

IMPACT OF COVID-19

State of Accountants Report

How successful firms are navigating uncertain times to ensure business continuity

COMPILED & WRITTEN BY



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Executive Summary

Over 1,100 accounting professionals from 18 different countries responded to the State of Accountants Survey allowing us to gauge the impact COVID-19 is having on the industry.

While most firms rate their handling of the pandemic as just above average, a few things stand out among the firms who feel they are adjusting quite well. First, they use cloud-based technology—particularly, cloud-based document management and online client portals. Sixty-three percent of firms that had a cloud-based document management system in place felt they handled the impact of COVID-19 well and felt they had a seamless transition to remote work. Successful firms also offered more virtual services to clients, with eighty percent offering online client portal access.

Firms identified as **Most Successful** in response to the pandemic are focusing on clients and working to keep them informed of what is happening in terms of impact to their business and what feels like constant updates to legislation. Firms identified as **Least Successful** in response to the pandemic are putting more energy into incorporating new technology to enable remote work and communication with team members and clients. Both groups are concerned with ensuring the security of communication and documents as they have transitioned to more virtual operations.

Overall, the majority of respondents agree COVID-19 is acting as a forcing mechanism to get more firms and clients to embrace cloud-based technology allowing them to do their job better and offer more strategic, advisory services.

It's clear that the future of accounting is here. But it's about more than just offering virtual services to clients in a time where social distancing mandates require it. This is about ensuring business continuity no matter what situations arise in the future. Those firms that are embracing cloud-based technology and processes are better able to adapt to unforeseen events, thus ensuring their firm can survive in the long-term. After COVID-19, more accounting professionals will look for this when scouting new jobs, and more clients will demand these virtual services as well.

So if you're part of a firm that already had cloud-based tech in place—congratulations! It's likely that you've had a much easier time adapting during this time of uncertainty, thus providing your team, and your clients an advantage. For those of you who feel you have struggled greatly to transition to remote work, help is here. Read through this report to better understand what the **Most Successful** firms are doing and take it step-by-step.

About the Contributors



Dawn Brolin
CPA, CFE

Dawn is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Fraud Examiner, and President of Powerful Accounting, Inc, a nationally recognized accounting, tax, forensic and fraud, IRS and State Agency audit and professional Quickbooks consulting firm. Recently Powerful Accounting has partnered with Anderson, Brolin & Coba CPAs, LLC—a powerhouse tax preparation, consulting and wealth management firm where Dawn is a partner. Dawn’s list of professional accomplishments is extensive and includes speaking on various fraud and tax resolution cases as well as keynote and emcee at many conferences across the country. Dawn has been named “Top 100 Most Influential People in Accounting” 2018 & 2019 by Accounting Today, “Top 25 Most Powerful Women in Accounting” 2012-2017 by CPA Practice Advisor, a “Top 10 Managing Partner Elite – Great Accounting Firm Leader” in 2017 by Accounting Today, and selected as a “Top 40 Under 40” by CPA Technology Magazine in 2009. Dawn continues to pursue excellence with the support of her amazing team at Powerful Accounting.



Gabrielle Fontaine
PB, ASBC

Gabrielle Fontaine is a freelance Professional Bookkeeper and Advanced Certified QuickBooks ProAdvisor who works with independent consultants and self-employed professionals to maximize cash flow, save taxes and improve profits using proven systems and online technology. She has been in business for over 30 years and works on a virtual basis with all her clients. Gabrielle is the author of the award-winning blog, [The Freelance Bookkeeper](#), and regularly speaks at accounting technology conferences around the world. She is best known for her practical online training programs specifically for independent bookkeepers.



Jane Aylwin
MICB PM.Dip

A true believer in the awesome power of data, a huge advocate of the ‘accounting revolution’ and an excitable supporter of cloud technology, Jane Aylwin is passionate about entrepreneurial small businesses and the role accountants and bookkeepers have to play in the business world. She is a certified ICB Member who was in practice until only recently, selling her bookkeeping business to take a senior role at a London firm. Jane has co-written a book, *How to Build a Successful Bookkeeping Business*, delivered presentations at The ICB Conference and, for the last four years, been a speaker at Accountex.

About the Survey

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to social distancing mandates and quarantines at varying degrees across the globe. Many businesses are being forced to figure out how to run their operations virtually in a world where face-to-face interactions are no longer an option. Accounting professionals, the backbone of small businesses across the world, are particularly impacted as they must find ways to continue operations and support their clients who need them now more than ever.

From April 1 to April 8, 2020, SmartVault surveyed accountants, bookkeepers, and tax professionals across the globe to help gauge the impact that COVID-19 is having on the profession. The aim of the survey was to better understand current challenges, how accounting professionals are approaching those challenges, their outlook on the post-COVID-19 future and to gather useful advice for the global accounting community. This report outlines the results of that survey.

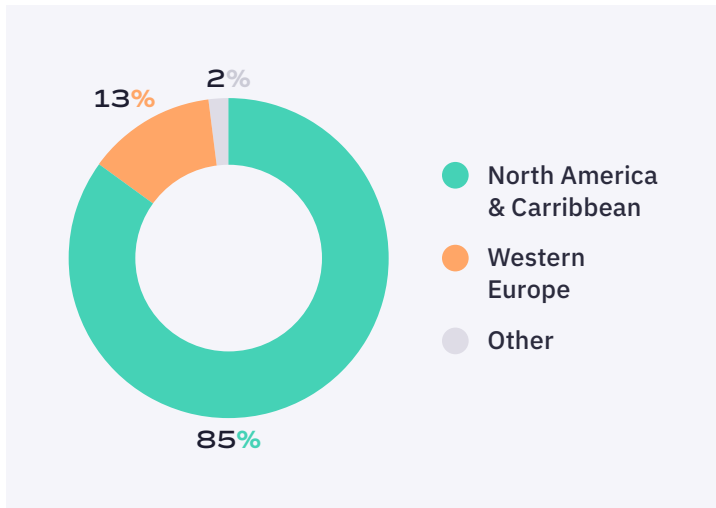
SmartVault received 1,109 responses from accounting professionals globally, which helped us donate \$5,000 to COVID-19 relief efforts via the [Small Business Relief Fund](#) and the [National Emergencies Trust](#).

We'd like to extend a special thank-you to all those who participated and helped make this possible.

Respondents Profile

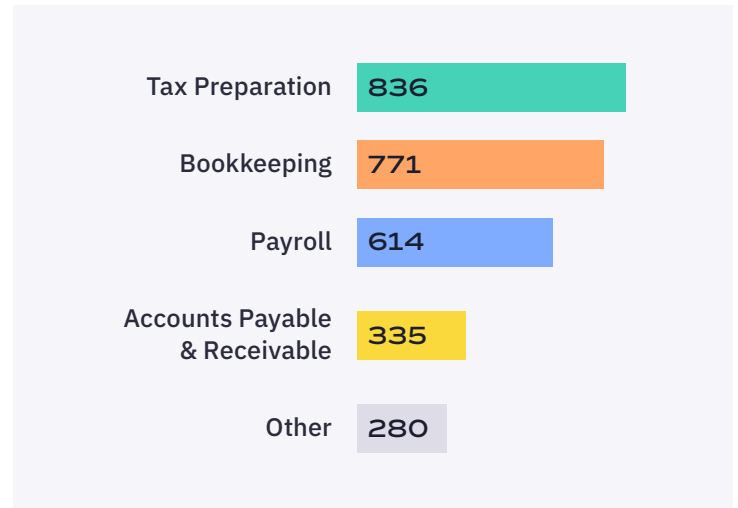
There were 1,109 responses collected from accounting professionals across the globe. Of the respondents, 93% work for a tax, accounting or bookkeeping firm and 7% work in industry.

Firm Location by Region



A majority of respondents are located in North America and the Caribbean, with Western Europe representing the second largest group.

Services Offered

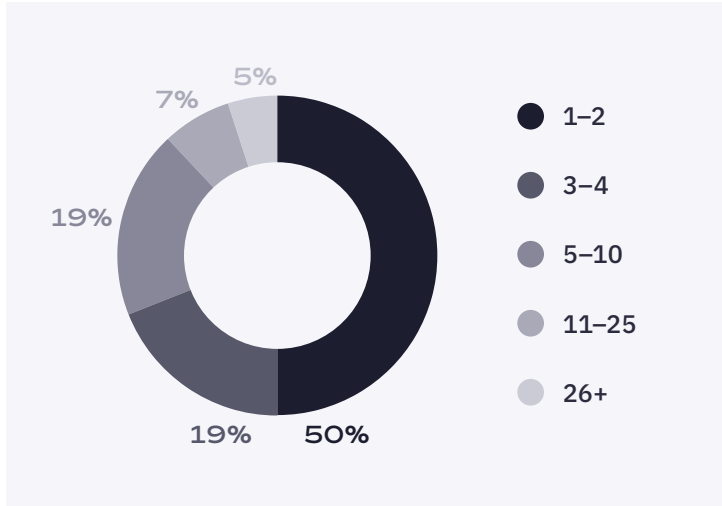


Many firms offer more than one accounting service to their clients, with tax preparation and bookkeeping being most popular. Consulting, advisory services, and audit services were the most common services listed as 'other'.

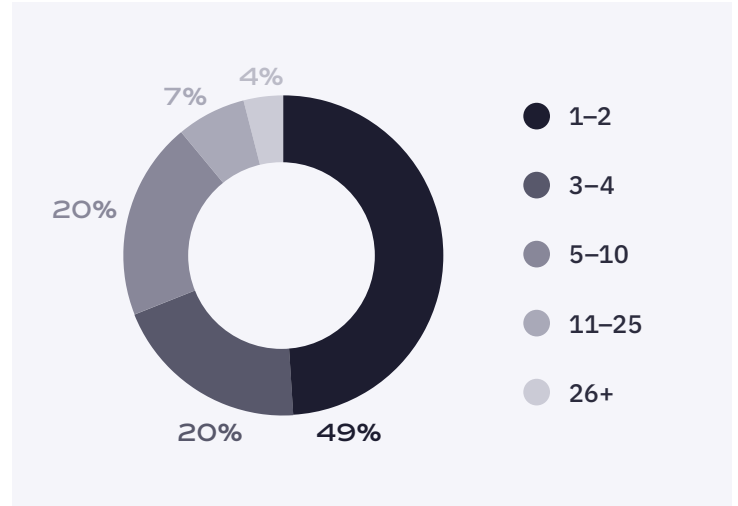
Firm Size

There were 949 firms that provided information on their number of employees. The majority of respondents work for small to medium sized firms with 50% reporting 1–2 employees and 45% reporting 3–25 employees.

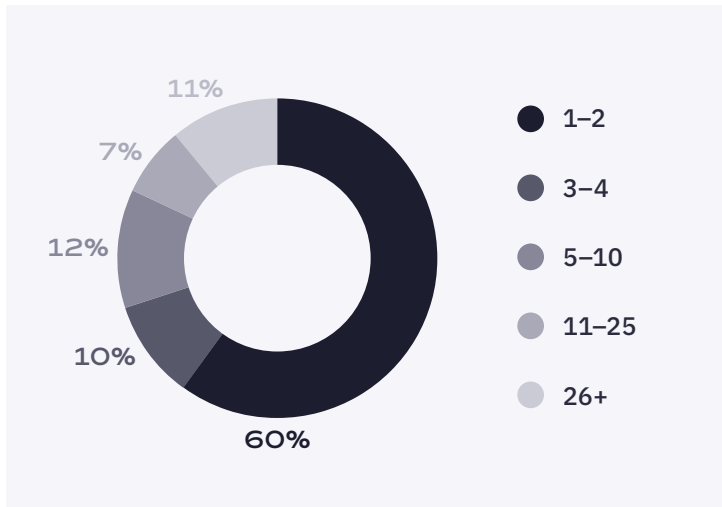
All Regions



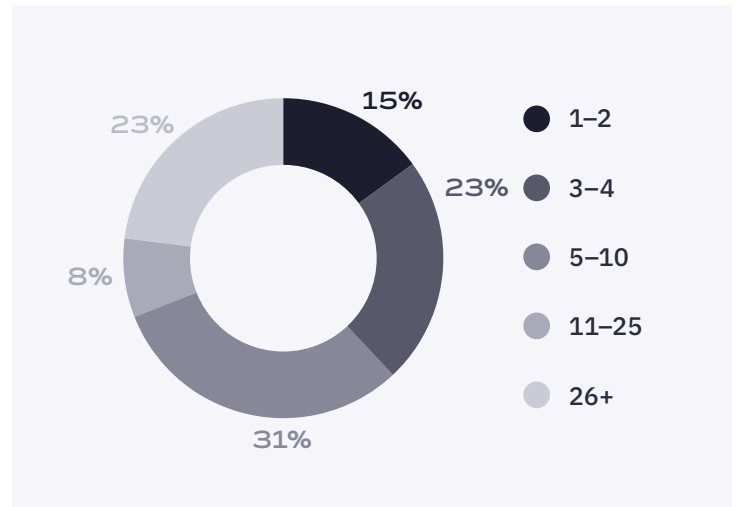
North America & Caribbean



Western Europe



Other



Most Successful vs. Least Successful Firms

In order to provide more meaningful insights into the data collected, we created two groups of responses: those that were **Most Successful** and **Least Successful** in their handling of the pandemic.

Responses were assigned a group based on their answers to the following two questions.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how prepared would you say your firm was for remote work?

ANSWER OPTIONS

- Our team already worked 100% remote.
- Very prepared, most team members were already enabled to work remote when needed.
- Somewhat prepared. We could access some systems and documents from home.
- Not prepared at all. We could not access any systems or documents from home.

How do you feel your firm has handled the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

ANSWER OPTIONS

Range of 1 to 5, where:

- 1 = Not Well
- 3 = Ok
- 5 = Superb

I am encouraged to see so many small firms who have embraced virtual technology, enabling them to support small businesses when this unexpected crisis arose. Small firms continue to have the agility to adapt to new technology quickly, and while the profession as a whole is already in disruption due to fast-moving technology, being in a position to continue to adapt to the fast onset of change has served us well early on in this pandemic, and I suspect, will help us to weather the road ahead.



GABRIELLE FONTAINE, PB, ASBC

Most Successful Group

To be included in the **Most Successful** group, a respondent answered that their team already worked 100% remote or were very prepared to work remote *and* they rated their firm’s handling of the pandemic a 4 or 5.

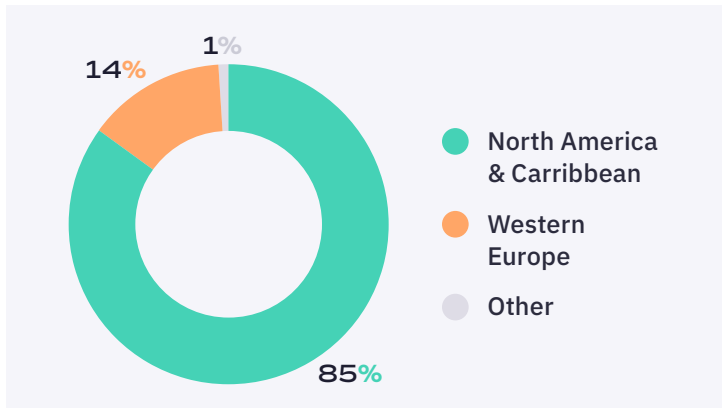
450 total respondents fell into this group, which is 41% of total responses. Of the **Most Successful** firms, 69% had less than 5 employees and 36% were sole proprietors.

Least Successful Group

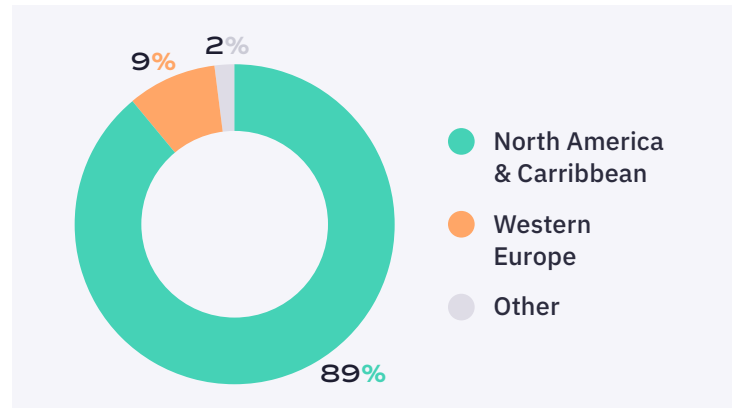
To be included in the **Least Successful** group, a respondent answered that their team was only somewhat prepared or not prepared at all to work remotely *and* they rated their firm’s handling of the pandemic a 1, 2, or 3.

216 total respondents fell into this group, which is 20% of total responses. Of the **Least Successful** firms, 57% had 5 or fewer employees and 21% were sole proprietors. Firms that had 3–10 employees had a higher proportion of responses that indicated they were unprepared for remote work and did not respond well to the pandemic.

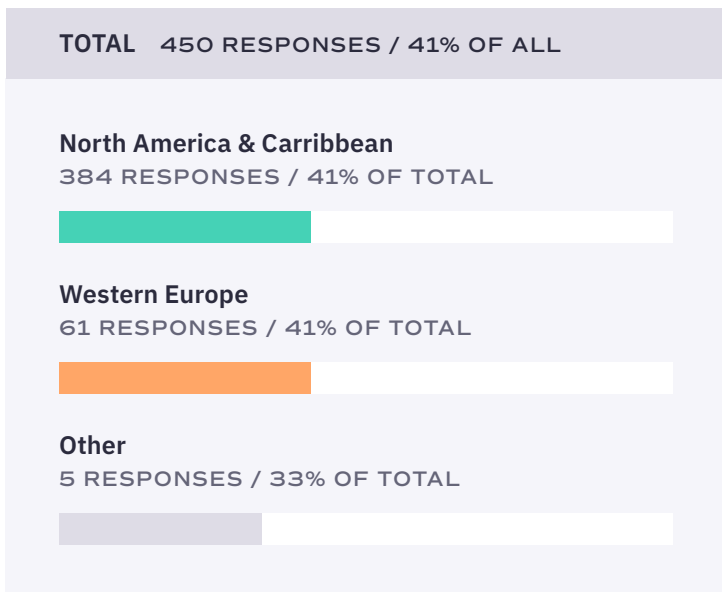
Most Successful Group by Location



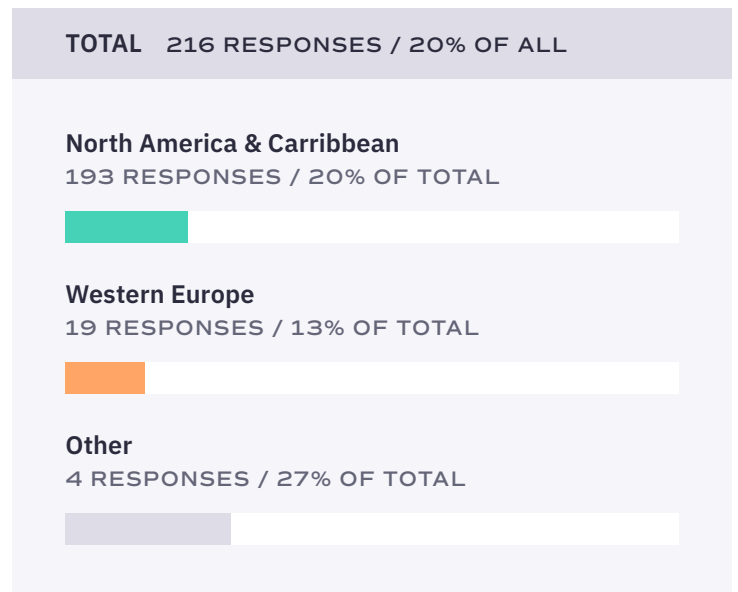
Least Successful Group by Location



Who qualified as Most Successful?



Who qualified as Least Successful?

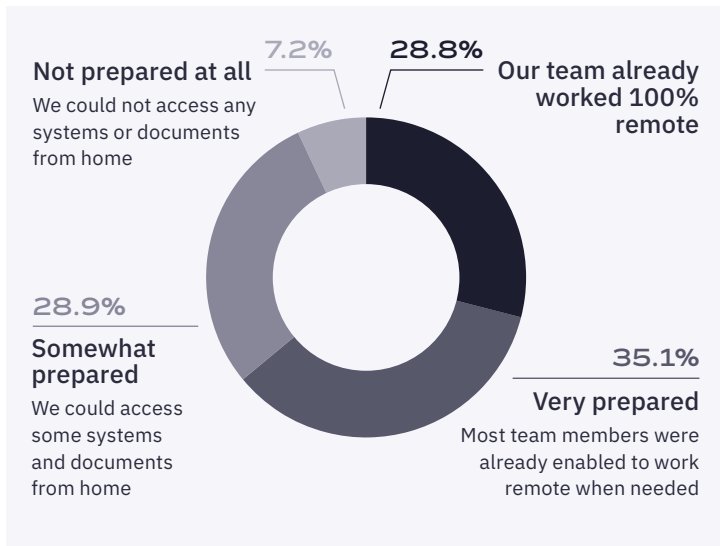


Shows the number of responses per region that are represented in the **Most Successful** or **Least Successful** groups, and the percentage of total responses per region that qualified for those groups.

Impact of Cloud Systems on COVID-19 Response

Overall, firms that already had at least one cloud system in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic fared far better than firms that did not have any cloud systems in place.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how prepared would you say your firm was for remote work?



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

62% of companies that **did not** feel prepared for remote work had **no** cloud-based systems in place.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following systems that you use were cloud-based?



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

78% of firms had at least one cloud-based system prior to the pandemic and 16% of firms had no cloud-based systems at all.

12% of firms had all the cloud tech options listed.

13% of firms had only cloud-based document management.

12.5% of firms had cloud-based document management *and* a cloud-based accounting application.

11.5% of firms had a cloud-based document management, accounting application, and tax application.

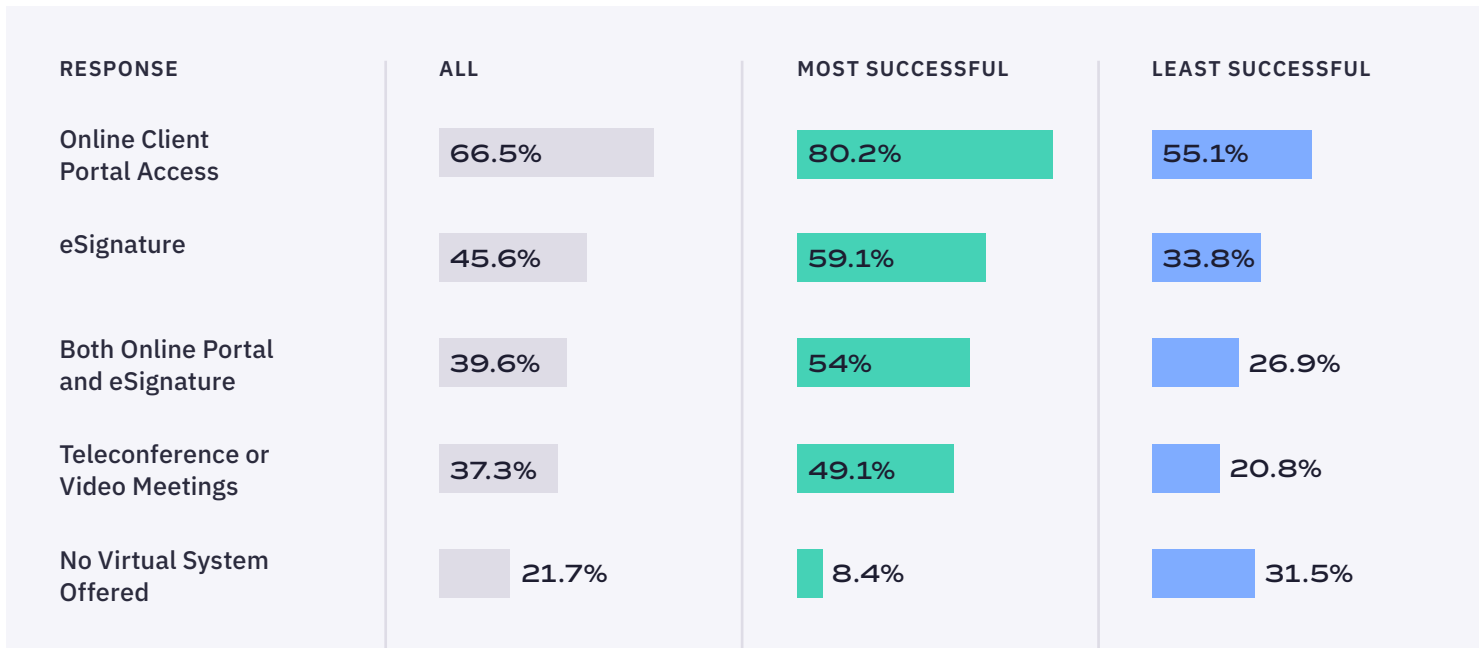
Most common ‘other’ responses were payroll, email/ Office365, and cloud hosting solutions for remote access.

KEY INSIGHTS

63% of firms that had a cloud-based document management system in place felt they handled the impact of COVID-19 well *and* felt they had a seamless transition to remote work.

Only 31% of firms who had no cloud-based systems in place felt they had a seamless transition to remote work.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following did you offer to your clients?



Most Successful firms offered more virtual services to clients, with a whopping 80% offering online client portal access. **Least Successful** firms offered far less in terms of virtual services, with 31% offering no virtual services to their clients at all, compared to only 8% of **Most Successful** firms.

From the experts

We all make strategic decisions on a daily basis. Deciding on accepting a new engagement, hiring new employees, budgeting, etc. In the last ten years, there has been a huge effort made by many in the accounting industry to help each other embrace technology. We thought it was because we needed to be more efficient. Many professionals didn't care about that. I was shouting from the rooftops about the implications of fraud in small business for those who weren't implementing simple technologies for fraud prevention.

The COVID-19 pandemic was certainly not on anyone's radar when making strategic decisions for their firm. I am very thankful that I implemented a streamlined process for onboarding new clients, secure document exchanges, and e-signatures. We have not skipped a beat in productivity and work completion and I cannot imagine having to learn, implement, and teach a new process to my clients during this pandemic. Keeping up with all of the news around tax deadline changes, small business lending assistance to my clients, and getting my work done is already overwhelming.



DAWN BROLIN, CPA, CFE

It seems clear that the firms who were already using a client portal / secure online document sharing were in a great position to serve clients. This is especially true in working with clients who need support for applying for the CARES Act government loans where financial documentation is key to quickly submitting the necessary information to get cash in the hands of clients who need it most. Again, I am pleased to see that many small firms have already embraced and are adept at guiding clients, making it much easier to provide the critical advisory support in these trying times.

In my own experience working with my bookkeeping clients who have been applying for government assistance, being able to provide electronic documents securely has been a huge benefit, since tax forms, bank statements and identity documents are needed for upload. Having this information easily accessible has been one less stress for my clients.



GABRIELLE FONTAINE, PB, ASBC

From the experts

These findings surprise me in the number of firms that do not have access to cloud-based tech, but do not surprise me at all in that those that do, have generally transitioned well to remote working.

The results are overwhelmingly in support of a transition to a more flexible and agile way of working, and the truth is that firms who are already working in a flexible and agile way, will be well placed to not only weather the storm, but also to maximize the opportunities that arise from it. Both in ways of supporting clients in a superior way and in creating new and profitable services.

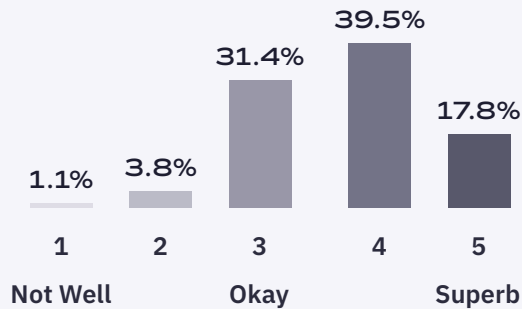


JANE AYLWIN, MICB PM.DIP

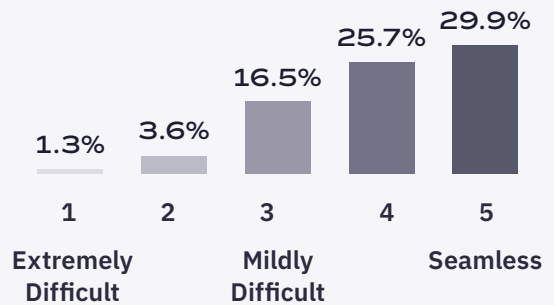
Firm Response to COVID-19

Respondents were asked to rate their firm’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide information on how they are working to continue operations during this time. Most respondents rated their firm’s response slightly above average. The majority of those that felt their firm handled the situation well were already utilizing cloud-based services for their team and their clients.

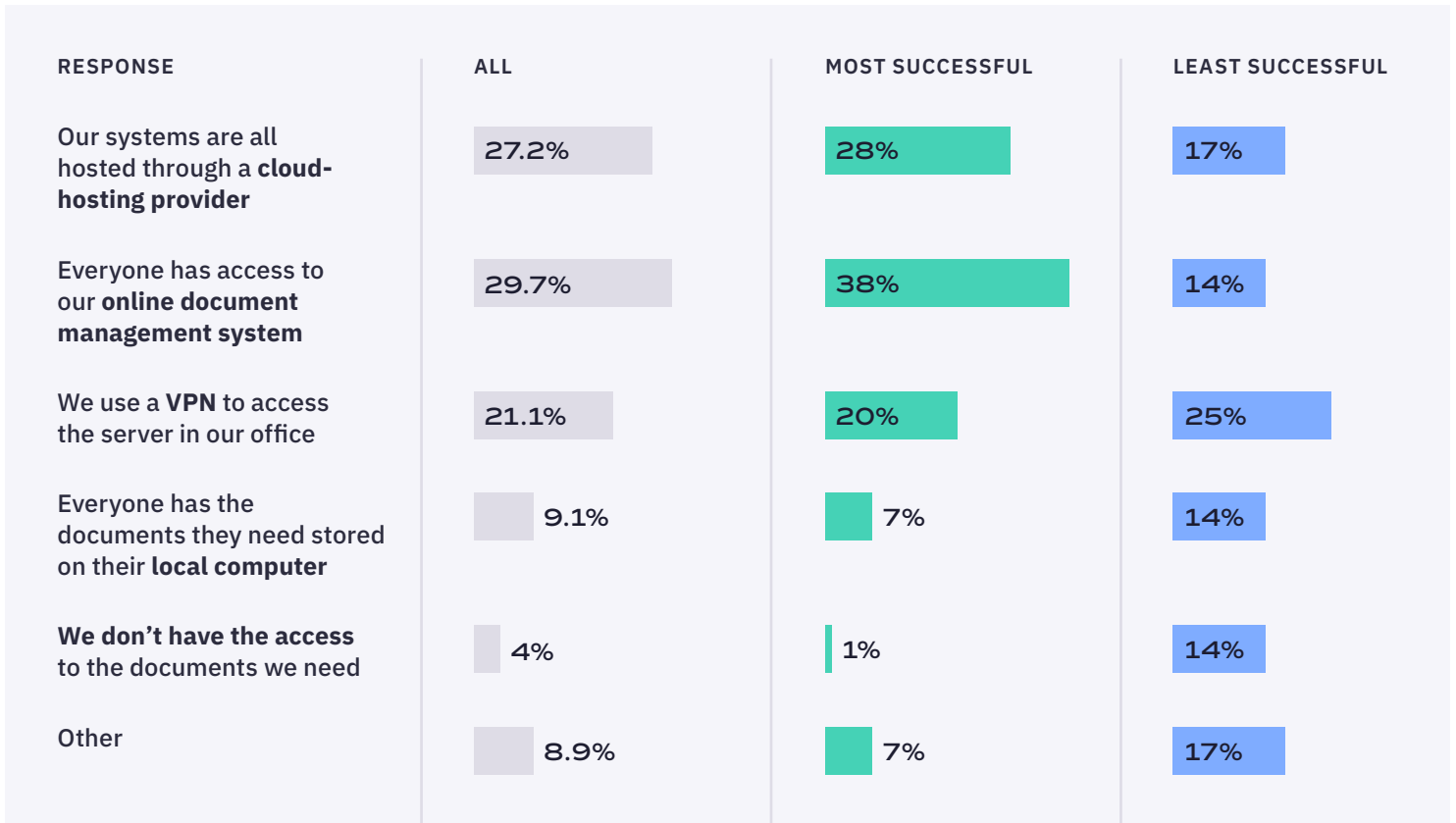
How do you feel your firm has handled the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?



How has the transition to remote work been for your team?



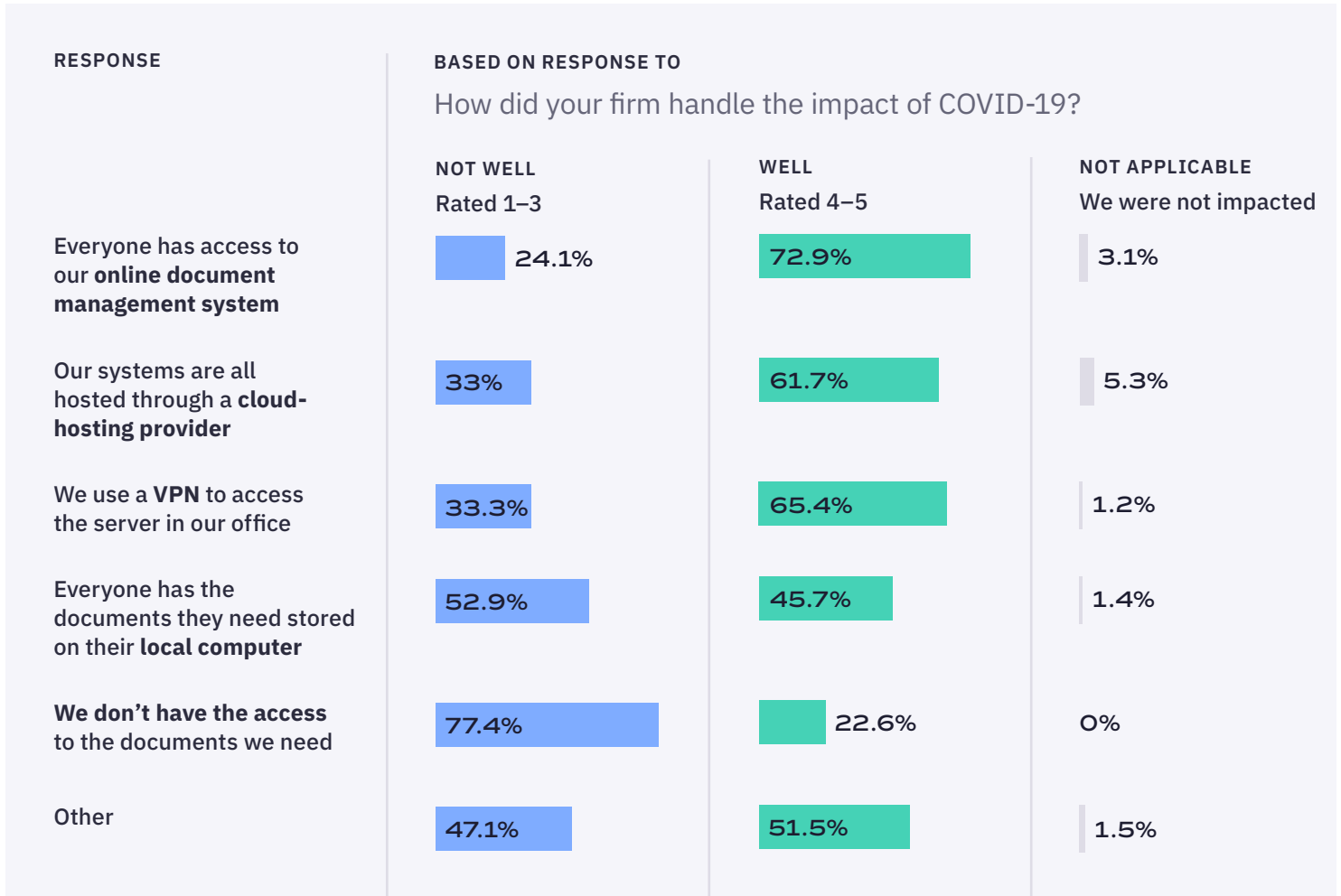
How does your team access important documents now that you have transitioned to remote work?



Most Successful firms have a cloud hosting provider, online document management or VPN system more often than the average respondent. **Least Successful** firms are accessing documents on their local computer or do not have access to documents they need in a higher proportion compared to the average respondent.

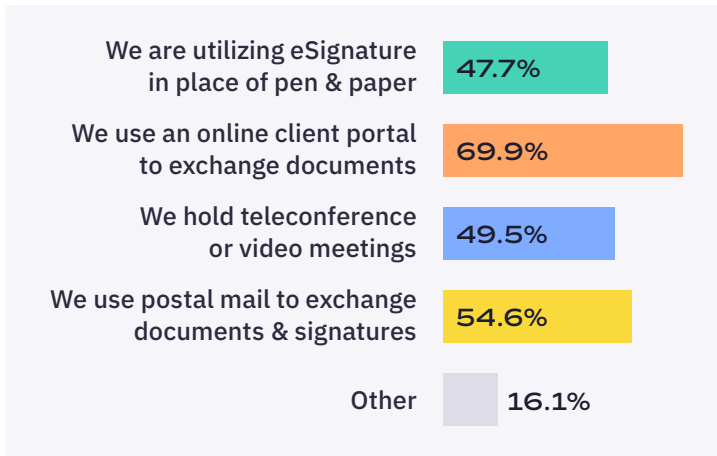
Most common responses for 'other' include a mix of VPN and cloud-based document management and using paper files (either picking them up from the office or having clients send them via post).

How does your team access important documents now that you have transitioned to remote work?



This chart shows how firms who are accessing documents through a specific way rated their handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. 72.81% of firms who access documents through an online document management system felt they handled the impact of COVID-19 well, while only 45.71% of firms who access documents on their local computer felt the same.

How are you continuing collaboration with clients in the midst of social distancing mandates?



Most Successful firms offered virtual collaboration tools to their clients at a higher rate than **Least Successful** firms, while **Least Successful** firms use postal mail at a higher rate than the average firm.

Most common responses marked as ‘other’ include a curbside service (dropoff/pickup), standard phone calls, and email.

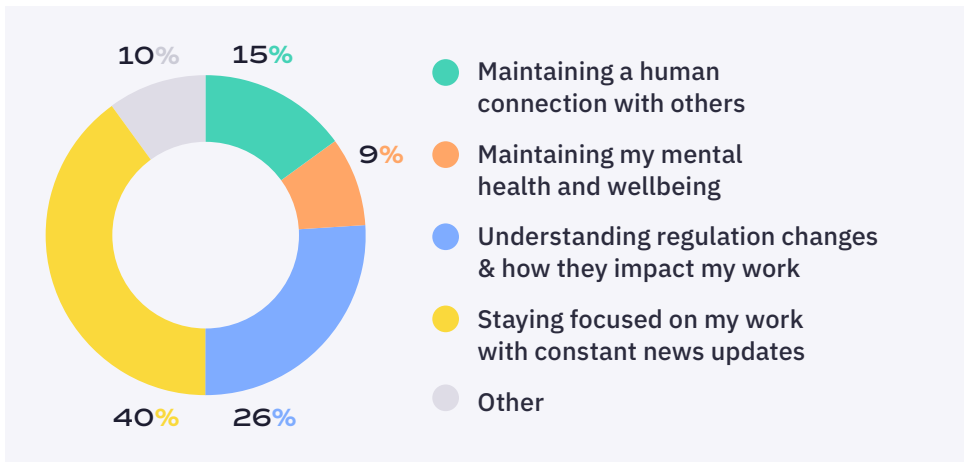
RESPONSE	ALL	MOST SUCCESSFUL	LEAST SUCCESSFUL
Online Client Portal Access	62.9%	75.6%	54.2%
eSignature	42.9%	55.8%	29.6%
Both Online Portal and eSignature	35.8%	47.8%	23.6%
Teleconference or Video Meetings	44.5%	55.6%	30.6%
Postal Mail	49.1%	47.6%	63.9%

I am finding that the use of FaceTime, Zoom, text and phone calls are working for us. We can still have a personal touch with our clients as well as reassure them during this troubling time that we are here for them. That means the world to the client when we just reach out to see if they are okay. This is not a time for upselling services, it is a time to be that trusted advisor and friend to the very clients who keep accountants in business and as essential workers at this time.



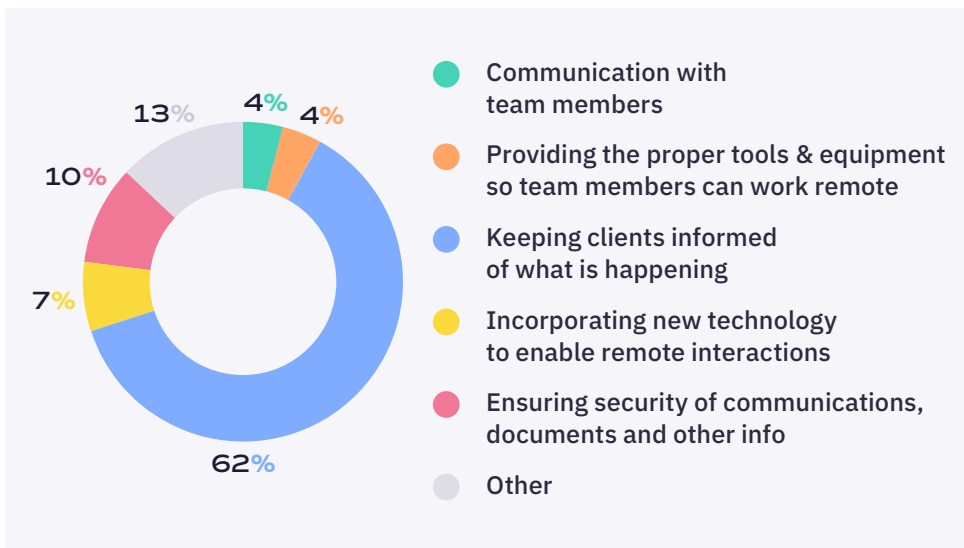
DAWN BROLIN, CPA, CFE

What are you finding most difficult as an accountant being forced to self-isolate/practice social distancing?



Responses marked as ‘other’ varied greatly. A majority focused on balance—either balancing needs of children and other family members with work or balancing the additional assistance clients need right now with finding time to understand all of the new information coming out regarding government assistance programs.

What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing while running your business/team during the pandemic?



Overwhelmingly, firms agreed that keeping clients informed is their biggest challenge right now. This is not surprising given that new information comes out almost daily. Whether you need to communicate new office hours or ways to reach your staff should clients have questions, new information about the tax deadline extension and what it means for each of your clients, and unpacking each country’s government assistance package to understand how each can support your clients through this time.

Of **Least Successful** firms, 13% are struggling most with incorporating new technology to enable remote interactions, which is a much higher rate than **Most Successful** firms, where only 3.8% indicated this was their biggest challenge.

Those who chose ‘other’ indicated a range of challenges, including cashflow issues because their clients are taking a hit financially, trying to cross-train staff to protect the business if anyone falls ill or can’t work, educating clients on how to use the different tools they offer, and with the pace that things are changing right now, just generally being prepared for the unknown that lies ahead.

From the experts

I will say that I am very thankful for being able to eliminate a few of the listed challenges like technology and communication with team members. The biggest challenge I face is keeping up with the changes that seem to crawl up every single day. It appears the left hand isn't talking to the right hand and the changes are constant. I have trouble focusing as it is but with these distractions it is even tougher.

I made a decision last week that I was going to focus on my clients, my work, and not on all of the other distractors such as statistics and deadlines. I make a list every morning of the clients I am going to reach out to and the clients I am going to complete work for. It has helped me stay focused and prioritize while still reaching out to my clients to do a check in. I don't expect to be able to finish all my work in a day and I don't expect myself to reach out to every single client every week. I just work hard to have small and simple goals and to do the best work I can every day.



DAWN BROLIN, CPA, CFE

From the experts

Just as the pandemic has brought home to small business owners the importance of having clean and up-to-date bookkeeping records, I think the results of how accounting professionals have been (attempting) to communicate with clients virtually and with social distancing is telling. As a profession, we are at varying stages of technology adoption. Those who are best positioned to demonstrate their value to clients are embracing video meetings, which is the next best thing to being in person.

In my own experience with my clients, we are using video conferencing more and communicating in general via all means more frequently (phone, text, email and video). I see this as a blessing all around, since it deepens the relationships in an already virtual practice such as mine. It has actually drawn my clients and I closer emotionally so that there is a more cooperative spirit, and they appreciate the work we do for them more than ever.

I believe the learning and advances in communication will become the new normal of the **Most Successful** in our profession, even after social distancing has been eased. Going forward, this supports more firms to expand their client base virtually, while still fostering empathetic advisory level services, whether around the block or half-way across the country.



GABRIELLE FONTAINE, PB, ASBC

From the experts

Responding to the sudden change in working is actually challenging for everyone, regardless of the readiness of the technology to do so—while the systems may be in place to enable remote working, for firms who are mostly office based, there will still be a period of adjustment. Teams who are used to working in the same office, will take a bit of time to get used to working apart from their colleagues.

Certainly, for our firm the first two weeks were spent almost entirely on Zoom for those of us in management. Those of us in management AND who are client facing did absolutely nothing other than hold web meetings, for two weeks. It was exhausting!

And for those who do usually work from home, while there will be little to no change in their working pattern and environment, the loss of all social interaction, particularly for people who live alone, will be hard.

Having worked from home myself on and off over the years, sometimes for extended periods, I understand first-hand the need for respite. When home and work are the same place and you do not interact face to face often with people when you are at work, the ability to ‘leave work’ and break up the day is extremely important. And the requirement for social activities is arguably even more acute.

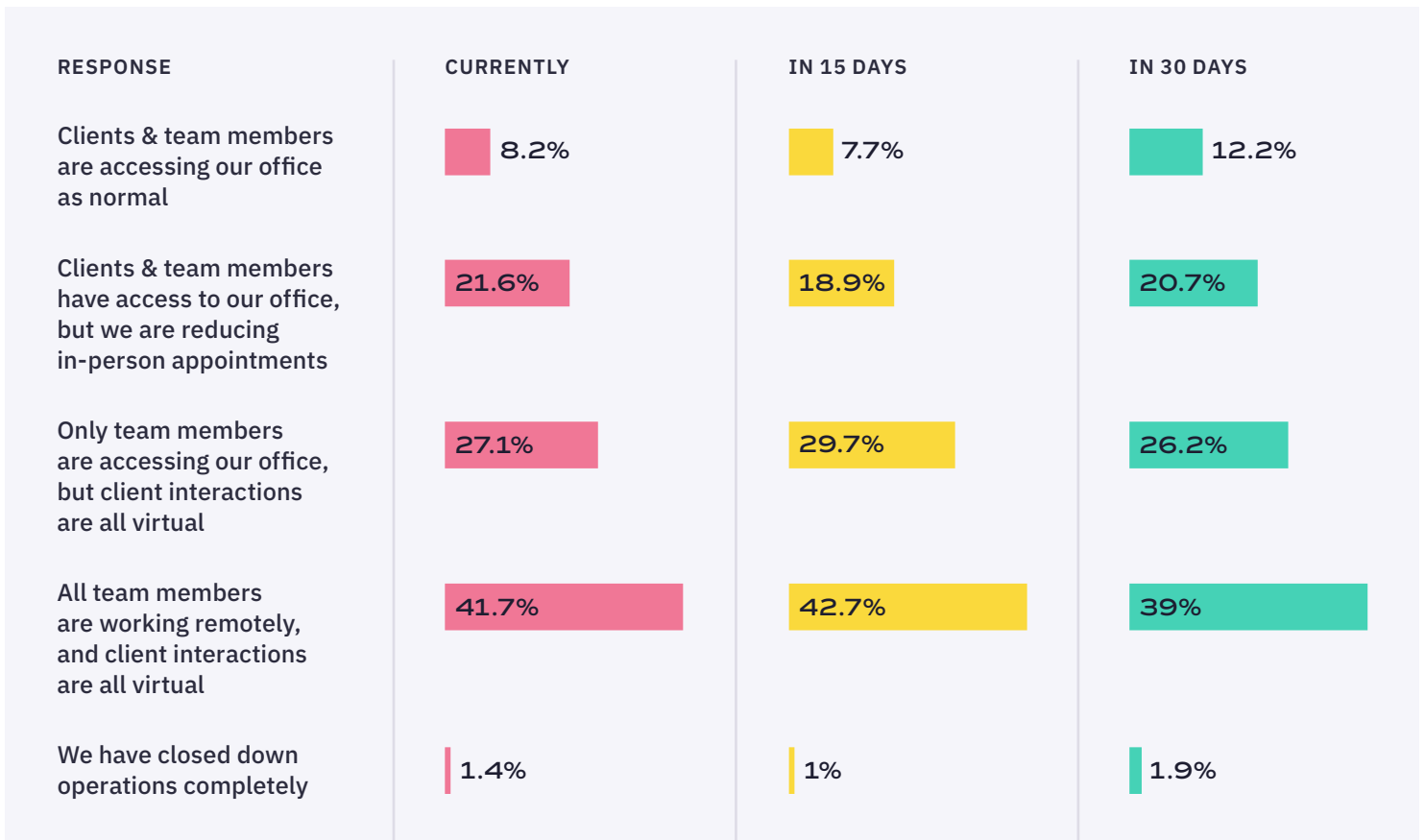


JANE AYLWIN, MICB PM.DIP

Future Impact for Accountants

A large majority of accountants believe that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt long into the future. Many think positive changes will come, as many clients and firms have been pushed to adopt new technology that can help the firm operate more efficiently and increase client and team member satisfaction.

Thinking about the next 30 days, how do you anticipate your business will operate?



INTERESTING INSIGHTS

Most firms have gone completely remote and anticipate they'll be continuing remote operations 30 days from now.

No **Least Successful** firms who said their team & clients are currently accessing their office as normal anticipate working 100% remotely over the next 30 days and 70% of those firms believe they will continue to access their office as normal over the next 30 days.

Do you think the COVID-19 pandemic will change the way accountants do business forever?



Overall, the majority of respondents agree COVID-19 is acting as a forcing mechanism to get more firms and clients to embrace cloud-based technology that allows them to do their job better and offer more strategic, advisory services.

Least Successful firms are more uncertain about the future of the profession, and are less optimistic about accounting becoming more advisory and strategic.

Specifically, how do you think the accounting profession will change (or not change) in the long-term after COVID-19?

RESPONSE	ALL	MOST SUCCESSFUL	LEAST SUCCESSFUL
More technology (cloud, working virtually or electronically)	45.2%	45.4%	44.9%
Increase in Remote working	30.3%	31.4%	24.4%
More advisory, strategic & efficient	8%	10.7%	3.9%
Negative impact to accounting as an industry	5.3%	5%	5.5%
Don't know or too soon to tell	5.9%	3.2%	13.4%
Unspecific	1.6%	0.7%	3.9%

A sampling of responses

“ I think as clients are being required to communicate remotely and e-sign tax returns, some will adjust to or even love the ability to remotely communicate and fewer will take multiple trips into the office to drop off documents then pick up their tax return.

“ The old guard attitude of “If I don’t see you, you aren’t working” will be dispelled. The economic advantage of remote work will foster a more geographically diverse team, and the work/life balance will become more favorable.

“ Based on the questions I am getting, I think our clients will be more involved in their numbers and we are going to provide more advisory services.

“ Everything will probably return to normal within two years once a vaccine is available.

“ Half joking, I think I may need to change the title of office manager to virtual connections manager.

“ We may not require an actual office to complete work and may utilize a daily office rental to meet clients or downsize space we have now.

“ More people will be open to a digital only copy of their tax return.

“ We may change the tools in our toolbox but we will still be here serving clients and their needs.

“ I think more firms will be open to flexible working, but also look at more remote catch up with clients and maximise face to face for year-end/higher levels of importance meetings.

“ I think there are many of our clients who would have never even considered using the portal that now really like it and will prefer that as the way to do business. We will do far more video and teleconference and much less in office appointments.

“ Creating continuity plans for our own businesses and helping our clients evaluate their business and savings plan for future disasters.

“ The next three months are about ensuring client survival but realistically we are preparing for the next 12–18 months and have already provided all of our clients with scenario based cash flows which can be updated to reflect changing circumstances. We have also prepared this internally and identified the risk of losing clients.

“ Sincerely hoping eSignatures will continue to be approved of by government agencies, especially here in Canada. Also hoping there will be greater respect for the profession and the value it provides, since financial records generally need to be in order for some of the subsidies and benefits to be obtained.

From the experts

I have to say that I have one huge take away from this experience. Those who embrace the change and stay closely connected to their clients during this pandemic will win. Clients will have more respect for the professional who helped them in some way through this crisis. At the end of the day, how we as an industry focus on the personal touch, the care and concern for the businesses we serve, and the phone call, email or text you make to them will be what separates you from others. Technology implementations is a no brainer, people will be much more open to that. But long term, the relationship you maintain or grow during this time is the key.



DAWN BROLIN, CPA, CFE

I agree that overall, the most successful firms in our profession are those who are adapting, looking ahead and leveraging what we have learned from the virus forcing our hand at working and advising by use of the latest online tech. Those who go back to 'business as usual' will in a reasonably short time find themselves obsolete. We have entered a new age of accounting services, and if we embrace it, I believe we will create new opportunities for ourselves and our clients where everyone benefits.



GABRIELLE FONTAINE, PB, ASBC

From the experts

I think what is incredibly intriguing to this section of the report is the table showing what firms believe the changes will be over the next 30 days (or the 30 days from the survey), apart from a relatively large (but still very small) jump in the first column where some respondents are clearly hopeful that we will return to normal sooner rather than later, there is little shift in the other options.

Apart from those who are already working completely remotely I strongly believe that any firm operating on a physical basis will have no choice but to change the way of working as restrictions become more stringently enforced over the short-term.

I believe that by the 30 day period at the very outside, everyone should assume that there will be a need to operate completely remotely with only virtual interactions—in fact as of today (14 April) this is already the case, if not in *law* then certainly in the spirit of working together to contain the pandemic. These results surprise and concern me that team members and clients are being exposed to potential risk when there is absolutely no need to do with right tech solutions in place.

COVID-19 will change the way a huge number of businesses, that don't actually rely on physical footfall to generate revenue, operate. Accountants will not go unaffected. My belief is that we will see a remarkable shift towards remote and flexible working, to online and digital collaboration with clients and in the services that clients see as valuable.



JANE AYLWIN, MICB PM.DIP

Accountant to Accountant: Advice & Resources

Here's a sampling of the best advice your fellow accountants provided

“ Have a pet—it helps keep the sanity during long hours.

“ Get ready for the day just as you would normally.

“ Set up everything exactly as you would in a regular office: multiple screens, comfortable chair & desk, small scanner and printer.

“ Don't pin yourself down to an 8–5 schedule at home, especially if you have young children. Be flexible with your working hours and take advantage of quiet times in your house to work. In the past, I have spent 45 minutes trying to complete a simple 10 minute task when my children are ready for lunch or need attention because I have been on my computer for too long. I learned the hard way, it is better to just spend 5 minutes wrapping up what I am doing and give my children the food or attention they are needing. I can get more work done if I spread out my day and take 3–4 breaks to prepare food and play with my children.

“ Learn the technology that makes it seamless to go from one task or client to another.

“ Stay focused when you can, take breaks as you need them, don't eat meals at the computer, get exercise and where hobbies are allowed (I ride horses and I'm on a farm) take advantage of it. You can now structure your days the way you want and still be available to clients.

Do it now! Use Glance or another computer portal program to access desktop workstations. Use FaceTime or Zoom to stay in visual contact with your clients. Use SmartVault or a different program for your document portal and client management system. Everything can be done remotely. I'm making it work and so can you.

TAMMY BECKER, QWIKBOOKSGIRL
BOOKKEEPING & CONSULTING SERVICES, LLC

“ Learn new ways to reduce stress through meditation and breathing techniques. Apps like Sanvello or Calm. Keep connected with colleagues and clients through social media apps such as FaceTime and Zoom.

“ Yes! We have been working remotely for over 5 years now. We recommend using Quickbooks Online, Zoom or GoToMeeting for meetings/conference calls; Using Slack for internal communications with our team, Trello for project management. We use Intuit ProConnect Online for our tax software, we also make sure we meet regularly with our leadership team—weekly & 2x a month together as an entire team.

Accountant to Accountant: Advice & Resources

Here's a sampling of the best advice your fellow accountants provided

“ Take exercise and get fresh air.

“ Have meetings with coworkers that aren't about work to help diminish the mental effects of social distancing.

“ You are not alone, the weight of this or any difficult decisions are not only on your shoulders. You are part of a team. Don't forget to take the time to talk to your team & socialise (virtually). We book in daily coffee mornings (20 mins) that anyone from the office joins if they can, it keeps the connections & can be a release from intense working.

“ Be kind to yourself, especially if you are also having to care for your young children or other family members while trying to work from home through busy season. Do not beat yourself up if you don't get a full day of chargeable time plus overtime like you may have been used to. Take each day at a time, and utilize the extensions to help alleviate some of the stress.

“ If you work with non-profits, check out PushPay. SmartVault is awesome for security, exchanging files, and communication with clients.

“ Set one big goal on what you want to accomplish and a couple of tiny goals. Work style has shifted and there is a learning curve.

“ Stay positive and find some of the good points that keep coming forward during this period.

“ I have been sending out mass emails on a weekly basis, keeping clients informed of resources, information on stimulus checks and other updates regarding tax implications. It only takes a few minutes and my clients are grateful for the info.

“ Keep smiling!

“ Stay in touch with your staff as much as possible (without overloading them and making it cheesy) and remind them on a regular basis how well you think they're coping. Assure them that fluctuations in attitude towards the whole thing are totally normal, especially if they have a degree of anxiety normally, and reassure them that we will cope and get through it all the best we can.

If they are not using SmartVault, they **MUST!** We would have been dead in the water and had to close our doors without SmartVault. Thank heaven we switched over from “the other brand” this year!

SANDY CHRISTIANSEN,
CHRISTIANSEN RUSSELL & CHRISTIANSEN, CPAS

From the experts

YOU ARE HUMAN! Take the weekend off, don't think you have to solve everyone's problems, and set boundaries. I have implemented having a personal cell phone that I literally will not give out to anyone other than my closest family and friends. That work cell phone stays in the office in the evening and on weekends (unless I choose to work on a Saturday). I have to give myself a mental break. Pick a binge watching series and let yourself be sucked into it. Hug those who you can and maybe even implement a virtual happy hour with a couple of your besties. Take this time to reconnect and just simply give yourself a break when you need one. It's okay. And if you want to get cray cray, do something like plant seeds with your family for your garden this summer! We did that on Easter, it was fun, and we are excited to eat the fruits and vegetables of our labor!



DAWN BROLIN, CPA, CFE

If you're not used to working from home, or your clients aren't, keep in mind the new security concerns that may not be top of mind. SmartVault helps to keep documents safe, but how are passwords being handled? Are family members sharing computers? If your practice and team are already working securely, you might also want to check in with any clients who may be new to working from home and share some tips to help keep them safe. A big one is password management. Another is to be careful with phishing emails that promise quicker or easier access to the CARES Act funding.



GABRIELLE FONTAINE, PB, ASBC

From the experts

Make sure that your team know you are there for them—ensure an open and safe environment for sharing stress, worry and concern—ask questions and make a little more effort. Send them a WhatsApp if you know they have been having a hard time, or are ill, or have been working super hard. It's more personal than an email, doesn't intrude on their personal time and shows that you are thinking of them on a genuine level. Do this for your key clients as well—be there for the people who rely on you, it will ensure loyalty and friendship that outlasts this situation and forgives you any dropped balls (and we're all dropping balls right now—forgive yourself!).

Don't forget about yourself. You need this support as well and it will be harder for you to find it—reach out to friends and family and be open about your own struggles. Mental health is a huge concern for everyone at the moment, you are not immune, don't try to be!

Embrace the positives wherever you can and try your best to find something every day that you can learn from and use to improve going forward. We will get out of this and we can do better if we learn from the new and sometimes overwhelming challenges that we are facing.

Don't work too hard. It's very hard not to work too hard when you have so much to do and you are working from home (and you don't really have much else to do!). I personally am as busy now as I was before. Not with the same things but with different things—gardening, chores that I've been meaning to do for ages but never get round to, keeping active and fit, engaging (remotely) with friends and family I wouldn't normally see. Maintain balance. It is vitally important to your well-being, now more than ever.

Meditate—just try it. It is extremely valuable, only needs to take up 10 minutes of your day and will make you more resilient. Use an app and give it a chance. It's easier than you think and more beneficial than you could imagine.

Exercise! So many free ways to exercise right now—apps for nothing, online classes, friendship groups doing fitness sessions. I run and I have NEVER seen as many people running as I am at the moment—people are out there and they are trying and it's fantastic to see. Try something new, get the bug and maintain it when we're back to whatever will count as normal in a couple of months.



JANE AYLWIN, MICB PM.DIP

Here are some resources suggested by your fellow accountants:

United States

TAXES	ACCOUNTING	WEBINARS & COURSES	GOVERNMENT
TaxSpeaker	Rubin Brown CPAs & Business Consultants	CPA Academy	Internal Revenue Service
National Association of Tax Professionals	AICPA	Surgent CPE	SBA.gov
Spidell Seminars California-specific	Insightful Accountant	Western CPE	Status Updates for Economic Impact Payments
Bradford Tax Institute for Small Businesses	AccountingWeb	Woodard Webinars	

United Kingdom

GOVERNMENT	ACCOUNTING	ACCOUNTING	BOOKKEEPING
HMRC Gov.uk	Accountancy Daily AccountingWeb Accountancy Today Accountancy Age	ICAEW AIA ICPA ACCA AAT	IAB ICB
			PAYROLL CIPP

Canada

GOVERNMENT	ACCOUNTING	ACCOUNTING
Canada Revenue Agency	CFIB Advocates for small business taxes	CPA Ontario

For the Kids!

[Go Noodle](#)
[Art Hub for Kids](#)

Global

BOOKKEEPING	FACEBOOK GROUPS	SmartVault Resource Center	SmartVault COVID-19 Resource Hub
ICB Gabrielle Fontaine: The Freelance Bookkeeper	Accounting Firm Influencers CARES Act Support Bookkeepers Corner	Webinars, ebooks, whitepapers, checklists, and more! Visit now »	Everything you need to keep your business moving forward.
LEADERSHIP & GROWTH Simon Sinek Rootworks Remarkable Practice: Paul Shrimpling Value Pricing Academy with Mark Wickersham	Bookkeeper Buddy Tribe Accounting & Bookkeeping Tips UK Accountants Inspiring, Challenging & Supporting Each Other by Simon Chaplin		TOPICS INCLUDE Cybersecurity, disaster recovery, virtual workflow, mindfulness and more. Visit now »

Final Thoughts from the Experts

This experience will, no doubt, change the course and direction of our lives as we know it. At the end of the day, it is our choices that will determine our fate as an industry. We need to support each other both through work product overload, stress and anxiety, and focus on what is most important, people. It is that simple. I don't necessarily agree with how people on social media are handling the pandemic but I do enjoy seeing families doing more together (because they have to) and I enjoy seeing the people of this country stopping and thinking about what will be their new normal. At the end of the day, we as accounting professionals serve the very core of what drives this country, small business owners. We are loud and proud and we will continue to fight for their business and their family. After all, people matter most.



DAWN BROLIN, CPA, CFE

It's not clear how long COVID-19 will directly affect how we are able to work and run our businesses, but we have been changed by the experiences. Critical lessons have emerged. One is how important the human connection is in the work we do. Our clients depend upon our help more than ever for financial survival. Have we stepped up? Will we continue to do so? Let's use what we've learned to not only upgrade our workflows to provide remote services, but let's also use it to more proactively care for our clients and finally become, truly, their trusted advisors for the road ahead. We will recover and prosper together.



GABRIELLE FONTAINE, PB, ASBC

Final Thoughts from the Experts

These are very uncertain times and there is a huge amount to take in and process. Those of us in an advisory profession have the very real responsibility of not only maintaining our own business, team morale and sanity, but also the businesses, owner or leader's morale and the sanity of our clients.

It is not enough to fully comprehend the information that is relevant to us but we must understand, dissect, keep abreast of and ultimately translate all of that information for our clients. Most firms still have a wide-range of clients from many different industries and of many different trading entities and style.

If firms are struggling simply to get the infrastructure for working remotely in place, how can they possibly cope with the demand for up-to-the-minute information to be dissected, summarized and communicated to clients. You must get working properly as a firm before you can provide the support required to your clients.

Understandably all of our clients are looking to us to help and we have little information – legislation is being written after the announcements have been made and there is huge uncertainty over the small print.

HMRC advisors are giving out conflicting and contradictory information, systems are not ready, full instructions have not been written because the mechanics of delivering on the promises are not known or understood by those who are making them.

I believe that until fairly recently, a large number of small practices would not be communicating updates, but would be reacting to the clients demands for information – this alone shows a very positive change in the profession, regardless of the integral use of tech in these firms.



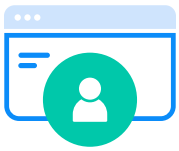
JANE AYLWIN, MICB PM.DIP

How SmartVault Helps Firms

SmartVault has helped accounting firms and client-services providers securely store and share files for over 11 years.

3 Powerful Ways Our Customers Use SmartVault

Increase business efficiency and provide higher levels of client service (without having to be face-to-face) while also maintaining a safe social distance to keep your employees safe:



Branded Client Portals

Use the [SmartVault client portal](#) to safely share documents with clients and vendors.



eSignature Integration

Use our built-in [eSignature solution](#) to request signatures on contracts, approval forms, engagement letters, 8878/8879 forms, offer letters and HR documents, etc.



Secure Online Document Storage

Enable SmartVault as your cloud storage platform so all team members have secure access to the documents they need to do their work.

“ Microsoft Office 365 + SmartVault have been seamless for online & remote access to client files, calendars, and communications.

SCOTT MCCLAURY
CTEC REGISTERED TAX PREPARER, MCCLAURY TAX

“ I am so glad I starting using SmartVault and eSignature this tax season. That is great timing. I am still learning and liking it.

TIFFANY LO
TIFFANY & ASSOCIATES

[Schedule Now »](#)

Schedule 15 minutes with one of our document management experts to see how SmartVault can help your business run virtually.

How SmartVault Helps Firms

We know this is a trying time for many businesses. And we want to make it easier for you to enable your team to be productive.

To support you in this effort, SmartVault is committed to:

Provide you a flexible month-to-month option

With the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, and the urgent need to enable teams to work remotely, we understand it can be difficult to commit to an annual agreement. We've extended our annual discount to monthly plans from now through July 31, 2020 for new accounts opened by May 31, 2020.

Annual discount applied to new monthly plans opened between March 16, 2020 and May 31, 2020. Annual discount will apply until July 31, 2020, regular monthly rates apply thereafter unless the account is switched to annual billing.

Waive all fees for onboarding and training, so your team can get started quickly

We've waived fees for onboarding and training through May 2020. Plus, we have many on-demand resources available for your team to get the most out of SmartVault.

Help you get started with eSignature with the first 100 envelopes free

We'll add 100 free DocuSign envelopes to your account so you can get electronic signatures easily, removing the need to handle paper documents or meet face-to-face.

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