



Case study

CCH Central Suite

Rouse Partners

Rouse Partners is one of Buckinghamshire's larger independent firms of chartered accountants, auditors and tax advisors. Based in Beaconsfield, the ten partner firm was first established in 1921 and is now part of Praxity AISBL, the world's largest alliance of independent accounting and auditing firms. Managing Partner Neil Relph discusses how technology can be a growth catalyst for accountants... providing they choose the right technology partner.

How has the current economic climate affected accountancy practices?

The depth and length of the current recession mean that, in order to continue to grow and develop our business, we are looking at new ways of working and engaging with our clients.

Any product or service that's considered to be a 'commodity' will come under price pressure when times are tough. The difference for the accountancy profession this time has been the range of compliance services that businesses now consider to be a commodity.

Naturally, clients are reluctant to pay for commodity services and they particularly don't want to pay just for accounts and tax details to be reconciled and corrected.

How should accountancy practices respond?

Given that clients can get meaningful data to you, more than ever they see you as their trusted adviser in the battle against the economic odds.

By getting a true understanding of a business, accountants can provide an invaluable lifeline of commercial expertise to help their clients navigate the challenges and, in many cases, seize the opportunities. In fact, there are still a lot of opportunities out there - with a little vision and good planning they can all be exploited!

So how has technology helped Rouse Partners?

We have a great team, but for that team to be successful we need to concentrate on meaningful engagement with our clients at every opportunity and at every level within their business. Timing, planning and communication are all vital for successful outcomes.

Critical to our success has been the systemisation and automation of our compliance processes. We have to be able to access clients' data in the

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simplest and most effective way and to convert it into the required outputs. We've achieved this by combining technology with an approach which thinks outside the box.

We have been very successful at managing our recoveries by using technology - for example by using it to help us understand which jobs are profitable and which aren't, and by tracking WIP 'creep'. We're also looking at how we can use our practice management software to automatically track and alert us when any part of our business is falling short of the targets we have set.

By using technology to automate compliance processes and manage key elements of our business, we can create extra time in which to more fully engage with our clients.

How do you see things developing in the future?

We think the best is yet to come. The more profiling data we collect from and about our clients, the more we can engage proactively with them.

We're investing time in the technology that will allow us to improve our productivity to further advance client engagement. Personal contact remains the key to driving business and the technology helps us to facilitate that contact.

With fingertip access to everything we need to know about our clients, we can provide that invaluable advice that will help drive their business and which in turn will drive ours.

To help make all this happen, we are working very closely with our technology partner, Wolters Kluwer. Just as we have to understand our clients' businesses it has been very important that Wolters Kluwer understands *our* business - what we are trying to achieve, what the challenges are and how they can work with us to solve them.

Of course we expect Wolters Kluwer to deliver on all our compliance needs - that's a given - but beyond that it's important to use technology to make our business more and more efficient and then to use it to help the engagement process with our clients.

Wolters Kluwer acts as our partner - they listen to us, they discuss new ideas with us, and they work out how they can help us deliver on our own business strategy - that is exactly what we want from our technology partner, and what for me distinguishes Wolters Kluwer from everyone else.

They don't just supply a disparate bunch of software products; they provide us with solutions over time that help us to deliver on our own business strategy and goals.

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