

2012 EXECUTIVE PREDICTIONS YEAR IN REVIEW

A LOOK BACK AT 2011

For a lot of tax and accounting professionals, 2011 was the year when “The New Normal” got a lot less new. We began to see firms adapt successfully and flourish in a changed environment. Firms that have been creative about using all of the information and technology resources at their disposal are doing well. They have become trusted advisors to their clients, part of the solution to the volatile economic times. They are indispensable to their clients and more profitable than ever.

2011 was an exciting year for us, as well. We introduced a variety of new products and enhancements that will help forward-looking firms flourish in their new role, including:

New mobile applications that will enable accounting firms to deploy a mobile app branded as their own to clients for sharing documents, collecting scanned receipts, and more. In addition, it will allow employees of those client

businesses to enter time, view W-2 information, and much more from their mobile devices.

Workpapers CS, a completely new application, will bring engagement management to the cloud. It builds on the revolutionary real-time collaboration capabilities that we originally introduced in Accounting CS to enable firms to efficiently manage workpapers from anywhere.

NetClient CS portals have also seen enhancements that make them an even better client service tool and paperless workflow instrument for the firm. For example, new integration with Practice CS makes it possible to create and populate NetClient CS portals directly from Practice CS. There's also a new option that gives firms one-click access to a client view of the portal, making it easy to see the same portal view as clients.

PREDICTIONS FOR 2012

Mobile will be bigger than you think. We all knew that mobile would be a great way to keep tabs on the office from the road. What we didn't anticipate was the incredible value of mobile technology as a tool for interacting with clients and building relationships in the field.

Suddenly, firms can walk into a meeting with the ability to look at data in real time, to do work, finalize reports, and solve problems. All on a friendly, unobtrusive device that doesn't put a barrier between you and your client. I can't think of a better symbol of the new dynamic in client-firm relationships.

Accounting will be less about numbers and more about people. You already know that computational services like tax processing are becoming commoditized, largely because of the influx of automated alternatives. But a software program can't build relationships. It can't find creative new ways to save clients money, grow revenue, or make smarter business decisions. You can.

Consultative, value-added services will be the solution for many firms that are looking for a more profitable

alternative to the nuts-and-bolts computational services that continue to shrink in value.

Partners, technology managers, and IT departments will lose their fear of personal devices. It's impossible not to see the onslaught of personal mobile devices in the workplace. Increasingly, their owners want to use them to access email and other firm resources. This has been viewed with skepticism and fear by some firm principals and IT managers. That attitude needs to change.

In effect, these workers are asking permission to use their own resources to be more productive. They're eager to take on responsibility and increase their involvement. If you refuse, you send the message that you view them more as a security risk than a source of new ideas. And you're leaving money on the table.

It has been a bumpy few years for just about everyone. But I believe that in 2012, the ubiquity of the web, myriad new devices, and their potential to make us all more efficient will make the New Normal less murky and more lucrative for the firms that embrace it. Success may look a little different, but it's still well within reach.

JON BARON

Jon Baron, President, Professional,
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Jon joined Thomson Reuters in 1992 and has more than 35 years of technology development and

executive management experience providing technology solutions for the accounting profession. He was vice president of technology development from 1992-1998, and was responsible for the design and development of the CS Professional Suite of products. Jon was then promoted to president and CEO of the business in

July of 1998. In July 2004, he was promoted to the position of president of the Professional unit of Tax & Accounting, which focuses on the accounting, bookkeeping, and tax software market in the United States and Canada. Jon holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Siena College and an MBA from Boston University.

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- Cross-client processing that opens new workflow and staffing possibilities.
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