

WORKFLOW GUIDE

Stop Chasing Documents: How an Integrated Tax Workflow Creates More Capacity

How ProConnect Tax + SmartVault connect client intake, tax preparation, delivery and document management

Tax and accounting services are undergoing a rapid transformation driven by technology. Today, clients want a smoother, hands-off, digital experience that doesn't take time away from their day-to-day business operations.

The issue: For years, document collection, organization, and secure archival have been critical bottlenecks that prevented firms from scaling and maximizing billable hours. Client expectations for digital interaction, along with the ever-present concern for data security and operational efficiency, pushes firms to evaluate the way they handle information, specifically their tax workflow.

The solution: Turn-key digital processes that create connected, end-to-end digital tax preparation. That solution is the integration of Intuit® ProConnect™ Tax + SmartVault.

Capacity is what matters: SmartVault reports that the ProConnect Tax + SmartVault workflow can remove approximately 60–90 minutes of manual data entry from a return, with the ability to save even more time depending on your workflow. In addition, based on SmartVault internal research and customer advisory feedback, SmartRequestAI users report saving approximately 1 hour on each return.

That's time you can spend working with your clients, improving your firm, and growing your bottom line.



Critical pain points in workflow

For firms, achieving efficiency and managing capacity often means addressing legacy friction points that consume non-billable time.

“The initial phase of client engagement and document collection is consistently identified as the single largest impediment to productivity,” said Daniel Fritz, vice president, Product and Engineering at SmartVault.

According to a report from AccountingWeb that reported accountants spend 50 percent of their time and 50 percent of their jobs chasing after documents, Fritz said, “To address this issue, a feature such as our SmartRequestAI® is the catalyst to help an accountant get to the next level of tax automation."

The “document chase,” marked by scattered emails, insecure attachments, and endless follow-up calls, creates a significant administrative overhead. In fact, it’s the “collect” phase of the tax workflow that is the primary cause of friction. SmartVault and Intuit ProConnect recognized that solving this problem required an integrated solution that works directly with tax preparation software.

A large part of developing the integration was listening to the tax community and their needs for smoother workflow. Jonathan Young, vice president of Growth at SmartVault, emphasized the commitment to the professional community.

“The deep understanding of the professional’s daily struggle helped us develop tools that were designed not just to transfer files, but to automate the entire client intake process,” he said.

Scaling success and achieving work-life balance

The true measure of the ProConnect Tax and SmartVault integration lies in the quantifiable, positive impact on firm success and quality of life. The efficiency gains based on the integrated workflow translate directly into profitability, capacity to take on the kind of work that is a good fit with the firm, and improved work-life balance for tax pros and their staff.

Customer testimonials of accountants who use ProConnect Tax and SmartVault highlight these transformative outcomes. These three examples underscore that the integration's value proposition extends beyond technical capability to enabling better business management and a superior lifestyle for firm owners:

> "Adopting SmartVault was one of the smartest technology decisions I've ever made to future-proof my firm. "By shifting hours away from administrative tasks toward revenue-producing work, we have saved more than $150,000 annually in billable time." –**Eric Green**, Esq., Green & Sklarz LLC, and the Tax Rep Network.

> "As a proponent of the 'work from anywhere' model, SmartVault is the backbone of my tech stack and integral to scaling my firm without adding new staff." –**Dawn Brolin**, CPA, Team Brolin and Powerful Accounting.

> "SmartVault made it possible to grow and serve more clients, but work less hours and live the life I want. We doubled our client base without increasing our firm's workload, maintaining smooth operations, even during extended travel periods." –**Nick Boscia**, CPA, EA, Boscia & Boscia and The Balanced CPA.

Meet the authors of articles on the Intuit Tax Pro Center:



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Integration and cloud-native design

The partnership between SmartVault and ProConnect Tax is built on 10+ years of collaboration, and extends across the entire Intuit tax ecosystem, which also includes Lacerte® Tax, ProSeries® Tax, and QuickBooks® Online. As a result, SmartVault is the only document management system (DMS) and client portal fully integrated across the Intuit ecosystem, ensuring firms can leverage the platform, regardless of which tax software they use.

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A critical element of this joint solution is working without desktop restraints. ProConnect Tax is a cloud-native platform, eliminating the need for local installation, updates, or backups, a feature highly valued by today's tax practices. This cloud-first approach allows ProConnect to automate tedious tasks, catch errors, and seamlessly integrate with other cloud services.

"The number one reason users choose ProConnect Tax is because it's cloud native," said Ashley Henderson, a senior sales solution specialist with Intuit. "There isn't anything to install or download, and there are no updates or backups. All of that is handled by us."

SmartVault complements this advantage by serving as the central document repository for a firm. Today's practice is more than just a "tax shop;" firms handle client accounting services, bookkeeping, payroll, and advisory, serving as partners with their clients.

"SmartVault consolidates all internal documents and client-shared folders in one secure, branded client portal with unlimited storage and client capacity," said Fritz. "Many tax pros are really excited about the ProConnect integration with SmartVault because it just really makes things easy. The combined system moves beyond simple file storage to become the organized backbone of the firm's entire operations."



Automating the tax prep workflow: Save 60-90 minutes on each return

What would you do if you had more time in your day? The ProConnect and SmartVault integration is designed to manage the full, 5-stage tax prep workflow: engage, collect, prep and review, deliver, and archive. By automating key actions at each stage, most notably a one-click push that sends the completed workpaper straight into ProConnect to create the draft return, the system removes on average, 60-90 minutes of manual data entry from every return.

SmartRequestAI runs the collection-to-prep workflow end to end

To tackle the sometimes-difficult collect phase, SmartVault developed SmartRequestAI. For firms on ProConnect or Lacerte, SmartRequestAI pulls prior year data directly from the tax software with no separate upload, no backup file, and no manual re-entry to build a personalized questionnaire before the client ever logs in.

Instead of sending generic organizers, SmartRequestAI extracts specific data points, income sources, dependents, and deductions straight from what's already in the return, then guides the client only through the questions that still apply. For example, if a client had W-2 income, but no rental property last year, the rental questions are already gone. Clients can answer, save their progress, and return later, even on any mobile device.

The power of SmartRequestAI provides 2 key deliverables for the firm:

1. **The workpaper:** A bookmarked, prep-ready PDF built automatically from every client answer, ready to push back into ProConnect with one click to create the draft return.
2. **Workpaper source documents:** A consolidated PDF containing all uploaded supporting documents, including W-2s, 1099s, and other forms, each tagged and bookmarked by question that can be used for direct data entry or for integration with external tools.

Because the connection runs directly between SmartVault and ProConnect, client data never has to move through a separate upload tool or a third-party app to get there. That means fewer vendors touching sensitive tax data, and fewer places a security issue could start, before the return ever reaches the tax software.

This process is further enhanced by SmartScan, a SmartVault feature that allows clients to use their mobile phone to scan documents instantly. Similar to a mobile check deposit, SmartScan automatically straightens, crops, and uploads the image as a secure PDF directly into the client's SmartVault folder, eliminating the security risks and formatting hassles associated with email attachments and HEIC files, Apple's version of a high-efficiency image format.

In addition, with SmartVault's Automated Reminders, you can send up to 5 automated email reminders to clients with open questionnaires or missing documents. You can clearly view opted-out status instantly on the client details page, all to drive higher client completion rates, fewer manual follow-ups from staff, and faster document collection and turnaround.

"Firms are **saving approximately one hour per return** using SmartRequestAI, converting a critical time-suck into a highly efficient, client-driven process."
(Source: Internal research and customer advisory feedback by SmartVault)

One connected tax workflow

Engage → Collect → Prep & review → Deliver → Archive

SmartVault		ProConnect Tax
Client questionnaires, document collection, secure portal, document management	⇄	Cloud-native tax preparation, return processing and review

Integrated movement of information between tax preparation and document management



Automated routing and data control

Once the client's documents are collected, the integration ensures they are organized instantly. SmartVault uses smart routing functionality that provides a clear folder structure. When the final return is generated in ProConnect Tax, the preparer simply clicks one button to "Send to SmartVault." The system automatically reads the client and year information from ProConnect, and routes the final return directly into the correct client and tax year folder.

Example: *[Client Name] > Taxes > TY24* engagement folder—without any human intervention or risk of misfiling.

This cloud app to cloud app approach ensures a connected and accurate workflow, eliminating the need for error-prone "print to PDF" processes that can often create administrative clutter and are often done manually.

The SmartVault-ProConnect Tax integration also automatically creates the client and the year-based engagement structure in SmartVault, if they do not already exist, ensuring consistency across every engagement. This automated structure not only enhances internal organization, but also ensures clients have immediate, secure access to their files within their branded portal.

The capability also extends to e-signatures and other third-party tools. Documents such as an 8879 that needs a signature can be printed to SmartVault, where a firm can then initiate a DocuSign request. The completed, signed document automatically boomerangs back into the correct client folder, maintaining the integrity of the connected workflow. The secure storage and instant retrieval of these final documents address the Archive and Deliver phases, ensuring the firm meets its data retention requirements, while providing clients with 24/7 access.

Uncompromising security and operational reliability

A critical consideration for any firm moving to the cloud is security, given the sensitive nature of financial data and the mandates of regulations such as IRS 4557 and FTC Safeguard. SmartVault emphasizes an enterprise-grade security posture, foundational to the entire system and the level of security practitioners have come to expect.

Every additional application that touches a client's tax data is another vendor to vet, another login to secure, and another place a security issue can begin. Because SmartRequestAI pulls prior year data directly from ProConnect and keeps the entire collection-to-prep workflow inside SmartVault, client data never has to pass through a separate upload tool or third-party app to get there. The fewer hands data moves through, the fewer places a firm has to defend.

SmartVault operates as a SOC 2 Type 2 compliant vendor, explained in detail by Young, in this Intuit Tax Pro Center article.

"This designation is achieved only after continuous and rigorous third-party auditing over a 12-month period, ensuring that the company's security protocols for protecting client data are robust and adhered to," said Young. "By using SmartVault as their DMS, firms can achieve compliance with relevant mandates."

Beyond compliance, the system offers granular control and reliability. Firms can customize granular user permissions, allowing specific employees access only to certain client files or document types. The system provides detailed activity reporting and audit trails, showing who last opened or edited a document, a step crucial for accountability and internal review. In short, the integration provides operational reliability, especially during a high-pressure tax season.

"One of the numbers SmartVault is most proud of is 100% uptime, especially during tax season. This commitment to zero downtime is essential, because the system must remain available when 30,000+ tax professionals are actively using the platform. The combination of uncompromising security and uptime ensures that the platform is reliable when firms need it most." —**Jonathan Young**, SmartVault

Onboarding and support: A commitment to success

Recognizing that transitioning a firm's entire document storage and workflow can be cumbersome and difficult, ProConnect and SmartVault heavily invested in dedicated, US-based support and migration services.

For firms moving from existing desktop solutions or other storage platforms, SmartVault provides a clear, guided migration process. This includes a dedicated migration specialist who assists with data verification, folder mapping, and a staged import process.

For users moving specifically from Intuit DMS, SmartVault offers an accelerated path with a dedicated tool that connects directly to the DMS to quickly transfer all folders and client data. This ensures a rapid, successful transition with minimal disruption.

Post-migration, SmartVault continues to provide support through SmartVault Academy, Smart Hours (one-on-one training), and weekly office hours, ensuring users are not just given the software, but set up for sustained, successful adoption.

Already on SmartVault? Moving to ProConnect is even faster

Firms already using SmartVault alongside Lacerte don't have to start over when they move to ProConnect. SmartVault automatically merges and duplicates client records during the switch, linking existing client data in bulk rather than requiring a fresh setup.



A unified path to efficiency and growth

The integration of SmartVault and ProConnect Tax represents a critical evolutionary step for firms. By bringing together a cloud-native tax preparation platform with a robust, highly secure document management workflow solution, the partnership eliminates many friction points in the tax workflow and creates more capacity to work on your firm and with your clients.

With intelligent intake, document collection, and tax return prep from SmartRequestAI, to the one-click auto-routing of completed returns, and foundational enterprise-grade security and operational reliability, this integrated ecosystem can truly move a firm forward. Firms can meet compliance requirements and operational demands, but also save hours of lost time, resulting in measurable improvements in profitability and the ultimate goal for many practitioners: sustainable, balanced growth.



Stop chasing the paperwork; start focusing on advisory and revenue-producing work.
Schedule a demo and get more information today.