



From Managing Growth to Thriving in a Pandemic: CPA Firm Triumphs with Practice Management Technology

Committed to Technology

“The goal was to grow the firm.” That’s what Michael Rosedale remembers about CPA Tax Partners’ role as an early technology adopter. Noted for being a forward-thinking practice with decades of expertise, the firm long ago committed to leveraging technology to offer highly efficient and personalized service. Yet their innovation wound up paying unexpected dividends when the COVID-19 pandemic hit – and CPA Tax Partners thrived while other firms floundered.

Firm Growth Leads to Software Hunt

Back in the 1980’s, CPA Tax Partners ran their firm like most accounting practices – manually. “When you have a small firm with three or four people, you can run your firm more easily by working from common lists and paper files,” Rosedale said. “But as you grow, you need rules and procedures and standardization in place. About four years ago, we realized we needed a practice management solution – and that led us to OfficeTools.”

CPA Tax Partners was initially drawn to OfficeTools because of its “seamless integration” with their tax software, Lacerte. But the growing practice quickly appreciated its other features.

One immediate benefit: increased visibility. As Rosedale put it, “It’s not only the billing, but tracking the time people put into projects and doing the analytics on that, so we understand which are profitable companies and which ones warrant a fee increase. That’s what it does for me.”

Those management insights led to smarter capacity planning, particularly when it came to balancing staff workloads. “The nature of a tax practice is seasonal,” Rosedale explained. “But you need work for staff to keep them busy year round.” Connecting productivity to client needs helped him understand how to better service demanding clients while balancing tasks amongst team members.

At a Glance

About CPA Tax Partners

CPA Tax Partners

A New York boutique accounting and tax advisory firm, CPA Tax Partners has spent over 30 years helping clients navigate the world of taxes and bookkeeping. The practice is recognized for partnering personalized service with modern conveniences, thanks to their early adoption of technology to offer an appealing client experience.

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Digital Workflows Create New Efficiencies

Another important benefit was digitized document management. “That was critical to get away from paper returns,” recalled Rosedale. “Our basement was full of years of paper copies of returns. Now with OfficeTools, we’ve eliminated the need to create or store paper files.”

The CPA Tax Partners team especially appreciated being able to find tax documents within OfficeTools. “You can just click in and see them, like e-file authorizations,” Rosedale said. “It also integrates with emails, so you can see email histories and track entire client conversations. You can track year ends and view what client work is left. Even when we collate and send out returns, every detail is documented – including how and when it was sent.”

Like most tax and accounting professionals, CPA Tax Partners uses popular systems like Office 365, QuickBooks Online. That made integration a big priority.

The firm’s digital workflows were working well, which inspired Rosedale to think about a move to the cloud. It was the autumn of 2019 – and though he didn’t know it, a global pandemic was just months away that would prove his decision oddly prescient.



Security

By moving its data to a cloud environment with state-of-the-art security, CPA Tax Partners can protect its clientele. “It’s critical that my clients’ information be in a safe, ransomware-free environment,” Rosedale said.



Cloud Access

“I can access our information from anywhere,” Rosedale said. “Whether I’m at beach or in the office, I can see what everyone is doing.” In the new remote era, staff can keep work moving forward at home or in the office.



Efficiency

Rosedale appreciates OfficeTools’ ability to automate workflows, eliminate paper, meet compliance regulations and offer electronic payments and secure document exchange, noting, “It runs smoothly.”

Moving to the Cloud: Collaboration, Clients and COVID-19

At the time, the growing threat of cybercrime had Rosedale worried. He knew attackers often target accounting firms for two reasons: firms store valuable data and they typically lack the strong cybersecurity of an enterprise organization. His firm had also recently hired another dozen professionals to keep up with their growing clientele base.

“We had another 12 or 13 people we needed seats for,” he recalled. “So the cloud made sense. And I wanted to remove the responsibility of cyberthreats and give it to an organization that had layers of security and data protection. We managed our own server for many years and we didn’t want that responsibility anymore.” Based on their positive experience with OfficeTools, the firm decided to move to Abacus Private Cloud, a compliance-ready environment that offers automated backups, multifactor authentication, advanced encryption and other security features.

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Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Sudden stay-at-home orders and social distancing changed the accounting industry in a way that had never been seen. Staff had to collaborate with each other from home; client relationships had to be built virtually. With tax season fast approaching, accounting firms everywhere struggled to communicate with clients and provide their teams with the right resources and information.

Luckily, CTA Tax Partners was well prepared for the change, having already migrated everything over to the Abacus server. The firm successfully navigated a disruption that put other accounting firms out of business.

“When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, everyone could work from home and have access to all the right information,” Rosedale said. “The good news is that our team was up and running and accessing their desktop from their house. So we got very lucky in that respect. I don’t think we would have gotten through tax season if it wasn’t for Abacus Private Cloud.”

Turning Results into Future Rewards

Today, Rosedale observes that OfficeTools and Abacus Private Cloud have created a strong foundation for the firm’s future.

“The fact that we can create rules and systematize means knowledge gets documented and processes are standardized,” he said, explaining why documentation is crucial for a growing firm. “We could hire new staff or someone could acquire the firm – and everyone would be able to quickly learn our system and get on board. If I wanted to buy five other CPA firms, they’d also operate on the same system. I could see what everyone’s doing, run reports and view the billing. That’s why this transformation has been so valuable.”

Rosedale, who aims to grow his firm in the coming years, expects to see OfficeTools and Abacus Private Cloud scale with his practice. “Technology has been the key to growing the firm virtually,” he said. “I see that continuing.”

