

## Testing the SaaS Waters with Audit Applications

By: Marty McCutchen, CPA.CITP

It's certainly no secret that CPAs tend to be "thoughtful" adopters of technology—waiting for others to test it out and report back the results. Though there is nothing wrong with taking a slower, cautious evaluation approach, at some point you simply have to take the plunge. And where well developed, cost-effective technology is concerned, CPAs that have jumped in the deep end of the pool are finding that the water is quite nice.

Such is the case with leading SaaS tools. These applications offer the profession powerful technology that answers a real need—the need to consistently elevate efficiency. Not a new concept in the tax and accounting field, the SaaS model has only recently started to gain momentum and get the attention it deserves. There are two primary reasons for this:

1) SaaS applications are exceptionally cost effective, and 2) Many SaaS products have proven their value in terms of quality and ROI.

### SaaS-based Audit Tools are a Good Example...

Historically, technology hasn't come cheap. In fact, software/hardware solutions rank as the largest cost item for firms, second only to staff compensation. SaaS applications are reversing this trend by offering powerful tools at a much lower cost. Because software is deployed over the Internet and typically developed for a broad audience, development costs are significantly reduced—savings that carry through to the end user. This means that firms get all the advantages of advanced technology—without the tremendous upfront cost.

In addition to a lighter price tag, there are several SaaS applications that have "earned their keep." For example, leading Disclosure and Reporting Manager (DRM) software further streamlines complex audit workflows by seamlessly integrating with core audit and engagement applications. DRM software supplements larger audit solutions by providing comprehensive and customized reporting capabilities and the ability to generate commonly used documents such as proposals, engagement letters, financial statement with footnotes, and management representation and recommendation letters. The SaaS-based DRM application fully integrates with a firm's checklists and practice aids and comes equipped with databases that allow you to store sample letters and footnote disclosures for reference. The end result is a far more efficient and standardized audit process.

The SaaS model continues to grow in popularity among CPAs, especially as more quality vendors continue to pop up on the radar. Not only do SaaS audit applications provide a lower-cost alternative, but many also integrate with core audit/engagement systems—providing needed functionality that is typically not available.

As new mandates and regulations hit the profession, not to mention ever-increasing client demands, firms require tools that accelerate efficiency. Many SaaS products have been around for years, so not even the slowest adopters can sit back for much longer. Because these products are tested and proven, it just might be time to jump in the deep end of the SaaS pool. Powerful, cost-effective solutions are there to help you operate your firm, well, *swimmingly*.

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Marty founded CPA Service Group, LLC in 2006, and currently serves as the company's president and Chief Executive Officer. In these roles, Marty is responsible for overall strategic direction of the business and design and development of the company's leading Disclosure and Reporting Manager (DRM) application and other applications in development. Prior to launching CPA Service Group, Marty spent 11 years in public accounting (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP & other related experience), specializing in the audits of public and privately held companies, SOX 404, reviews and compilations, and other assurance related services.

Marty has more than a decade of experience in the professional tax and accounting industry. He is also a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Texas and Alabama Societies of CPAs. Marty earned a BBA in accounting from Auburn University and holds both CPA and CITP credentials.