will make it much easier to find and implement a CRM application that is well-suited to your firm. ■

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	Online Accessibility	Mobile App	Easy Implementation	Scalable	Integration	Reporting	Import/Export	Help/Support	2020 OVERALL RATING
ACCELO	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	★ 5
INSIGHTLY	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	★ 4.75
RESULTSCRM	*	X	X		X	X	X	X	★ 4.5
ZOHO CRM	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	★ 4.75

* = ON-PREMISE OR HOSTED

Other CRM Utilities

While you may not be interested in implementing a complete CRM application in your firm right now, here are a couple of options to consider if you wish to get a better handle on managing your current clients.

OFFICETOOLS WORKSPACE

OfficeTools WorkSpace is generally known as a robust practice management application, but it also includes good contact management capability. The interface is similar to a traditional CRM application, with extensive detail available for each contact, including email, social media links, and both company and contact details. The addition of a cloud-based application, OfficeTools Cloud, makes this a good solution for firms that need anytime/anywhere access to their client database.

Users can choose the type of information displayed,

including projects, assignments, documents, schedules, and alerts, with a detailed list at the bottom of the client screen detailing any upcoming tasks, as well as work completed.

Designed to work with other features found in the core application, the Contacts feature is particularly helpful for managing current clients effectively. OfficeTools Cloud supports unlimited contacts and client types, with pricing starting at \$49 per user, per month, when billed annually.

MICROSOFT OFFICE 365 – PEOPLE

The Outlook People page is designed to manage contacts. While not a traditional CRM, one of the distinct advantages of using this application is its integration capability with other Microsoft applications such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Just click on the Outlook People menu option in Microsoft 365

to access the application. Outlook People lets users create, edit, find, and manage contacts, with the ability to mark specific contacts as favorites.

Contacts are quickly entered, with users able to view all interactions by accessing the contact, including any shared files, appointments, and direct email options. Contacts can also be imported into Outlook People, with the option to export a contact list if desired. Integration with other Microsoft applications allows users to easily share or assign files to a specific client, as well as manage calendar activities and email correspondence. Microsoft Office 365 starts at \$5.00 per user per month, with an annual commitment required, with month-to-month pricing available as well.

Accelo CRM

Accelo offers a variety of applications designed for numerous niche markets including accounting firms.

STRENGTHS:

- Good fit for accounting firms
- Dedicated implementation manager assigned to new customers
- Can purchase only the modules desired

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Time consuming setup
- Support plans must be purchased separately

Completely online, Accelo allows accounting firms to easily manage all of their business operations using a single, unified platform.

Not just a CRM, Accelo includes complete database management as well as email tracking, invoicing and payments, retainers, and sales options. In addition to managing firm clients, Accelo

allows users to track leads, vendors, and collaborators and partners.

Accelo offers a mobile app for both iOS and Android devices, allowing users to easily add a new contact wherever they are. An Activity Stream is also available that allows users to scan any project or client for current activity. The mobile app also includes timers that can be used to record activity against a project or client, with full synching capability with the web application.

Accelo is a good fit for accounting firms of any size that wish to automate and manage their client activity

www.accelo.com



2020 OVERALL RATING

5

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21123911

from a single platform. All new users are assigned a dedicated implementation manager. Each module (Sales, Projects, Retainers, and Service) is available for \$39 per user, per month. For those looking for a complete system, the ServOps system is available for \$79 per user, per month. All modules require a minimum of three users, with no additional fees assessed.

Insightly CRM

Insightly CRM from Insightly offers complete CRM capability designed for both product sales as well as service businesses.

STRENGTHS:

- Three plans offered
- Free trial available
- Good integration options

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Complex onboarding
- Support plans have to be purchased separately
- Not really suitable for smaller firms

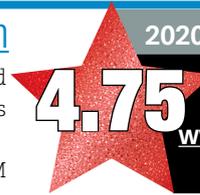
Insightly CRM is an online application that offers easy navigation. A mobile app is also available for both iOS and Android devices, offering features such as the ability to create, edit, and view any record in the application. The mobile app also offers an easily

navigated home page, along with the ability to add or edit notes, send assignment notifications, access an event calendar, and view and send emails.

Insightly navigation is intuitive, including a CRM dashboard that allows user to view various graphs and charts related to their activity. The main dashboard also includes a navigation bar that offers quick access to Insightly features such as Tasks, Contacts, Organizations, Leads, and Opportunities.

Though not specifically designed for accounting firms, Insightly does offer excellent CRM capability

www.insightly.com



2020 OVERALL RATING

4.75

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21123916

suitable for businesses or professional firms selling products or services. Insightly's Plus plan is \$29 per user, per month, the Professional plan is \$49 per user, per month, and the Enterprise plan is \$99 per user, per month. Both the Plus and Professional plans also offer a free 14-day trial.

ResultsCRM

Designed for small businesses and accounting firms that use QuickBooks Desktop or QuickBooks Online

STRENGTHS:

- Great for QuickBooks users
- Offers both on-premise and cloud deployment
- Good reporting options

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Only suitable for QuickBooks users
- Not suitable for larger businesses

applications, ResultsCRM offers complete bi-directional CRM capability between the application and QuickBooks Online, QuickBooks Desktop, and Microsoft Outlook, eliminating the need to enter data twice.

ResultsCRM is an on-premise application that includes a mobile

app. Firms can also choose to have the application hosted in the cloud. The ResultsCRM system also offers a mobile app that can be used with iOS and Android devices for easy access to data at any time.

ResultsCRM is designed to be an all-in-one solution for small businesses offering a variety of features such as project and workflow management, billing management, service scheduling, sales management, and complete contact management. With its Microsoft Outlook integration, ResultsCRM users are able to add contacts, activities, and email conversations using the

www.abacusnext.com/software/CRM/results



2020 OVERALL RATING

4.5

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21123918

ResultsCRM QuickAdd button housed in Outlook.

Well suited for small to mid-sized businesses and accounting firms that use QuickBooks applications, ResultsCRM easily combines multiple features into a single database. A subscription to ResultsCRM starts at \$25 monthly.

Zoho CRM

Zoho CRM is a solid online CRM application well designed for businesses of all kinds, including accounting firms, although it is better suited for businesses that sell products. Zoho CRM offers four plan levels, with a basic plan available at no cost.

STRENGTHS:

- Four plans available
- Excellent help resources available for new users
- Customizable

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- User portal only available in most expensive plan
- Performs better if used with other Zoho applications

In addition to easy online access, Zoho CRM offers a mobile app for iOS and Android devices,

with the mobile app offering features such as customer email management, inventory management, a phone log, voice notes, and the ability to attach documents to a file.

Users can easily customize Zoho CRM to reflect the needs of their business, including the ability to add custom modules, buttons, and fields, with customization capability varying based on the plan purchased.

Along with the Free plan, Zoho offers a Standard plan which currently runs \$12 per user, per month,

www.zoho.com



2020 OVERALL RATING

4.75

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21123919

a Professional plan, which is \$20 per user, per month, and the Enterprise plan, which is \$35 per user, per month and contains an amazingly diverse set of features. Those interested can visit Zoho's website to sign up for a free trial of any of the plans.



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5 Tips to Prevent Staff Burnout During Tax Season

IT'S CRUNCH TIME for accounting professionals and tax pros. The arrival of tax season means accounting firms are facing their busiest time of the year. When preparing for this stretch of longer hours and higher stress, managers need to make sure their plan not only addresses production deadlines but also workers' mental fitness — a concerted effort to prevent burnout.

A resounding 91% of employees polled for an Accountemps survey reported being at least somewhat burned out. The average level of fatigue on a scale of 1 to 10 was 5.6, and the numbers were highest for the 18-34 age group.

In the accounting profession's annual tax marathon, you don't want your people to hit the wall. Burned out workers will be less focused, more irritable, less healthy, more likely to exhibit negative attitudes and more prone to mistakes. Worse, bad attitudes can be contagious.

So while you're planning deadlines for tasks such as client document submissions, it's also important to consider how you'll engineer a work setting that minimizes burnout during what is unavoidably a stressful period.

Here are some considerations and tips.

1. PAY ATTENTION TO WARNING SIGNS.

Throughout the year, it's important to gauge the level of satisfaction of your team, but during tax time it's especially crucial to watch for signs of frustration that can lead to burnout. Some employees will give unsolicited feedback, but others might fear that doing so will be perceived as a weakness. Check in with each member regularly to identify stress points and develop potential solutions. Whatever small setback

there is in the time this takes will be worth it in the long run.

2. GIVE OVERWORKED STAFF SOME RELIEF.

One of the top causes of burnout is an unmanageable workload and long hours, employees told us in the survey. The amount of work was also the top concern cited by managers in a companion survey. While heavier workloads and long hours simply come with the territory during this critical period, you can reduce their impact by bringing in temporary professionals to take some of the load off core staff. A staffing firm specializing in placing interim accounting and finance talent can help you keep your operations at peak efficiency with less of the stress.

3. MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS.

In the survey, workers cited interruptions as one of the primary causes of burnout. While client calls, email and messages can't be left unanswered even during busy periods like tax season, allow your team to set specific blocks of time during the day to focus on critical work uninterrupted. They can then use the alternate blocks for responding to these inquiries. If disruptions are coming from within the office, let them know that it's OK with you if they post a "Do Not Disturb" sign on their



cubicle or office door for part of the day. And there's something you can do yourself that will also help: Schedule only essential office meetings during the busy season.

4. INVEST IN NEWER TECHNOLOGY.

Technology has transformed the accounting profession — from ERP systems and cloud-based financial applications to robotic process automation. But the standard for what's state of the art is changing virtually every few months. Evaluate whether aging tech tools are limiting the speed and accuracy of your team members — and unnecessarily stressing them out. In our survey, employees mentioned outdated technology as one of the contributors to burnout. While this suggestion can't be implemented overnight, it could help in future tax seasons. And if you decide to

invest in new tools, you may have a receptive audience: Forty-five percent of U.S. managers surveyed for our Jobs and AI Anxiety report said their teams are very eager to learn about new technologies.

5. SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION.

Some firms give bonuses or other rewards at the end of tax season, but consider some smaller perks as your team negotiates the path. Ordering a group lunch on Fridays or offering snacks at a central office location are two examples. Throughout tax season, also be conscious of opportunities to verbally lift up your people, commending their work in both group and personal sessions.

Look out for the signs of burnout before it's too late. Take note of this year's challenges and solutions so you'll be even better prepared next tax season. ■

Take the Pain Out of Payroll With New Features in QuickBooks Online Payroll

FOR MANY ACCOUNTANTS, helping clients meet their payroll obligations and staying compliant has often taken a back seat to providing other accounting and tax services. But now, with QuickBooks Online's new expanded suite of automated payroll services, that's a thing of the past.

The new expanded suite goes beyond payroll, delivering real value-add for you and your practice, saving you and your clients valuable time. Already packed with the standout features in QuickBooks Online Payroll Core and Premium, QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite (a brand new offering) provides benefits that will enable any practice to offer payroll, benefits, and HR services without pain points. Now, accountants and small businesses can protect their business with end-to-end setup, certified HR support and tax penalty protection, all within QuickBooks.

Here are more details on the benefits of QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite:

White Glove Customized Setup: Have the option to leave payroll setup in QuickBooks' hands. US-based experts will handle everything for you, ensuring your clients are set up to have the most accurate payroll possible.

Auto Payroll*: Set up payroll just once, and you're done! Once the initial setup is complete, this feature allows clients with only salaried employees to run Auto Payroll on direct deposit, review and approve payroll before paychecks are sent, and easily add additional compensation, such as commission and bonuses. For all other workers, business owners can run payroll in less than five minutes from anywhere. Payroll is also automated in the Core and Premium offerings.

Manage Projects and Track Time On the Go: Through the TSheets mobile app included with QuickBooks Online Payroll Premium, clients have

mobile time and location tracking, allowing workers to clock in or out anywhere, on any device; GPS tracking to get a more complete picture of who's working where; and the ability to review, edit, and approve employee hours right inside QuickBooks.

Ratcheting things up a notch, QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite also has geofencing and project planning. Now clients can better manage projects and track time on the go by tracking project hours and labor expenses in real-time, tapping into geofencing that alerts workers to clock in or out when entering or leaving the job site. They will also enjoy an activity feed that lets team members add and view notes, photos, and project updates from anywhere.

Professional HR Advisor: Human resource questions inevitably arise, and finding someone to answer them can be challenging. Now, with QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite, your clients will be able to consult one-on-one with HR advisors! This offering, powered by Mammoth, enables clients to consult with certified HR advisors by phone or online, receive professional guidance on critical HR issues, and obtain custom handbooks and policies for compliance with relevant laws. Mammoth HR advisors provide actionable HR solutions tailored to each client's diverse needs. They listen, educate, and coach with respect and empathy, knowing HR is a different experience for everyone.

Tax Penalty Protection:** Tax penalties are not just alarming, but

potentially detrimental. QuickBooks stands behind all the calculations of customer paychecks, tax payments and forms and helps ensure they are accurate and on time. Additionally, with QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite, Intuit will pay your IRS penalty fees and interest – up to \$25,000 per year – regardless of who caused the error. In addition, QuickBooks Payroll's tax resolution team will work on your clients' behalf to help resolve any payroll tax or filing issues with the IRS.

Automated Taxes and Form Filings on All Products: QuickBooks will handle all payroll taxes. With our automated features, federal, state, and local payroll taxes are calculated, filed, and paid automatically. In addition, W-2s are prepared and mailed to employees, and annual W-2s are filed for the client. In addition, your clients can automatically file state new hire paperwork to stay compliant.

These are just some of the best benefits of QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite. You may be wondering when these changes will take effect and how they'll affect your experience. However, before getting into the specific dates for when QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite will be available, it's first important to acknowledge that you won't have to do anything on your end.

Rather than "moving" you and your client accounts to the new suite, QuickBooks will be releasing the new features into your existing accounts to make this transition as smooth as possible.

Upon logging in for the first time after the transition, you and your clients will experience no disruption to your business processes, no barriers to running payroll or filing/paying taxes, and no data to transfer. That's right – all of your payroll history is already there!

The ProAdvisor
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Here's how QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite will be rolled out for accountants:

If you use or plan to use QuickBooks Online Payroll for your own firm through QuickBooks Online Accountant, your account will transition to the new suite lineup on or after Feb. 1, 2020.

- All QuickBooks Online Accountant users will have access to QuickBooks Online Payroll Elite for their firms free of charge.
- If your firm currently uses TSheets, your account will transition on or after May 1, 2020.

As for your clients, here is their transition plan:

- Client accounts will transition to the new lineup on or after March 1, 2020. More details on timing were shared via email to clients in January.
- Client accounts will transition to the more robust version of their existing product to ensure the most seamless experience. This means that those on Enhanced (Self-Service) move to Core, Full-Service become Premium, and TSheets customers also go to Premium. Note that clients currently on Self-Service payroll who also have a TSheets account will transition to the QuickBooks Premium offering, as Premium time-tracking by TSheets is included in this product and will offer the best value and experience.

For information on pricing, FAQs, and more, visit <https://quickbooks.intuit.com/payroll/>. ■

* Auto payroll is available if setup for employees and the company is complete, all employees are salaried employees, all employees are set up on direct deposit, bank verification, e-services is enabled, all employees are located in the same state and the company is not a multi-state company, and the account has not been on hold in the last 6 months.

** If you receive a tax notice and send it to us within 15-days of the tax notice we will cover the payroll tax penalty, up to \$25,000. Additional conditions and restrictions apply. See more information about the guarantee here: <https://payroll.intuit.com/disclosure/>

Stop Scrambling

EXPENSE MANAGEMENT HAS always been important, but in recent years, the surge in company travel has found more businesses scrambling to find a way to continue sending their employees where they need to be, but doing so in more cost-effective manner.

Typical expense management has always been a nightmare, with employees struggling to keep track of receipts, in turn delaying reimbursement of their expenditures as they struggle to locate that last receipt. Meanwhile, supervisors and managers were scrambling to find the time to review the submitted reports to determine if the expenses were accurate, if their employees followed company policy, and if an expense was eligible for a reimbursement. And that was only the start. Once the report was finally approved, it had to then be submitted to accounting for employee reimbursement.

Enter Expense Management applications. Designed to make everyone's life easier, these applications provide the tools and resources to streamline the entire expense management process from initial expense using receipt capture technology, to automatic expense report creation. But it doesn't stop there. Many of these applications can also route the completed report to the correct party for approval, and even expedite the reimbursement process.

So why aren't more businesses embracing this technology? That's hard to say, particularly since expense management applications come in all shapes and sizes, with price points to match. No longer are these applications only for the enterprise level businesses, but are now flexible enough and affordable enough to be used by small and mid-sized businesses as well.

For our first reviews of 2020, we've included some of the most popular expense management applications on the market today. While some are better suited to a larger business, others work well with businesses of any size.

Here are the Expense Management applications reviewed in this issue:

- Certify
- Concur
- Chrome River
- Expensable

- Expensify
- Xpenditure
- Suti Expense
- Zoho Expense
- Tallie

Many of the products reviewed in this issue offer a free demo, making it easy to try out an application prior to purchasing; a great way to avoid buyer's remorse. In many cases, you can also sign up for a demo of the application. Whichever way you lean, be sure to do some proper due diligence prior to purchasing any software application.

So, are you ready to toss out that pile of receipts? If so, take a look at our software reviews, check out a few of the applications that are best suited for your needs, and start 2020 out the right way for both you and your employees. You won't regret it.

	Receipt Capturing & Uploading	Multiple Product Access Levels	Multi-Currency	Tracks Mileage & Time	Travel Management	Automated Credit Card Feed	Multi-Level Approval Process	Auto-Reimbursement	Spending Controls	Automated Expense Report Creation	Usage Reporting	Integration with Other Applications	Good Help & Support Options	Free Trial	2020 OVERALL RATING
CERTIFY	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	★ 5
CHROME RIVER	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		★ 5
CONCUR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	★ 5
EXPENSABLE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	★ 4.5
EXPENSIFY	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	★ 4.75
RYDOO (FORMERLY XPENDITURE)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	★ 4.75
SUTIEXPENSE	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	★ 4.75
TALLIE	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	★ 5
ZOHO EXPENSE	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	★ 4.5

Certify Travel and Expense Management

www.certify.com

2020 OVERALL RATING



Read the full review for this product online at: www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124261

- STRENGTHS:**
- Offers automatic synching with QuickBooks applications
 - Suitable for businesses of all sizes
 - Offers numerous add-on features
- POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:**
- Many features only available in more expensive plans
 - No demo available to try out

Certify Expense from Certify is well suited for businesses of all sizes. Scalable, Certify offers three plans that are suitable for very small businesses, to those with more than 200 employees. In addition, Certify Now!, the entry-level plan, includes automatic synching with both QuickBooks Desktop and QuickBooks Online, while the Professional and Enterprise plans also include additional integration options.

In addition to Certify Expense, users can opt to add Certify Travel, which offers a variety of travel management features such as pre-trip approval, online booking for airfare, hotel, and rental cars, corporate rates and discounts for certain vendors, and the ability to create travel policy. Certify Travel is included in the Enterprise plan, but other plan users can choose to add it to Certify Expense for a monthly fee.

Certify is scalable, with three plans available: Certify Now!, which is designed for 1-25 users, and runs \$8.00 per user, per month; Professional, which is designed for 25-200 employees; and Enterprise, which

is for businesses with more than 200 employees. The Professional plan is billed as a monthly service fee, while the Enterprise plan is billed annually, with pricing available directly from Certify. Those interested in the product can also request a demo from Certify or access informational videos by filling out an information request form.

EXPENSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: REVIEW

Chrome River Expense

Chrome River EXPENSE is a cloud-based web application designed to manage both business and travel expenses. The application is best suited for mid-sized to enterprise level businesses. Although Chrome River EXPENSE can also be used by smaller businesses, it's doubtful that smaller businesses would be in a position to take advantage of the level of features offered in the application.

Chrome River EXPENSE is designed to work with

STRENGTHS:

- Powerful application
- Can handle a variety of expense types
- Excellent reporting options

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Not suitable for smaller businesses
- Implementation is complex
- Training likely needed

www.chromeriver.com

other Chrome River applications, including Chrome River DIRECT PAY, which will automatically debit a business bank account for all approved expenses, while crediting either corporate credit cards or an employee's personal bank account. This allows users to process and deposit employee reimbursements within three days, with all employees eligible for the service. Also available is Chrome River FOLIO, which automates data extraction from hotel bills directly into the application, eliminating the need to enter details such as room service, taxes, parking, and other hotel fees.

Chrome River EXPENSE is especially well-suited



2020 OVERALL RATING

5

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124266

for those with a global presence. Chrome River typically handles all initial system configuration and implementation, which can be a lengthy process, though the end result is a custom-designed travel and expense management application. All pricing is customized for a particular business, with a quote available from Chrome River upon request.

Concur Expense

Concur Expense from SAP Concur offers good expense management, along with a variety of integrated solutions for businesses of all sizes. Entirely web-based, Concur Expense offers solid receipt management and expense report creation. Concur also offers a variety of expense-related applications that are designed to work with Concur Expense to offer

STRENGTHS:

- Good integration
- Excellent reporting
- 24-hour support

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Smaller businesses may be overwhelmed with features they don't need
- Time-consuming setup process
- Travel and expense plan better suited to larger businesses

www.concur.com

greater functionality, including Concur Drive, for those who need automatic distance capture, Concur Detect, an application offered by AppZen that will audit all created expense reports for possible fraud and non-compliance issues, and ExpenseIt, included in the Concur Expense mobile app, which takes receipt management to a whole new level.

Concur also offers a variety of travel expense management applications including Concur Travel, Concur Request, Concur TripLink, and Travel & Expense.

Best suited for larger businesses with more



2020 OVERALL RATING

5

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124274

complex business expense and travel needs, Concur Expense also offers a plan designed specifically for small businesses. Pricing for all Concur applications is available upon request directly from Concur. A free trial can also be requested from Concur for those interested in the application.

ExpensAble

ExpensAble Expense Management is a travel and expense management application from Insperty. ExpensAble is well suited for small to mid-sized businesses, offering two plans: Express, which is designed for businesses with less than 20 employees that need to file an expense report, and Corporate, which is better suited to larger businesses with more than 20 employees filing expense reports.

ExpensAble is an online appli-

STRENGTHS:

- Offers two plans
- Good reporting options
- Automated credit card feed

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Does not create expense reports automatically
- No telephone support available
- Does not include travel expense management

www.expensable.com

cation, with users able to manage expenses using a desktop or workstation computer. A mobile app is also available for both iOS and Android devices, with the mobile app offering the same functionality found in the web application.

Using the mobile app, users can snap a photo from their mobile device, which can then be uploaded to the application. All uploaded receipts are then stored in ExpensAble until an expense report is created when they can be attached to the appropriate report. In addition, users can opt to upload receipts to ExpensAble via email if desired.



2020 OVERALL RATING

4.5

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124278

ExpensAble offers good expense management capability for small to mid-sized businesses. ExpensAble currently offers two plans: ExpensAble Express, which is designed for small businesses with fewer than 20 employees, and ExpensAble Corporate, for businesses with more than 20 employees. Pricing is available for both plans directly from Insperty.

Expensify Expense Management

Expensify is a scalable travel and expense application suitable for small to mid-sized businesses.

Completely web-based, Expensify works with both desktop and laptop computers. A mobile app for both iOS and Android smartphones and tablets is also included with all plans.

The setup process in Expensify

is designed to be easy, with new users guided through a series of questions that help expedite the entire

STRENGTHS:

- Offers four plans
- Free trial available
- Good integration with tax applications

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- No telephone support offered
- Not suitable for very large businesses

Use.expensify.com

setup process. Unlimited receipt scanning is offered in the application, with users able to snap a photo of any receipt and upload it to Expensify, where the SmartScan feature will transcribe the data on the receipt. The receipt is then stored until ready for use with an expense report, with the data automatically populated in the created report.

Expensify offers complete scalability, with four plans available ranging from Track, which is designed for individuals or consultants who need to track their expenses; Submit, which is ideal for very small businesses; Collect, which is good for small and growing



2020 OVERALL RATING

4.75

Read the full review for this product online at:

www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124285

businesses; and Control, which is best-suited for small to mid-sized businesses that need to track numerous expenses. Both Track and Submit are \$4.99 per month for a single user, while Collect is \$5 per user, per month, and Control runs \$9 per user per month. All plans offer a free trial for those interested in trying out one of the plans.

REVIEW: EXPENSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Rydo Expense Management

www.rydoo.com

2020 OVERALL RATING

4.75

Read the full review for this product online at:
www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124288

STRENGTHS:

- Three plans available
- Offers onboarding support
- Submits expenses as they are entered

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Numerous features only available in most expensive plan
- Reporting options are limited

Rydo was formed by combining three former startup applications (Xpenditure, iAlbatros and Sodexo), into a single, easy-to-use application that merges business expense and travel expense management. Rydo is available in three plans, making it suitable for small to enterprise level businesses that wish to track and manage expenses easily.

Rydo currently offers a mobile app for both iOS and Android devices. The mobile app offers complete

functionality with users able to update their settings in order to utilize the correct currency, mileage details such as miles or kilometers, and a default country. Rydo is designed to integrate with a variety of ERP systems, and offers good receipt management capability including the option to snap a photo of a receipt with a smart phone and submit the image directly to the application. The receipt scanner uses OCR technology to extract all data from the receipt, eliminating the need to key in expense data.

Rydo currently offers three plans: Team, which is \$7.00 per user per month and includes OCR Scanning,

Mileage Tracking, and Approval Flow; Growth, which is \$9.00 per user per month, and offers Team features that include a Controlling Module, Expense Policy Rules, and Per Diems; and Enterprise, which includes all features from the other versions along with Direct Bank Transactions Fee, ERP Integrations, and API Access, with pricing available on request.

SutiExpense

www.sutisoft.com

2020 OVERALL RATING

4.75

Read the full review for this product online at:
www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124258

STRENGTHS:

- Offers three plans
- Good integration
- Ability to add custom expense categories

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Requires a minimum number of users
- Focuses more on travel than general expenses

SutiExpense from SutiSoft offers online travel and expense management. Designed to track both corporate travel and all related expenses, SutiExpense offers three plans that are well-suited for small to enterprise level businesses that need to track expenses easily.

In addition to its online application, SutiExpense offers a

mobile app for both iOS and Android smartphones and

tablets, with the apps offering the same functionality as the online application.

All SutiExpense plans offer automated workflow, receipt capture, cost allocation, an export feature, custom expense categories, and OCR capability, with the top two plans offering additional features such as pre-trip requests, travel booking, and the ability to link a corporate credit card with the application.

The Professional plan runs \$8.00 per user, per month, with a minimum pricing of \$100 required and offers basic expense functions, while both the

Premium and Enterprise editions offer additional features including travel integration, corporate card link, and eSignature approval. Pricing for the Premium and Enterprise plans is available directly from SutiExpense. A free demo is available for those interested in the product.

Tallie Expense Report Software

www.tallie.com

2020 OVERALL RATING

5

Read the full review for this product online at:
www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124290

STRENGTHS:

- Three plans available
- Free trial offered
- Intuitive navigation

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- No travel app included
- Not suitable for very large businesses

Tallie is online expense report software that is designed for small to mid-sized businesses that need to manage business expenses. Tallie offers three plans: Basic Accounting,

Cash Control, and Cloud ERP, with an option to add additional users available in each plan. A mobile app for both iOS and Android

devices is also available.

Tallie's mobile apps offer powerful features such as photo receipt capture, GPS-enabled mileage tracking,

and expense report tracking using GPS Start-Stop capability. Users also have the option to enter starting and stopping points, with Tallie calculating the mileage.

Tallie's interface is designed for simplicity, allowing users to drag and drop receipts and other documents directly into the application. There are also options to drag expenses between reports, and drag and match receipts to credit card transactions.

Tallie's plan and pricing structure has changed since our 2019 review, with three plans now offered: Basic Accounting, which is designed for 5 system users and runs \$50 per month; Cash Control, which is for up

to 9 users, and runs \$95 per month, and Cloud ERP, for up to 18 users, and runs \$200 per month. Additional users can also be added to any plan for an additional fee if desired. All plans include complete expense and administrator functions, approvals and compliance features, and support. Those interested can try Tallie out for 14 days with no credit card required.

Zoho Expense

www.zoho.com

2020 OVERALL RATING

4.5

Read the full review for this product online at:
www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124292

STRENGTHS:

- Excellent integration with other Zoho Suite applications
- Very affordably priced for even the smallest businesses
- Numerous tools and resources available for new users

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS:

- Smallest plan is for 10+ users
- Does not offer time tracking capability

Zoho Expense is part of Zoho One, a suite of applications that are designed for small to mid-sized businesses. Zoho Expense offers three plans levels: a Free Plan, which is a great fit for freelancers and sole proprietors; the Premium Plan which works for small businesses with at least 10 users; and the Enterprise Plan, which is designed for more than 500 users.

Zoho Expense is an online application, with all Zoho apps designed to integrate seamlessly, allowing firms to build a complete set of business and accounting solutions. A mobile app for iOS, Android, and Windows smartphones and devices is also available to download if desired.

Zoho Expense's Free Plan offers limited features such as receipt storage, multicurrency capability, customer and project tracking, and cost allocation; the Premium Plan includes mileage expense tracking, per diem expenses, auto-scan capability, and travel

management features such as travel requests and pre-travel approval.

The Premium Plan is priced at \$3.00 per month plus \$2.50 per user per month. If you want to try it out, Zoho currently offers a free 14-day trial for the Premium plan.



AMY VETTER, CPA, CITP, CGMA
Mindful Technologist &
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A Different Kind of Value: *Defining Your Professional Purpose*

HAVE YOU EVER thought about the difference between the words “value” and “values”? If you’re laughing and thinking, “Yeah, it’s the letter ‘s,’” well, you’re not wrong, but that’s not what I mean.

When we talk about “value,” a word we usually use in a professional context, we’re usually referring to providing benefit to clients. “Values,” on the other hand, are the ideals we hold near and dear, and we often only discuss those outside of the workplace—and that’s a shame. Given that more than half of employees report feeling less than engaged at work, it’s high time we start asking how we can bring values into the workplace and

WHAT DO YOU VALUE?

It’s hard to go about developing a great sense of value in your career if you don’t take the time to investigate what those values are. While your professional values don’t have to be exactly the same as your personal ones, they shouldn’t be far off. The biggest mistakes people make when creating a list of values are being too concrete and too superficial. Identifying passions and hobbies is a worthy task, but values

Reflecting on your career in this light, which most people have never done, can help give you a fresh perspective.

MICRO- AND MACRO-PURPOSE

Your values manifest in work in all sorts of ways. On a small, granular scale, ask yourself how your daily tasks reflect values. If collaboration is important to you, you’ll probably be much happier working on a tight-

you can help build a firm in your image. You can serve clients whom you admire, like my recent podcast guest Marin Bright of Smart Meetings. She talked about her love for hotels and hospitality, which drove her passion in her business to serve those industries. Even though she doesn’t work directly in a hotel, she has had a chance to specialize and make it part of her career, which in turn helps her to create more value for her customers. In Accounting



create a clearer sense of purpose in our firms and in ourselves. When I say a purpose-driven workplace, it’s not a matter of doing only what you most enjoy. Finding work to match your values doesn’t have to come in the form of finding your “dream job.” Bringing your values into your work, rather, is about finding ways to align both what you do and how you do it with what matters to you. When you discover a greater sense of purpose at work, you will be more motivated, feel more fulfilled, and perform better. So let’s get started.

are something deeper. You really have to look inside yourself and ask what you care about. Don’t be afraid to consider big, lofty, abstract ideas. For an excellent list you can use as a jumping off point, check out this article (<https://bit.ly/2Hmvf4g>).

Once you created a list of values, it’s helpful to rank them or give them star ratings for importance. Do you, for example, care more about autonomy or recognition? Usually, the more autonomy you have at a job, the less likely you are to receive public recognition.

knit team than being siloed in your own office. People who like an ever-changing task list probably don’t want to be at a firm that performs a narrow range of services. Those who want a predictable, steady workflow won’t enjoy a start-up, but those who want to be a part of building something may love it.

As an accounting professional, you’re at a great advantage in terms of finding meaningful work. What we do is truly important to our clients, so you’ll never feel like your job is inessential. Accounting firms come and all shapes and sizes, and

we have the exact same kind of opportunity when we specialize in niche areas that we are passionate about and when working with those clients it doesn’t feel like work.

While occasional listlessness at work is something everyone experiences, you shouldn’t struggle to ask yourself why you’re getting up in the morning. If you do, perhaps it’s time to look inside and ask what your values are. From there, you can start to find them in your career—or start crafting a career path where you can. ■

Meeting & Calendar Apps

WE LIVE IN an era of convenience, and that goes for meetings as well as everything else. There's simply no excuse to insist that everyone gather in person for a meeting, nor is there reason to be frustrated with the chaos of a conference call when too many people are on the line, like the one depicted here: <https://bit.ly/38nP6fy>.

Instead, we reached out to members of our CPA Practice Advisor community for recommendations for their favorite meeting apps – we wanted to hear about apps for scheduling meetings as well as the meeting apps themselves. Our response was tremendous, so here is a sampling, and you can follow the URL at the bottom of the article to find more recommendations on our website. Happy 2020 meetings!!!

Paul Kersten, owner of Kersten Accounting & Tax Professionals, uses **Google Calendar** to schedule meetings. “The reason we use it is because it syncs and can do real time so all our staff can schedule meetings. It also is very helpful for working in real time with our two office locations.”

Michelle Walsh, vice president of client services at XCM, told us about the meeting apps she uses: “We use **Eventur** – I love it because they are a great partner and willing to do a little extra for customers. We've also used **ConferencesIO** and **Double Dutch** – both are super user friendly!”

Tony Chan, CFP®, EA, principal at Crossroads Planning, LLC, uses **Calendly**, “It is user-friendly, easy to set up and customizable.” That was just the start of the Calendly fan club. Here are several more recommendations for the app.

- **Vince Porter**, president and CEO of Porter & Company CPAs, said, “I absolutely love Calendly. It's very easy to use. It allows clients to book appointments to see me without me having to play the back and forth game of availability. It allows us to set it and forget it and clients book their own appointments.”
- **Arline Welty**, principal consultant at DataQuest Solutions, said, “Oh gosh. Calendly is the best! It's so fast and works great when integrated to Outlook. Totally does away with the long email exchanges. Also a fan of **Doodle** for larger groups. Even the free version is pretty useful.”
- **Samantha Bowling**, CPA, CGMA, owner, Garbelman Winslow CPAs, told us, “I love Calendly, it links to my Outlook and allows me to customize when I am available to meet and how many meetings I want to have in a day. Saved my life last tax season. It also allows my receptionist to book appointments without

seeing the details of my calendar. I also love Zoom for virtual meetings and there is an Outlook plugin that allows me to schedule virtual meetings from my calendar. Zoom allows you to also share and view other user screens. Great for showing client's how to fix software issues.”

- **Scott Hoppe**, CPA, principal at Why Blu, agrees with the rest: “Calendly - Easiest to use UI & comes with excellent webpage integration for people to book all sorts of ways (pop up window, link, or integrated calendar). Very slick.”

And there are more – but let's continue with some other recommendations.

Alina Nikishina, co-founder and program architect at The Mastery Network, told us: “I like to use **Doodle** when I need to figure out if more than one person has availability on certain dates/times for a meeting. Doodle lets me enter-in a few dates/times as options, and then I can send out a link to all the people that need to be in the meeting. Everyone then votes on which dates/times work for them. After everyone has voted, I can easily make a final decision by seeing which date/time was the most popular.”

Stacy Kildal, founder of Kildal Services, LLC, recommends **Boomerang Calendar**. “I'm a control freak about scheduling and hate having online scheduling options. Boomerang Calendar allows me to suggest meeting times for multiple people (who can then choose with one click) and add an event to my calendar from an email.”

Megan Thomson, CPA, CVA, CFF, at Thomson Accounting, said, “Our team uses **Slack**. I really like that I can communicate with one or multiple employees at a time and we can exchange ideas quickly. We are able to organize meetings, discuss tasks we are working on, or just talk about what to have for lunch and there is no long string of work texts mixed in with my personal texts on my phone.”

Clayton Oates, founder of QA Business Pty Ltd., said, “Its **Zoom** all the way for me. Ease of use for both us and the clients is key, the ability to easily record and distribute the meeting recording is also valuable and also the mobile app is simple to use and the Outlook plugin enables you to easily schedule



and manage meetings. I never see requests for meetings via Skype anymore, mostly now Zoom or Google Meetings.”

Caleb Jenkins, EA, CQP, leader of client accounting services at RLJ Financial, told us, “I use Zoom & Acuity Scheduling for my meetings:

- **Acuity Scheduling** – I love this app because I can create different meeting types (I have over 30 of them) and that allows the client to find a time on my calendar that works for them, fill out all the details that are necessary for that meeting type, and that links to my Zoom app to auto-create the meeting links on Zoom. This also allows the client to be in control of rescheduling their meeting, etc.
- **Zoom** – I also love this app because there is absolutely zero time that it takes to prepare for a meeting. Zoom allows me to share my screen and record the meetings which is a huge booster for my clients in their ability to remember our meeting details and the ability to interact with me more closely around the data that I'm presenting. Zoom is the closest thing to an in-person meeting as possible without requiring the client to drive to our office and it is still completely personal.”

Sandra Wiley, president of Boomer Consulting, Inc., said, “We LOVE **Box.com - Box Notes**. Box Notes allows everyone to collaborate on the agenda, as well as add notes during the meeting at the same time. It has been a game changer for us. We use Zoom for all of our meetings. Great for seeing each other, screen sharing and ease of use. **Miro Board** is also terrific. Another collaborative way to organize by using virtual sticky notes for brainstorming and education”

Richard Roppa-Roberts, owner of Quasar Cowboy Consulting, is also a fan of **Zoom**. “Hands down the best meeting app I have ever used. Personally, I use Zoom each and every day and cannot imagine using anything else. As a host you can set all the parameters when scheduling the meeting - start with video on or off, use computer audio or phone. Screen sharing is easy peasy - you can share an entire screen or a single window - you can also chat in-app and annotate screens during screen sharing. One of my favorite hidden features is the ability to share an iPhone or iPad screen right through the zoom interface. Recently, Zoom introduced a virtual background option that is 95% perfect even with no green screen. Once you use it, you will never look back.”

Randy Johnston, executive vice president at K2

Enterprises, recommends **Bookings**. “This is included at no charge in Office 365, integrates to Exchange/Outlook and allows you to set rates/charges for meetings, if desired.”

Joy Lutz, CPA, founder of Aligned CPA, LLC, recommends using **Google Docs**. “We find it imperative to lead every meeting with an agenda. We use Google Docs to prepare and share the agenda before our meetings so everyone knows what to expect.”

Angie Grissom, president, The Rainmaker Companies, said, “My team loves **Doodle!** It’s free (and also has a paid version if you want to get rid of advertisements), easy to use and our clients love it. It gets rid of the 40 emails of back and forth to schedule a call!” In addition, she recommends **Cvent**. “This is the most comprehensive of the meeting planning apps at this time. The ability to have materials, maps, attendee and exhibitor list, social media interactions and more make it particularly attractive. Further, integration with travel service providers is a benefit, too. The downside is the cost.”

Jackie Meyer, CPA, CTC, CTS, CEO/Founder, Meyer Tax, The Concierge CPA told us, “An amazing new app I’ve started using is **Otter.ai** for automated meeting notes. It records anything said verbally through the computer’s microphone, no matter what meeting platform, and transcribes it in real time. Saves a lot of time summarizing and saving details. A second new app I have to mention is **Crystal Knows**. If you want to understand your meeting participant’s personality type and best communication style, use Crystal. It will analyze their LinkedIn profile, add their DISC type, then make recommendations in your Google calendar invitation.”

Will Hill, MBA, senior product manager at Tax Professionals Advisory, said “I am really starting to love **Microsoft Teams**. All the notes, recording, etc. available right in the calendar view are great. I also like the blur background feature to keep visual focus on the person on webcam.”

Mark Brooks, investment manager at Syngenta Corporate Ventures, said, “The best app I’ve ever used for this is **Brella**. It’s often used at conferences that place a high value on networking. Brella lets others at the same event see who is there and request a brief meeting. If the other person accepts the invitation, Brella automatically schedules the meeting location (usually a table somewhere at the event venue). I’ve found it invaluable to meet high potential contacts at conferences and events.”

Roman Kepczyk, director of firm technology strategy at Right Networks, told us that, “**Doodle** is great for scheduling meetings and finding everyone’s

availability, and it automates reminders.”

Donny Shimamoto, CPA, CITP, CGMA, managing director of Intraprise TechKnowlogies LLC, is also a fan of **Doodle**, “for figuring out when to meet since it makes it easy to present options and quickly assess those options where we can maximize attendance.” He also recommends, “**Zoom** for actual meetings, as it seems to have the least amount of issues with people getting into the meeting. The mobile app is a pretty seamless user experience too.”

Ingrid Edstrom, priestess of profits at Polymath, LLC, said, “I love **Zoom** for my client meetings. The tools are intuitive, high quality, and great for both meetings and webinars. I particularly love the ease of the integration with Google calendar, as it makes it so easy to include a meeting link on any calendar invitation.”

Garrett Wagner, CPA, CITP, founder/CEO of C3 Evolution Group, is also on Team Zoom. “**Zoom** – Hands down the one and only go-to app for meetings. It doesn’t matter if it is audio or video or both, it’s the only meeting app I use.”

Michael Barton, CPA, partner at Petrow Kane Leenhuis, PC, agrees. “For my AICPA meetings and also client meetings I utilize **Zoom**. It helps keep that face-to-face interaction for a big group while not making it complicated to get setup. I utilize it for all long-distance client relationships as well.”

Kevin Bong, founder at AuditFile, said, “I like **Zoom** for screenshare web meetings. I find it easy to use and it ‘just works’ most of the time. It’s also reasonably priced.”

David Cieslak, EVP, Chief Cloud Officer, RKL eSolutions, told us, “We’ve used MANY of the tools available today, but currently feel the following are best of breed:

- **Doodle** – super simple to use and adjusts for time zones. Invaluable for scheduling meetings between busy people!
- **Zoom** – Live on this product. Great sound quality, multiple video feeds and record meetings.”

Melissa Galasso, founder and CEO at Galasso Learning Solutions, said, “I’m a big fan of the **Zoom** app. It allows me to schedule meetings and take them from everywhere without needing my laptop. The ability to see the attendees and see a shared screen works just as well on the app as it does on the website. As a frequent traveler, this is my go-to on the road app to have the most efficient meetings.”

Amy Vetter, CEO, The B3 Method Institute, uses **Calendly** for organizing. “It has saved so much time from going back and forth on email trying to find a time to meet to making it easy for someone to find

a time based on available.”

Susan Coffey, CPA, CGMA, executive vice president – public practice at AICPA, had a different take on meetings to share with our audience. “While I don’t use meeting apps, I do search for ways to lighten up the day during breaks – particularly when meeting virtually. See this link for some interesting ideas: <https://bit.ly/37oldKA>. I’ve done trivia during breaks. I’ve done rebus puzzles during breaks. I’ve done music during breaks. I’ve asked people to submit pictures of something from their childhood bedroom that makes them happy/smile, and asked meeting participants to ‘guess who.’ What I’ve found is that things like this help people get to know each other better, creates comradery to solve common issues, and gets them back to the meeting on time (to manage the meeting better).”

Jacquelyn Tracy, CPA, CGMA, partner at Mandel & Tracy, LLC, said, “I am old school and like **Outlook** for scheduling meetings. This way, I can ensure that it is on everyone’s calendar. I can include any instructions, notes and even attach the agenda. I use it for business, personal and my volunteer work. If it’s not on the calendar, it just won’t get done!”

Elizabeth Pittelkow Kittner, CPA, CITP, CGMA, DTM, vice president of finance and HR at International Legal Technology Association, told us, “**Zoom** is my favorite meeting app because it allows for easy viewing of video participants and offers a ‘Raise Hand’ feature, which is helpful for encouraging participation in larger groups and grabbing the attention of the hosts. **Doodle Poll** is my go-to option for organizing meetings because it cuts down on e-mails discussing availability, is easy to use, and is quick to implement.”

Kim Austin, business development manager at Intuit, said, “We use **Calendly** for several of our internal teams that are often needed in short-notice windows. It’s a great way to be able to quickly let a partner know if we have a resource available and it’s far easier than sending numerous emails back and forth or trying to assume someone remembers to put ‘carpool pickup’ on their Outlook calendar. As far as scheduling a meeting with a group, I love **Doodle** – it’s simple to quickly set up the open choices on the calendar & allows each participant to select multiple options that will work for them. When you’re trying to get time from external individuals, this can be a lifesaver and save a huge amount of wasted time going back & forth on emails.”

Continued online at
www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/21124539

“Alexa, Call My Accountant”: Staying Relevant in an AI World

IN 2020, NO matter what generation you hail from, you are no doubt familiar with asking questions of a digital assistant. What is today’s weather? When is that movie starting? Play my favorite song.

These voice assistants are powered by artificial intelligence (AI). They’re in our cars, our homes, throughout the workplace. The lure of AI is it answers our questions in an instant. No emails, no texting, no search engines.

We’re at the end of the beginning of the digital age, and we love the millennial mind. When it comes to trivial topics, they just use AI rather than wasting time, querying one another. AI knows the answers, just ask your phone. That’s cool.

But, as accountants, do we flip a switch and suddenly become less cool with our clients? Despite what is happening all around us in banking, restaurants, ecommerce—are we old school, making believe that our profession’s knowledge isn’t flowing into databases where AI will soon feed it into Alexa?

Wouldn’t it be a good idea if people could ask questions of us as comfortably as they do of Alexa?

by those who embrace AI—by Alexa, Cortana, Siri, or Watson?

WHAT CAN’T WATSON DO?

Understand this: IBM’s Watson can query numbers, nouns, noses—all at the same time. Watson is AI on steroids. It learns as it goes along, teaching itself how to read and process data, documents, visuals, and so on.

Someone could ask Watson, “How do I record a vehicle trade and new auto purchase?”

Watson will learn how to give the client step-by-step instructions tailored to their specific accounting package. Before we work ourselves into a tither about becoming the next telegraph, we have time and opportunity to become approachable. Where we encourage our clients to ask us questions, the more questions, the better.

PUTTING PEOPLE AT EASE

When it comes to approachability, you may be amazed to hear that most people feel, “My accountant is too busy to be bothered with questions like this.”

We need to overcome the negative stereotypes that we’re too busy or too expensive. To stay on top-of-mind, we must feel accessible. That means showing we are accessible. We pick up the phone, we respond to emails, we don’t abuse gatekeeping.

Does it mean we answer everyone in an instant? Of course not. You need to determine how you will set the bar. It may be different for different clients. But make others feel

heard, acknowledge the question and establish a timeframe for replies is often all people want.

By making others feel like we are approachable, they get their questions answered, and they have no need to look elsewhere. They value the relationship and view you as relevant. Focus on making others feel important and valued. They sense genuineness, and they’ll keep coming back to you. Particularly, you will find that millennials value authentic relationships. They sniff out what is real, they want that in the fabric of their personal and professional lives.

THE ART OF QUESTIONS

When you become approachable, that is Step One. Step Two is when things get tricky.

Anyone can answer questions. Answering them in ways that are succinct and asking intelligent follow up questions is the goal. That is where we can outshine a search engine, a voice assistant, or your average competitor. We focus our experience, knowledge and skills to do more than just answer the question. We hear the implied problem and ask the right follow up questions.

Through artful re-direction, we can drive a conversation, clarify the problem, identify gaps and ways to add value. Anyone can ask twenty random questions in reply. That may just generate anxiety with your client. We want to ask the right questions.

Watson, do I ask too many questions?



GARRETT WAGNER, CPA
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- Is now a good time to ask you some questions?
- What is an issue that currently has you at a crossroads?
 - What is unresolved right now?
 - And, what if we resolved it... what would make the biggest difference in your day, month, or the year ahead?

Big, strong questions solicit information, open hearts and minds, and drive a conversation forward.

When it comes to asking the right question, helping others come to new self-realizations of what they need to accomplish is the ultimate objective. Doling out advice is nice. But guiding others to find answers that uncover things they may be hesitant to confront is the greatest gift you can give. When someone helps us to achieve some new self-actualization, we remember that for a long time. We remain indebted, and we use not only the knowledge gained—but how we came upon it—for years to come.

Leverage this trend, and we can remain or become relevant advisors to our clients as their source for the right answers to what seem mundane, run-of-the mill questions. They may not know those questions are mundane, they may assume so—wrongly. It is our job to ensure that our clients understand there are no stupid questions.

Don’t wait for an AI-powered kiosk to poorly answer your client’s questions. Be the one with the right questions as answers to their questions. Both you and your client will be glad you did. ■

Alexa, what is today’s weather?



3 Visionary Trends to Consider in 2020

By Jodi Chavez

READ MORE, EXERCISE, take up a new hobby — you've got New Year's resolutions for yourself, but what about for your accounting firm? With 2020 fast approaching and a new decade on the horizon, now's the perfect time to position your firm for success in the new year. Here are some of the biggest workplace trends to watch for in 2020 — and what you can do to prepare.

DIVERSITY IS AN INCREASING PRIORITY

Workforce demographics are changing, so many businesses will be looking to improve their own diversity levels in 2020 to keep up. According to a study by Deloitte, companies that created inclusive workplace cultures were found to be:

- 2X more likely to meet or exceed financial targets
- 3X more likely to be high performing
- 6X more likely to be agile and innovative
- 8X more likely to achieve better business outcomes

That's a lot your firm could potentially gain by prioritizing diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the new year, so make it a top focus if this is an area where you need to improve. Improving D&I starts with hiring, but it's not just about the approach you take to actively target new talent. Even the language you use in your job postings can have an effect on the types of candidates you attract. For instance, one study found that more "masculine wording in job advertisements leads to less anticipated belongingness and job interest among women."

In terms of building a better culture for the employees you already have, remember that change starts at the top. When workers see a diverse team of leaders, they see their own possible pathways to advancement and a concrete daily reminder that your organization doesn't just walk the walk when it comes to inclusion.

AI AND AUTOMATION: NOW'S THE TIME

A recent research report on the future of

accounting concluded that many accounting tasks are expected to be fully automated by next year. Setting digital transformation at the top of the docket for 2020 can help your CPAs adapt faster. There are plenty of processes that can be automated to improve day-to-day efficiency. Employees will be glad for the improvement as it will allow them to spend more time building and deepening client relationships. Another great example, cloud accounting, for instance, empowers your clients to access their data faster and in real-time, too. Automating bookkeeping and accounts-payable processes could save you time and money at a rate of about \$16 per invoice and one less hour of work per day. That's more time back for your CPAs to focus on advising their clients strategically and providing value in areas you previously didn't have enough bandwidth to address completely. How visionary!

TECH TAKES OVER EMPLOYER BRANDING

In an era of social media and the rise of employer review sites, businesses can no longer sit on the sidelines and still expect to attract and retain top talent. Ninety-four percent of job seekers said they would likely apply for a job at a company that actively managed its employer brand, and 72 percent said they spend at least one hour researching a company before deciding to apply. Technology has enabled businesses to spread their brand messages farther and convey them more vividly. Expect competing employers to continue branching out into new channels like Instagram or experimenting with different kinds of content to tell their stories like



day-in-the-life videos or employee spotlights.

To get your firm up to speed, conduct an audit of your own employer brand. Scour review sites, and read what people are saying on social media to get an idea of the public's sentiment toward your organization. If you see negative reviews, take the time to respond correctly, as managing your brand is just as important as building it. Identify areas that you could address or emphasize more clearly, and start building a messaging strategy around them.

Of course, these three trends won't be the only things going on in the world of work next year, but you can bet they'll be among the most prevalent. Keep these suggestions in mind and follow the guidelines here, and you'll be sure to keep your firm competitive in the new year. ■

As group president, Jodi oversees the field organization and provides strategic direction for Randstad Accounting & Finance, Professionals, Life Sciences and Tatum. With more than 20 years' experience in the staffing industry, Jodi's entrepreneurial drive and strong business acumen have enabled her to consistently increase revenues, grow profits and deliver ROI. Her breadth of expertise spans team building, strategic planning and execution, M&A, branding, social media and multi-generational leadership.



What is a Payroll Lookback Period for Forms 941 and 944

By **Mike Kappel**

DO YOU KNOW how often you need to deposit federal income, Social Security, and Medicare taxes? You can't deposit the taxes whenever you feel like. Your deposit frequency is based on a lookback period. So, what is a lookback period?

WHAT IS A LOOKBACK PERIOD?

A lookback period is the time frame employers use to figure out their deposit schedule for withheld FICA tax (Social Security and Medicare) and federal income tax. Your tax liability during the lookback period determines whether you deposit these employment taxes monthly or semiweekly. Your IRS lookback period depends on if you file Form 941 or Form 944.

As an employer, you will either report employee wages and payroll taxes on Form 941 or 944. You can only use Form 944 if the IRS tells you to.

Form 941, Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return, is a form that employers use to report employee wages and taxes quarterly. Most employers use this form.

Form 944, Employer's ANNUAL Federal Tax Return, is a form that employers use to report employee wages and taxes annually. Only very small businesses use this form.

IRS PAYROLL DEPOSIT SCHEDULE

Regardless of whether you file Form 941 or 944, you will either be a monthly or semiweekly depositor. Again, your total tax liability during the lookback period determines which schedule you must follow.

Take a look at the difference in tax liability between monthly and semiweekly depositors:

■ **Monthly depositor:** Employers who

reported a tax liability of \$50,000 or less during the lookback period

■ **Semiweekly Depositor:** Employers who reported a tax liability of more than \$50,000 during the lookback period

Monthly depositors must deposit their employment taxes collected and contributed during a month by the 15th day of the following month. For example, you must deposit taxes collected in June by July 15.

Semiweekly depositors' due dates are determined by payday. If payday falls on a Wednesday, Thursday, and/or Friday, deposit taxes by the following Wednesday. If payday falls on a Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and/or Tuesday, deposit taxes by the following Friday.

You cannot pay your liabilities based on a previous deposit schedule or how often you pay your employees. Use the lookback period to determine your deposit frequency.

Determine your deposit schedule before the beginning of each calendar year. Once you figure out your deposit schedule, use it for the whole year.

LOOKBACK PERIOD FOR FORMS 941 AND 944

Form 941 filers use a four-quarter lookback period that starts halfway through one calendar year (July 1) and ends halfway through the next calendar year (June 30).

Form 944 filers use an annual lookback period that looks at the employer's total tax liability during the calendar year (January – December).

But, which calendar years do you look at? Let's get into the nitty-gritty of the IRS lookback period for Form 941 and Form 944 filers below.

WHAT IS THE LOOKBACK PERIOD FOR FORM 941 FILERS?

Again, Form 941 filers report their Social Security, Medicare, and federal income tax liabilities on a quarterly basis.

Form 941 filers have a four-quarter lookback period that spans from July 1 to June 30 the following year.

Let's say you want to determine your deposit schedule for 2020. You would calculate your total tax liability from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Quarter 3 (2018)	Quarter 4 (2018)	Quarter 1 (2019)	Quarter 2 (2019)
July 1 - Sept. 30	Oct. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Mar. 31	Apr. 1 - June 30

FORM 941 LOOKBACK PERIOD EXAMPLE

Let's say Karen of Karen's Pet Supply wants to know whether she's a monthly or semiweekly depositor in 2020.

To find out Karen's deposit schedule for 2020, we need to look at her tax liability in quarters 3 and 4 in 2018 as well as quarters 1 and 2 in 2019:

- **3rd Quarter 2018:** \$10,000
- **4th Quarter 2018:** \$10,000
- **1st Quarter 2019:** \$13,000
- **2nd Quarter 2019:** \$13,000

Karen's total tax liability during the 2020 lookback period is \$46,000. Because it is less than \$50,000, Karen's Pet Supply is a monthly depositor.

WHAT IS LOOKBACK PERIOD FOR FORM 944 FILERS?

Again, Form 944 filers report Social Security, Medicare, and federal income tax liabilities on an annual basis.

If you will file Form 944 for the current year, or if you filed it in either of the previous two years, your lookback period is the second preceding calendar year. For example, the IRS lookback period for 2020 is calendar year 2018.

Depending on how you filed in the past, you might have to look at your Form 944 for that year, or all four quarters of Form 941 for that year.

FORM 944 LOOKBACK PERIOD EXAMPLE

Let's say Daniel of Daniel's Hauling Services wants to find out whether he's a monthly or semiweekly depositor for 2020. He reported the following tax liabilities on Form 944 during calendar year 2018:

■ **Calendar Year 2018:** \$1,000

Because Daniel's tax liability was less than \$50,000 in 2018, his deposit schedule for 2020 is monthly.

HOW ADJUSTMENTS AFFECT THE IRS LOOKBACK PERIOD

Mistakes happen. If you make an error on Form 941 or Form 944, you will need to make a correction using Form 941-X or Form 944-X.

If you make a correction, the adjustments don't affect the amount of tax liability for previous periods. You must use the amount you originally reported.

EXAMPLE OF AN ADJUSTMENT

Let's look at the 2020 lookback period for Karen's Pet Supply again:

- **3rd Quarter 2018:** \$10,000
- **4th Quarter 2018:** \$10,000
- **1st Quarter 2019:** \$13,000
- **2nd Quarter 2019:** \$13,000

Based on this information, Karen's Pet Sup-

ply is a monthly depositor. However, let's say there was a mistake on Form 941 one quarter.

The second quarter of 2019, where Karen reported \$13,000, should actually have been \$18,000:

- **3rd Quarter 2018:** \$10,000
- **4th Quarter 2018:** \$10,000
- **1st Quarter 2019:** \$13,000
- **2nd Quarter 2019:** \$18,000

Karen can file Form 941-X to make corrections to the second quarter's report in 2019. However, the business must use the original amount reported in the lookback period. As a result, the business remains a monthly depositor instead of changing to a semiweekly depositor.

I'M A NEW EMPLOYER. WHAT'S MY LOOKBACK PERIOD?

If you're a new employer, you obviously haven't paid Social Security, Medicare, and federal

income taxes before. So, your tax liabilities are considered as zeros in your lookback period.

This makes you a monthly depositor during your first year as an employer.

Before the beginning of the next calendar year, make sure you examine your lookback period. You might have some tax liability to consider.

For more information on the IRS lookback period, check out Publication 15. ■

Mike Kappel is the CEO and founder of Patriot Software. This article first appeared on the Patriot Software blog.



Form 941 for 2019: Employer's QUARTERLY Federal Tax Return

(Rev. January 2019)

Department of the Treasury — Internal Revenue Service

950117

OMB No. 1545-0029

Employer identification number (EIN) -

Name (not your trade name)

Trade name (if any)

Address

Number Street Suite or room number

City State ZIP code

Foreign country name Foreign province/county Foreign postal code

Report for this Quarter of 2019 (Check one.)

- 1: January, February, March
- 2: April, May, June
- 3: July, August, September
- 4: October, November, December

Go to www.irs.gov/Form941 for instructions and the latest information.

Read the separate instructions before you complete Form 941. Type or print within the boxes.

Part 1: Answer these questions for this quarter.

1	Number of employees who received wages, tips, or other compensation for the pay period including: Mar. 12 (Quarter 1), June 12 (Quarter 2), Sept. 12 (Quarter 3), or Dec. 12 (Quarter 4)	1	<input type="text"/>
2	Wages, tips, and other compensation	2	<input type="text"/> .
3	Federal income tax withheld from wages, tips, and other compensation	3	<input type="text"/> .
4	If no wages, tips, and other compensation are subject to social security or Medicare tax	<input type="checkbox"/> Check and go to line 6.	
		Column 1	Column 2
5a	Taxable social security wages	<input type="text"/> .	<input type="text"/> .
		× 0.124 =	<input type="text"/> .
5b	Taxable social security tips	<input type="text"/> .	<input type="text"/> .
		× 0.124 =	<input type="text"/> .
5c	Taxable Medicare wages & tips	<input type="text"/> .	<input type="text"/> .
		× 0.029 =	<input type="text"/> .
5d	Taxable wages & tips subject to Additional Medicare Tax withholding	<input type="text"/> .	<input type="text"/> .
		× 0.009 =	<input type="text"/> .

Financial Reporting Executive Committee Seeks Feedback on Insurance Entities Working Drafts

The AICPA Financial Reporting Executive Committee (FinREC) has issued several working drafts of accounting issues for Insurance Entities, related to the implementation of FASB Accounting Standards Update (ASU) No. 2018-12, Targeted Improvements to the Accounting for Long-Duration Contracts, and is requesting feedback.

The new FASB accounting standard on Long-Duration Contracts makes targeted improvements to the existing recognition, measurement, presentation, and disclosure requirements for long-duration contracts issued by an insurance company. FinREC and the AICPA Insurance Expert Panel will continue to develop working drafts on accounting implementation issues that have been identified for the new standard. ■



CONSUMER FINANCIAL SATISFACTION MOVES HIGHER

Thanks to a late 2019 stock market surge, Americans' financial satisfaction has roared into the 2020's. The average Americans should be feeling their strongest sense of financial well-being ever, according to the AICPA's Q4 2019 Personal Financial Satisfaction index (PFSi) which has reached a new high for the seventh time in the last ten quarters.

The current state of Americans' financial satisfaction is quite different from this time last decade. Entering the 2010's, many Americans were still reeling from the Great Recession. In Q4 2009, financial pain significantly outweighed financial pleasure and as a result the PFSi measured -29.6. This negative reading indicates that the average Americans were feeling very dissatisfied with their financial health. ■

AICPA SEEKS CLARITY ON SEC. 465 RELIEF

The AICPA is requesting the Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issue a notice clarifying that reporting relief on certain reporting under section 465 will also apply to S corporations.

On December 9, 2019, Treasury and the IRS issued Notice 2019-66 to provide – among other relief – a delay in certain reporting under section 465 at-risk activities until the taxpayer's 2020 taxable year. Recently released draft forms and instructions for partnerships and S corporations have increased the

level of reporting expected for the 2019 taxable year at a time when such taxpayers are still expected to address volumes of additional guidance from Treasury and IRS specific to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA).

Notice 2019-66 provides temporary reporting relief for certain items that were considered the most burdensome to partnerships. The AICPA believes that the additional time for partnerships to comply with such provisions will result in better overall compliance. ■

AICPA ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) is now accepting applications for the Private Companies Practice Section (PCPS) George Willie Ethnically Diverse Student Scholarship and Internship program.

The George Willie program provides a scholarship and internship to five minority accounting students who intend to pursue their CPA licensure. The AICPA provides a scholarship of up to \$20,000 to each student to assist with their final academic year tuition, while five PCPS member firms each sponsor a student for an internship during the 2021 tax season (January to April).

The participating member firms are:

- Aronson LLC, Rockville, MD
- Boyum Barendscheer, Bloomington, MN
- OnTarget CPA, Indianapolis, IN
- Reynolds, Bone & Griesbeck PLC, Memphis, TN
- Sensiba San Filippo, Pleasanton, CA

This program was created in honor of George Willie, CPA, CGMA, a former chair of AICPA's PCPS Executive Committee and the AICPA Minority Initiatives Committee. During his more than 35-year career, Willie has promoted the benefits of a career in accounting to students and young professionals in pursuit of the CPA license.

"Interning for a firm is one of the best ways to experience what it means to be a CPA," said Carl Peterson, CPA, CGMA, Association International of Certified Professional Accountants' vice president of small firm interests. "This program gives students financial backing to help them complete their accounting education and real-world experience that will better prepare them for a career as a CPA."

Visit <https://bit.ly/39vJKz4> for more information. Applications are currently open, with a deadline of April 15, 2020. ■



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Director, Boomer Technology Circle™
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6 Steps for Adopting a Growth Mindset

EACH YEAR, OUR team provides consulting services to hundreds of top-performing accounting firms. The thing about being a consultant, as many CPA firms are learning, is that while you can provide insight and advice to help your client solve a problem, you can't make decisions for them or force them into action. We can help build consensus and commitment and provide ongoing accountability, but it's ultimately up to the client to decide whether and how to implement the plan of action we've recommended.

Most of the time, the difference between success and failure of a project comes down to mindset. In the book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, author Carol S. Dweck explains how mindset impacts growth and change.

FIXED MINDSET VS. GROWTH MINDSET

Your mindset is a spectrum. One side of the spectrum is a fixed mindset, while the other side is a growth mindset.

■ **Fixed mindset.** People with a fixed mindset believe that abilities, intelligence and talents are all traits we're born with. They often obstruct their development through their belief in innate talent and their fear of failure. They see failure as a disaster.

■ **Growth mindset.** People with a growth mindset believe their talents and abilities are developed through effort, teaching and practice. They believe anyone can improve and be smarter if they work at it. They're open to new ideas and learning and see failures as opportunities.

Our mindset shapes whether we can learn and change and grow. The good news is that anyone can adopt a growth mindset, think differently and become more open to innovation and growth.

James Anderson, a Certified Growth Mindset Trainer, identified

several misunderstandings about mindsets. Before we jump into how to adopt a growth mindset, it's essential to address at least two of those misunderstandings.

First, your mindset is not an innate part of who you are. You weren't born with either a fixed or growth mindset – you developed it through your experiences, especially the role models you had as a child and the messages you received from others.

Second, growth vs. fixed isn't an either/or proposition. No one has a completely fixed or growth mindset. It's more accurate to talk about the degree to which a person holds a growth or fixed mindset about abilities. We all have a mixed mindset to varying degrees.

SIX STEPS TO ADOPTING A GROWTH MINDSET

It's possible to develop a growth mindset, and in the accounting profession today, we believe it's not just a good idea, but vital to long-term success. Here's how you go about moving toward the growth end of the mindset spectrum.

1. FOCUS ON LEARNING

Seek out the best sources of information from within and outside the profession and focus on learning from the best. Read books, industry publications and quality blogs. Listen to podcasts and attend conferences.

There is a lot of information out there, so work on developing the skill of identifying the best and avoiding the rest.

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT ROLE MODELS

Take inspiration from thought leaders and innovators in the profession. Follow them on social media and attend the same events. Try to model their way of thinking and adapt their mindset in a way that fits you.

3. CHALLENGE YOUR CURRENT BELIEFS

One of the most critical steps in changing your mindset is acknowledging that you have a fixed mindset – at least in some areas. Look at your current belief system and identify where you have self-limiting beliefs. Acknowledging this isn't shameful – it's human.

Shine a light on the roadblocks you're putting up for yourself and work on turning them around.

4. SET A VISION AND DEFINE GOALS

Creating a vision and setting goals can help provide the motivation you need to move from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. What do you want to achieve in the next year? Five years? Ten years? Get a clear picture of where you want to be and then break your vision down into

goals that will help you reach it.

5. SEE FAILURES AS OPPORTUNITIES

People with a growth mindset know that failure is a necessary stop on the road to success. When faced with failure, they see it as an opportunity to change tactics or apply extra effort to improve results.

6. BE AUTHENTIC

A growth mindset demands authenticity in how you think and act. Know who you are and what you're all about. You don't have to put on a perfect front to others. Don't be afraid to be yourself and let your values be known to others. When you are open and honest in your interactions with others, people know where they stand with you and trust you.

To innovate and think differently, accountants need to adjust their mindsets. But realize that a growth mindset isn't the only ingredient for success – it's just the first step. You also need to do the work of transforming yourself and your firm to become future-ready. Having a growth mindset doesn't guarantee success – it just opens the door to getting there. It's a process that involves mindset, goals and action that leads to results. ■

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- 2 Farmers & Fishermen Tax Deadline
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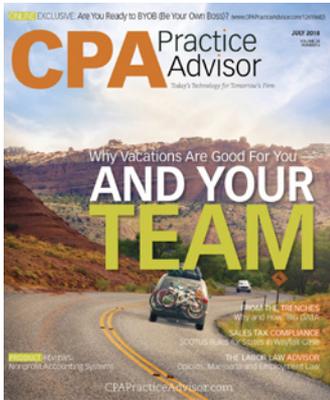
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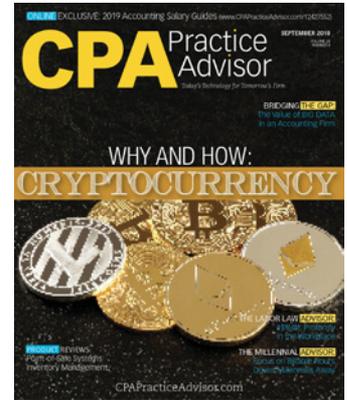
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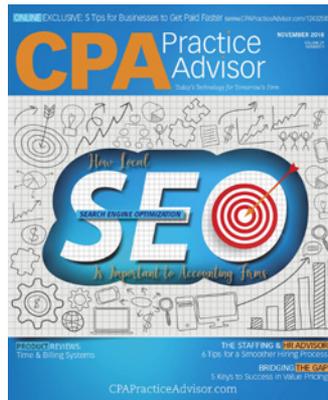
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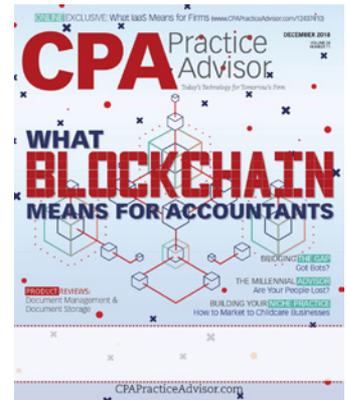
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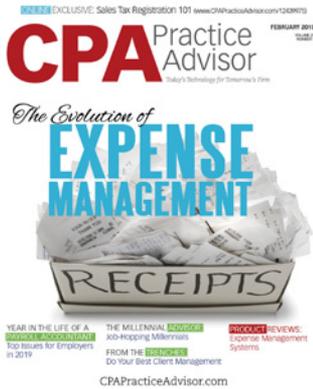
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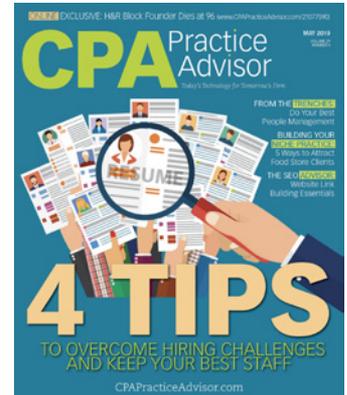
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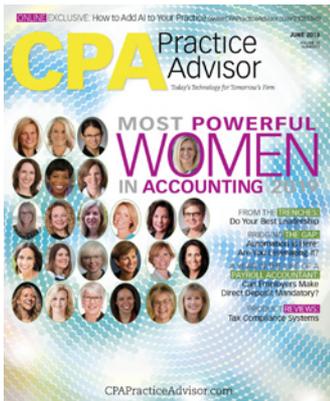
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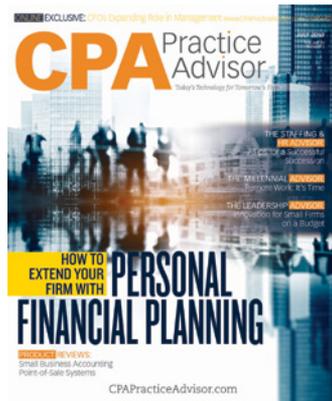
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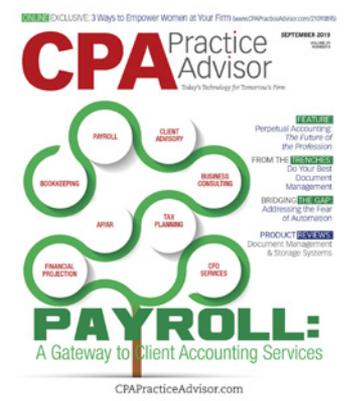
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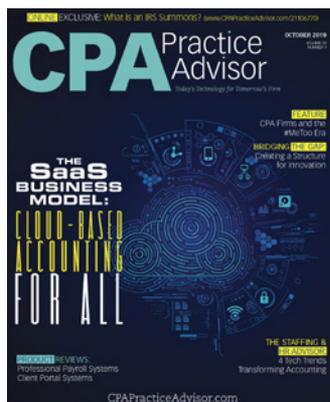
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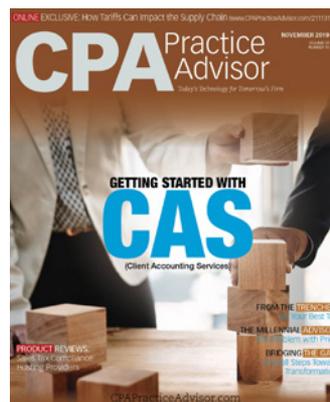
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September 2019



October 2019



November 2019



December 2019

2018