

QUICKBOOKS

## Inform Restaurant Accounting

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**JAN WALKER**  
Owner

**Core Business**

Full-service accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, and business operations for restaurants

**Homebase**

Tigard, OR

**Business Launch**

2008

**Employees**

6 full-time, 1 contract

### Ordering Up a Digital, Efficient Accounting Process

Catering to restaurants...Inform Accounting, works to digitize workflow, offer broader options, and add services

Exclusively serving restaurants has allowed Inform Restaurant Accounting to build specialized expertise in their niche, and stake their claim in the food services industry. Unfortunately, it has also exposed the firm to piles of paper that flow in on a weekly basis from restaurant clients.

“Restaurants produce an immense amount of paper,” explained Carin Dykzeul, Director of Operations at the firm. “What drives the high levels of paper are deliveries. Restaurants deal in perishable items that sometimes require daily ordering, especially restaurants with seasonal, organic or specialized menu items. Combine this with liquor, beverage, and other food items, as well as the multiple payment methods available for these deliveries, and the paper really starts to pile up.”

To keep up with the higher-than-normal level of source documents, the firm prefers to collect paperwork from clients on a weekly basis. Although paperwork is eventually passed back to the client, it doesn't take long before the volumes of paperwork become overwhelming to manage.

“In 2011, we reached capacity. The office was becoming cramped due to the amount of paper, boxes, and filing cabinets. Our president made a command decision at that point to move paper online,” said Dykzeul.

The firm's owner, Jan Walker, began the paperless transition by using the document management software that was loaded on the firm's copier/scanner. This allowed staff to electronically file scanned documents to the local network, which only supported storage of static files with limited access. And it still left the firm with hoards of original source documents.

Eventually, too many technical problems made Walker realize that this was not a long-term solution. The firm needed a broader solution that not only provided unlimited, 24/7 access to documents, but also provided a client portal for accessing documents remotely. Bringing clients into the process required an affordable solution that would support real-time online document storage and secure file sharing. The search began for the right solution. Walker and her staff started listening to what was going on in the profession in relation to technology.

### Making the Move

After some intensive research, Walker was set on SmartVault as the solution. And once the decision was made, she went full-force forward with implementation.

“Sometimes you just have to take the leap. You can't research forever,” Dykzeul recalled.

And leap they did. On January 1, 2012, a new protocol was put into place. All client source documents were scanned to the SmartVault Inbox—the first step in each staff member's workflow. In electronic format, the documents could then be attached to QuickBooks transactions and safely stored in SmartVault.

"There is so much value in this integration," Dykzeul said. "Every source document is attached to an entry in QuickBooks, so we can access files from either system any time and from anywhere. That is priceless."

While the transition to paperless internally was smooth and speedy, transitioning clients has presented its own set of challenges.

"Chefs don't want to deal with accounting. They want to be in the kitchen, doing what they are passionate about," Dykzeul explained. "Even though we know moving them online will streamline their part of the accounting process, we have to be sensitive to their apprehension."

The firm is steadily moving forward on transitioning clients to portals and delivering documents online, Dykzeul reported. "We started with one client, because this particular client understands technology and the value of an online process. We will continue to educate other clients and move them over using a phased approach."

## The Proof is in the (lack of) Paper

Inform Accounting didn't just implement a paperless process; they took the time to test it as well. Over the course of several months, the firm's president put the new system under a microscope.

"Jan conducted a thorough time analysis to see the extent to which we reduced manual tasks, the handling of paper, and time spent in the office."

Walker found that her professional staff, some who work remotely, were spending significantly less time in the office because they no longer had to sift through piles of paper. Instead, they could access client source documents in the cloud.

"Tasks that once took staff about an hour to accomplish, now takes only 20 minutes," Dykzeul said.

Overall, the results of the transition to paperless have been very positive—especially from the standpoint of time savings. With source documents in the cloud, staff members have real-time access, allowing them to work far more efficiently and serve their clients more effectively.

"We love SmartVault," Dykzeul commented. "We could never go back to the old ways of doing business."