



3 Things Leaders of Thriving Firms Prioritize

Creating Consistent, Simple Workflows

When they find themselves with too much to do and no end in sight to the pile of work, many accountants overlook the tech they have at their fingertips and jump right to outsourcing to manage the extra tasks.

Truth be told: Hiring more staff doesn't magically streamline your workflow and make things easier.

In fact, it could do the opposite. If your workflows are all over the place, your new staff will have a harder time knowing what to do, leaving you to answer their questions and help them accomplish what *should* be simple tasks. Hiring and retaining talent is *already difficult enough*; you don't want someone to leave quickly after joining your team simply because they're frustrated.

And it's not just you and your staff who suffer. Client satisfaction — and their desire to stay with your firm or refer others to you — rapidly declines when your processes are unorganized and difficult.

So, what can you do instead?

When you and your staff come in each day, [they should know exactly how the firm runs](#), what their priorities are, and what you expect of them. The same should be true for your clients.

So, how do you get there? Leaders of successful firms — the ones that perform better, work faster, avoid burnout, have strong client relationships, and maintain higher profits — prioritize workflow.

Instead of accepting mundane tasks and hitting roadblocks as part of the job, they evaluate and revise their processes until they are working for them, not against them.

Now, you can't control or anticipate every single thing that's going to happen during the workday. There are parts of your workflow, however, that you can organize so they are both planned and easily reproduced the same way each time.

You first need to decide what those parts are. Figure out where things go wrong and where you hit roadblocks or bottlenecks. Talk to your staff about their tasks and if there's a way to automate or make things simpler. Let your clients share feedback on what they enjoy about working with you and what leaves them frustrated or stressed.

You can then take everything you've learned, combined with best practices from others in your industry, and create an actionable plan to move your firm forward with simpler, yet more effective, workflows.

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The Accountant's Ultimate Guide to Creating a Modern, Efficient Firm

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Efficient, modern firms have benefits like increased productivity, teams understanding what's expected of them, consistent and easy processes, and meeting clients' evolving needs and expectations.

Learn how to achieve these benefits at your firm in this free guide.

Knowing and Adjusting to What Clients Want

At its heart, accounting is a people-facing, client-oriented profession. And, post-pandemic, what clients need and want from their accounting professionals has changed drastically.

Many firm leaders have difficulty evolving to meet the needs of the modern client, partially because they're just unaware of what their clients want.

Technology plays a large role. According to a [recent report from Intuit](#), nearly 75% of taxpayers say they want a secure place to upload documents throughout the year, and 74% expect to send their data via a secure transfer. The same survey found, however, that only about half of accounting professionals have the tech to provide these services to their clients.

You must keep up with the service expectations too. Over 80% of the taxpayers stated they were looking for their accounting professional to provide them with advice about their taxes all year long, not just during the busy season.

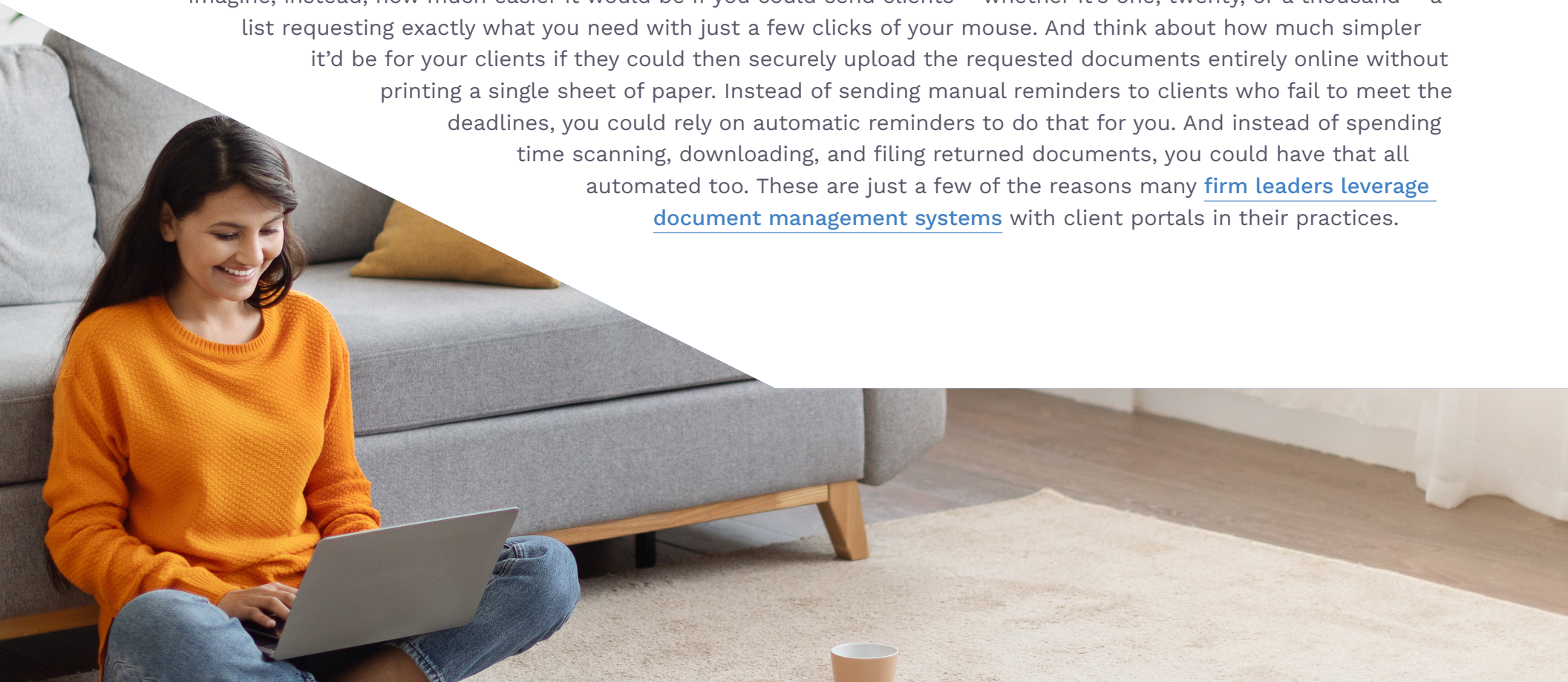


Sound like a lot? *It is!* You have to be a future-focused, future-proofed accounting and finance professional to meet your modern clients' expectations. What does that mean? It means moving away from the old way of working, especially if you still use things like physical paper and in-person meetings to collaborate with your clients.

With the right technology, you can create efficient onboarding processes that are easy to follow, as well as make things like client collaboration more streamlined. The key is to ensure your clients know what you need and by when, and then give them a very easy way to accomplish their tasks.

Some of the most challenging and frustrating tasks of your job are requesting, collecting, and tracking client documents. It's the thing most clients find stressful too. Going back and forth through email or playing phone tag aren't the best ways for anyone to spend their time (not to mention it's [incredibly risky to send some documents](#), like W2s, in emails).

Imagine, instead, how much easier it would be if you could send clients – whether it's one, twenty, or a thousand – a list requesting exactly what you need with just a few clicks of your mouse. And think about how much simpler it'd be for your clients if they could then securely upload the requested documents entirely online without printing a single sheet of paper. Instead of sending manual reminders to clients who fail to meet the deadlines, you could rely on automatic reminders to do that for you. And instead of spending time scanning, downloading, and filing returned documents, you could have that all automated too. These are just a few of the reasons many [firm leaders leverage document management systems](#) with client portals in their practices.



Cybersecurity and Staying in Compliance

It can be easy to overlook cybersecurity and think you'll never be a victim to an attack. Don't make that mistake at your firm. Attacks are becoming so common that experts encourage us to change how we think about them: It's not a matter of it'll happen to you, but *when*.

As criminals *get bolder and cleverer each year*, it's not enough to plan for risks you're aware of right now: Technology changes quickly, and if you don't stay current, cyberthieves will remain one step ahead of you.

Keeping data secure means planning for today and tomorrow.

So, how do you do that?

First, cybersecurity is ultimately about the people. Everyone must recognize and embrace their roles and responsibilities in protecting themselves (and others) online. This means things like using strong passwords, completing system updates as needed, and being able to determine when something seems *off* (and then reporting it to the right person).



It's also encouraged that you complete a risk assessment. This is an appraisal of your practice's ability to keep itself from falling prey to a cybercrime and will help you identify, evaluate, and prioritize areas where your cybersecurity measures are leaving you vulnerable to an attack.

The first step is knowing what you need to protect. Make a list of the data you handle and where you store it. Look at the software and hardware you use and evaluate your current operations. Think about your teams, both in-house and virtual, and the contractors or vendors who have access.

Document as much as possible about how your data is cared for, stored, and accessed. Is it online, offline, locally, or in the cloud? Then identify all potential points of failure. For example, if your business stores all vital information in only one place, what would happen if that place failed or was destroyed?

Once you complete your risk assessment, you can create a comprehensive cybersecurity program that addresses any vulnerabilities and strengthens your security. The Federal Trade Commission requires you to have a robust data security plan called a Written Information Security Plan (WISP). Firms are also required to comply with portions of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley (GLB) Act, which requires you to outline how you will protect your clients' personal information. Firms that fail to comply may lose their business licenses and damage their reputation.

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The Accountant's Ultimate Guide to Cybersecurity

Learn about the most common ways people put their firms at risk, as well as how to develop a strong cybersecurity program to lower your vulnerability and meet legal requirements.

This guide is also packed with tips on how to stay updated on the cybersecurity threats of tomorrow without having to become an IT expert.

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