

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Newsletters

American Institute of Certified Public
Accountants (AICPA) Historical Collection

3-2003

InfoTech Update, Volume 11, Number 2, March/April 2003

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Information Technology Section

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aicpa_news



Part of the [Accounting Commons](#)

InfoTech Update

Information Technology for CPAs by CPAs

IN THIS ISSUE

1 CPA Firm Relationship Management Technology: An Idea Whose Time has Come

With CRM tools, you can develop new business by finding out what your clients really want. Tom Davis uses a how-to approach to de-mystify this profitable, growing arena.

4 Leslie Lowthers: The Proof is in Paper(less)

An InfoTech Update profile

5 Using Call Center Technology to Automate the Sales Process

Using outbound call centers to increase the sales function isn't anything new to most industries, but it is almost revolutionary to the CPA profession. Can your firm use something like this to boost its market share?

8 Product Showcase: Managing Information Breaks Ground With new Options

Discover how Juice™ Software and Six Degrees offer variable ways to manage and retain your data and files.

10 AICPA TECH 2003 — Las Vegas: Innovations Abound While Traditions Remain

If you've never attended the AICPA's TECH Conference, you're missing out on valuable information, networking and much, much more.

11 Ebitz: How to Build a Paperless System Susan Bradley's popular column explores the ins and outs of implementing the software and technology you need to go paperless.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

CPA FIRM RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

By Tom Davis, CPA

Tom Davis, CPA, is managing partner of TC Davis & Associates, an accounting and consulting firm in Valdosta, Ga., that offers both traditional accounting, a variety of business and consulting services, and technology implementation. Davis also is president of Knowledge Concepts, Inc., and creator of FirmWorks, a software solution that leverages a firm's methodologies and existing technology with communication, collaboration and information management tools.

CPAs are really living in "interesting times." In early 2001, accountants were concerned with issues such as emerging practice opportunities, a lack of available staff resources and a moderately declining economy. Today, they face very real concerns. Some highly visible audit failures have placed a cloud over the credibility of the CPA, resulting in calls from outside the profession to govern the way services are performed, and even which services a firm is allowed to offer to its clients.

Firms are concerned — and rightly so — about the impact of these issues on the profession and their financial well being. In turn, firms feel they need to improve the service performance for their clients, take advantage of every opportunity and make the

most efficient use of their resources. To make this happen, firms should consider an emerging type of technology that can make a substantial impact on the firm's ability to provide high-quality, on-time services in a highly efficient manner: customer relationship management (CRM) tools.

Relationship management tools are designed to meet many firm needs, including relationship management, service management, resource management, marketing and practice development, knowledge management and document management — just to name a few broad capabilities. These tools touch the firm at all levels, and greatly leverage the amount of information collected while also creating something of a much higher value to the firm — knowledge. This single point of access allows management to transform this knowledge into executable decisions. Never before has the firm had such a powerful, yet easy way to gain this control.

Learning From the Mistakes of Others

There have been volumes written about CRM implementations that did not go well. However, there are some substantial examples of success. When you look at both the failures and successes, there are some interesting points for consideration.

continued on page 2

Pervasive use

This is a simple concept. If all team members use the tool, more information is collected. The firm now has a single access point for information. No more multiple databases to be maintained and no need to open different applications to handle related tasks. Pervasive use means *complete information*, and this information is more accurate and timely. Pervasive use promotes “standard” approaches for handling similar tasks that translate into less training and more efficient work. The more information collected, the more it is used. The more information is used, the more valuable it is — we call this knowledge.

INFOTECH UPDATE, March/April 2003, Volume 11, Number 2. Publication and editorial office: AICPA, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036. Copyright © 2003, American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Inc. Opinions of authors and the AICPA staff are their own and do not necessarily reflect policies of the Institute or the Information Technology Section. Any hardware or software products mentioned do not in any way represent an endorsement by the Institute or Section.

All rights reserved. You may copy and distribute this document subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Copy all text without modification and include all pages.
- (2) All copies must contain the AICPA copyright notice and any other notices provided therein.
- (3) You may not distribute this document for profit.

InfoTech Update Editorial Advisory Board

If you wish to update your member profile please visit <https://www.aicpa.org/anon/login.asp>.

Susan E. Bradley, CPA/CITP
Tamiyasu, Smith Horn and Braun
Fresno, Calif.

Mark S. Eckman, CPA
Rockwell Collins, Inc.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Philip H. Friedlander, CPA/CITP
College of Technology and
Management
St. Petersburg College
St. Petersburg, Fla.

Wayne E. Harding, CPA/CITP
AccTrak21
Englewood, Colo.

Roman H. Kepczyk, CPA/CITP
InfoTech Partners
North America, Inc.
Phoenix, Ariz.

Janis R. Monroe, CPA
MicroMash
Las Vegas, Nev.

Sandi Smith, CPA
Consultant
Dallas, Texas

Scott H. Cytron, ABC
Editor
scytron@sbcglobal.net

For questions about your subscription to *InfoTech Update* or other questions about your IT Membership Section benefits, please contact the AICPA at infotech@aicpa.org or leave us a voicemail at 212-596-6211.

Total Firm Focus

Many of the failures start with a departmental focus. One practice area or department is the primary promoter of the CRM

CRM touches the firm at all levels, and greatly leverages the amount of information collected while also creating something of a much higher value to the firm — knowledge.

initiative. The complaint that is heard most often in this type of implementation is that not enough information is collected because not enough firm members use the CRM tool.

Information related to a firm’s clients, prospects, centers of influence and vendors is a firm-level issue. To be successful, the CRM tool has to meet the needs of the *total* accounting practice, not just those of a single department such as marketing, tax, audit or something else. In addition, the different “disciplines” of accounting are becoming increasingly linked. A decision related to the tax department directly impacts audit, consulting services and other firm practice areas.

Unless the Professional Services Automation (PSA) tool meets the needs of *all* firm members, its implementation will fail. Without an all-firm focus, CRM application use will not achieve the critical mass needed to produce valuable information in quantities sufficient to justify the efforts required to use these tools.

It’s Got to be Easy

“Easy to use” is defined as easy to get to the *right* information. Many of the CRM applications on the market are easy to use. However, few, if any, give easy access to the information that accountants need.

Most CRM applications only look at an incomplete picture of a relationship. For example, the typical application focuses

continued on page 3

CPA Firm Relationship Management Technology: An Idea Whose Time has Come *continued from page 2*



on sales force automation, marketing and the function of tracking client interactions. The packages do not take into consideration the services being performed and do not provide *easy* access to all facets of the client experience. This creates a break in the “knowledge chain” and often requires the use of other applications to “sort of” track client services, staff responsibilities, due dates and the myriad other bits of data needed to complete the information picture. There is not easy access.

Picking the Right Vendor

CRM applications and processes are new tools for accounting firms, which means there is usually no internal firm base of knowledge that will be helpful in selecting a suitable product or implementing the new tools and processes. Firm members will have expectations (sometimes vague and not obtainable) about a few key areas of information the new application is to supply, but typically, employees will not have a clear understanding of all the possibilities and the pitfalls of a CRM information system.

Success requires that the vendor must be more than just knowledgeable with the package. More critically important, the vendor must be an expert on accounting firms, understand the services firms deliver and how these services are performed, understand the issues surrounding the management of firms, and have extensive experience with many firms (there are substantial differences between firms). Without this knowledge, implementation will be incomplete and unsuccessful.

The vendor will be a critical element in the planning stage of the project. Because this is not a case of replacing an existing system with a new, more efficient, faster application (those types of implementations are easy), the planning process must cover several critical points. First, it will define the information produced by the new system so that it will meet firm objectives

and needs. The plan will detail the timeline for getting the new system deployed, training firm members and handling the evolution of the application (a continuous process). A knowledgeable vendor is critical in this process.

Training

After the plan has been developed, there has to be training, but the training approach is different compared to other applications. A CRM initiative will not be completed in a day, a week or even a month. Firms will “evolve” into the total use of the system. This is not because the systems are complex, but because the power and value of the system will grow with use. There is a lot of information that will be gathered that has not been collected in the past.

A successful training program in this environment is one that features continuous training as the firm evolves. It also means that the vendor has to be continually involved with the firm as it moves further and further along with using the PSA application.

A CRM initiative will not be completed in a day, a week or even a month; firms will “evolve” into the total use of the system.

Strategy and Outcome

The CPA landscape is indeed changing, and firms are rethinking their strategies to meet these changes. Whether the objectives are growth or survival, new methodologies are being developed to ensure success. CRM information technology provides the most effective means to supporting these new methodologies.

Firms need to be aware that the concept of an all-inclusive, pervasive process for collecting information about everyone the firm does business with, every service and every opportunity, is a new experience. Anytime you do something new, it requires extra attention to the details: planning, selection, training, implementation and evaluation.

Contact Tom Davis at tdavis@tedcpa.com.



Hear more from Tom Davis about knowledge management at TECH 2003. See page 10 for details.

LESLIE LOWTHERS: THE PROOF IS IN PAPER(LESS)

By Scott H. Cytron, ABC

If someone asked you to find a client's file in your office, how long would it take you to lay your hands on the actual documents?

Atlanta CPA Leslie S. Lowthers estimates it took her staff up to five minutes to find one file, and while this doesn't sound like very much time, it all adds up. Of course, that was pre-paperless. Today, every file is available in a matter of seconds!

Leslie is senior manager in the real estate group of Atlanta, Ga.-based Habif, Arogeti & Wynne, LLP, a full-service accounting and consulting firm with approximately 150 total staff. HA&W also is the largest independent accounting firm in Georgia and regularly makes the industry's top 100 listings.

"When we started upgrading our technology in 1998, we had no intentions of going paperless," says Leslie. "However when we realized tools that were available on the market, we made the common sense decision to use those tools to increase productivity. We were one of the first firms anywhere to commit to going completely paperless, so there was no one to tell us how to get it done or even help in an advisory capacity.

"One of the main reasons we decided on this direction was the lost productivity that resulted from spending time in searching for files. With the tough market for new hires, we had to think about becoming more efficient, and doing more with fewer people."

When Leslie says the firm went "paperless," she means *totally* paperless, not just dealing with "less paper" or taking some parts of the practice paperless as many accounting firms currently do. Even though the initial goal was simply

to update the firm's technology, the process involved in going completely paperless presented two problems.

"The software packages on the market were either very expensive and didn't do what we wanted, or they couldn't handle the volume required by an organization the size of ours," she says.

The firm decided to develop its own document management software that integrated with other applications the firm had selected. This product was named SIAN®, or *Secure Information Available Now*.

For trial balance application, the firm decided on Toronto, Ontario-based CaseWare Working Papers as its trial balance product. The firm uses CaseWare Working Papers for all attestation functions (audits, reviews and compilations) and CCH ProSystemfx for taxes along with the Microsoft operating system, and Microsoft Office products for word processing, calendaring and other administrative functions. The firm tied these major applications and many other ancillary applications together by using SIAN to control all documents generated.

The combination of these programs, along with increased electronic storage capacity (a must, according to Leslie), provided enough resources to capture a minimum of *seven years* worth of data. As part of the process of going paperless, the firm digitally imaged all paper files, including files in dead storage. She says if the file was within the retention period, the firm digitally imaged the document.

The result? The system completely eliminated the firm's storage and filing system. In fact, when the firm moved its offices in 2000, it didn't move any paper



Leslie Lowthers, CPA

files in the process, and today, the firm has no central filing area and the only paper relates to interim work.

Obviously, an endeavor like this takes time, planning and resources to occur. However, there's also a large, human resource element that fits into the process, a component she says most firms overlook because they're totally focused on technology instead of the human element.

"We truly believe the key to the entire process is training. Prior to going paperless, we just threw software programs or other products to the staff and expected them to figure them out without training or education. Now, we focus on not only training on the products, but also training on the firm's process for using the products."

Leslie says another requirement is to have good IT people either on staff or readily available.

"You just can't go paperless without having the backup system in place and an IT department to support a digital office. Firms who think they're too small should not be afraid of making necessary

continued on page 5

Leslie Lowthers: The Proof is in Paper(less) *continued from page 4*

changes. Different size firms call for different solutions. We have helped implement our system in offices with as few as 10 staff.

Except for the traditional accounting busy season, Leslie travels across the country as a certified CaseWare trainer, sharing her experience and teaching other firms how to work in the paperless office environment. With her field experience, she has three recommendations for smaller firms (the largest contingent) that want to go paperless:

- ◆ **Get some outside help** — Making paperless happen internally is unlikely, unless the firm's staff is technologically savvy. Most accountants find it difficult to keep up with the latest technology advances.
- ◆ **Attend the AICPA Tech Conference** — This is a good source of information to find out what other CPA firms are doing (see related story, page 10).

◆ **Training** — Start with basic Word and Excel, learn how to use Windows Explorer, and understand how files are saved electronically.

“Employers let their employees down by not training them on basic products. Management is usually of the opinion that, ‘if you know how to type, you know how to use Word, or if you can add one and one together on a spreadsheet, you know how to use Excel.’”

Cost, of course, is another consideration that cannot be underestimated. For starters, she says you have to have enough storage capacity, and while some firms have made great strides in upgrading their servers and systems, they also need to have enough storage for many years to come — not just on an annualized basis because the firm hasn't planned far enough in advance. HA&W, for example, has 20 terabytes of storage capacity. Loosely translated,

that's enough storage for 126 million documents.

On the software front, she advises that many of the products firms already are using may be equipped to help go paperless, such as CCH, LaCerte and some of the larger tax packages. SIAN, for example, installs for \$18,000, and annually runs \$325 per user, with half of that fee spent annually for sales and support.

For more information on HA&W's endeavors in the paperless office, contact Leslie at leslie.lowthers@hawcpa.com.

If you work in the technology arena and would like to be profiled in an upcoming InfoTech Update, send an email to infotech@aicpa.org and tell us what you're doing that differentiates you from other firms and companies. We're especially interested in profiles of CPAs in business and industry.



CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

USING CALL CENTER TECHNOLOGY TO AUTOMATE THE SALES PROCESS

By Bob Howard

Bob Howard is founder and managing director of SalesLogic, LLC (www.sales-logic.com), an international sales consulting and outsourcing firm focused on consulting, technology and professional services. Through the company's team of OverDrive™ consultants and proprietary sales processes, SalesLogic's “win rates” typically increase by 50 percent, while sales cycles quickly decrease by 50 percent.

You've got a great idea, but where do you turn to execute that idea and realize success? Accounting firms spend much of their energy and efforts delivering on-point client deliverables, and yet, find themselves with a real-life *lack of time* to implement various activities, including cross-selling the firm's services to existing clients, marketing their skills and services to prospects or even increasing sales on the reseller front.

For accounting firms, this lack of resources to take ideas to the marketplace is one of the reasons they turn to outbound call centers — and it's not just the Big 4 that are using call centers

to generate a buzz. Although the accounting profession mostly hears how call centers benefit the ultra-large firm, many smaller firms that learn about the benefits weighed against the costs realize the advantages inherent in using centers to boost profits. In short, call centers provide firms with the resources needed to take their message to target markets.

Call center technology is the software applications and hardware that control the phone calls received or dialed by call center agents, as well as the database that captures the results of each call. According to the American Teleservices Association (ATA), tele-services generated \$661 billion in revenues in 2002 on 180 million sales transactions and, as an industry, employed 5.7 million people — one of the most aggressively growing segments of business process outsourcing.

Because of that growth, the efficiencies of the Internet and the eventual proliferation of voice over IP, the technology investment within the call center market segment has remained

continued on page 6



Using Call Center Technology to Automate the Sales Process *continued from page 5*

robust over the past couple of years, helping create even greater efficiencies.

Call center technology can be defined by the niche a call center serves, as well as the necessities of that niche, including inbound calls, outbound calls and market research that relies on specific mechanical advantages like predictive dialers, call routing and hunt groups. Call centers also tend to be narrow in their focus. For example, agents that primarily make only outbound sales calls probably would not do market research. Many large call centers offer a variety of services, but most have chosen a niche they can profitably serve.

"Sales automation achieved through call centers can provide phenomenal results when used deliberately and strategically," says Toby Gilman, senior vice president of Dallas-based SalesLogic. "Many people think this is just one step away from telemarketing, but in fact, the entire process is very professional and actually a lot of fun. It's about delivering results."

Gilman, formerly with Ernst and Young, LLP, combined a powerful marketing strategy with college graduates to generate a results-oriented marketing message to contact and set appointments with 5,000 executives who work for Fortune 1,000 companies. Within 20 months, these appointments resulted in \$100 million in incremental revenue for the Big Four firm — all at a cost of less than \$1 million.

"Call centers provide access to the marketplace; however, many variables must come together to drive results," says Gilman. "Our outbound representatives were college graduates who were articulate and could speak in business terms, and the product itself offered incredible results. We were able to leave a message and have the CEO of the company actually call us back."

"Because of the narrowness of what most call centers offer, they easily become very efficient," says Mike Garzillo, SalesLogic's vice president of Technology, and a principal member of the team responsible for implementing Symantec's CRM. "That's valuable insight for most every business because whatever part of your sales process you'd like to improve, there's probably already a call center somewhere offering a more efficient solution. However, efficiency is not realized just because of the technology, it's also because of the training and discipline of the agents to conform to a refined, consistent business process that best uses that technology."

Good Initial Steps

All parts of your sales process could probably become more efficient, and the first step is that you must accept that sales will always be a people-dependent reality. Multiple people in various roles will create unavoidable inefficiencies.

Eight Sales Force Automation Considerations

Here's an eight-point checklist to determine whether you need a Sales Force Automation (SFA) program:

1. Do you want your sales data to integrate with your financial systems or other existing databases?
2. How do you currently compile, run and report your sales forecast?
3. Is a lack of adoption/acceptance of your current SFA because of technical problems (lack of synchronization or unreliability, a slow application on the desktops, it isn't modifiable enough, the database makes it difficult to run reports)?
4. Do you want data warehousing functionality so you can analyze your sales data?
5. Do you want your sales managers to have administrative access to the data or are they only interested in seeing the reports?
6. How segmented are the roles within your sales force?
7. Do you have remote reps and how will they access the system?
8. Do you want the tool to be a Web-based application?

"Many companies think automating their sales process means fixing everything — diluting the impact they could have had on one specific area," says Garzillo. "Scope creep is normal when considering any form of sales automation, but conceding to it can become very expensive and threaten your return on investment. Any VP of sales can tell you what he'd like to fix; the challenge is knowing what will produce the greatest increase in revenue."

Start by writing down the roles of your current sales staff and how they fit into your sales process. Build a diagram that reveals your sales process to be a flow through various roles. In doing so, this will reveal the redundancies and bottlenecks that are probable areas of investment. If the flow is reasonably smooth with little redundancy, then look to see where the biggest impact could be made by suddenly adding many more people (i.e., identifying replicable tasks). Your technology investment will prevent you from needing all those bodies, but it's a good indication of the potential impact of investing in that role. And, consider the narrowness of the role.

continued on page 7

Using Call Center Technology to Automate the Sales Process continued from page 6

“The lesson to be learned from call centers is that every person does a very specific, narrowly defined role the most efficient way possible,” says Garzillo. “If you have a sales role that you can narrowly define and that role has a big impact in either creating more leads or closing more sales, it will be easy to institute consistent behaviors that will best use the technology you invest in. Your people have to have a disciplined, consistent methodology or the technology won’t effectively leverage your efforts.”

You can fix multiple problems and roles with the same technology investment, if those roles have enough commonality that the narrowness of task is a fit for the tool. For example:

- ◆ If you’re in a high transaction business, do you have reps that only prospect while others close business? That’s an opportunity to consider a predictive dialer (technology that automatically dials prospects).
- ◆ Do you have a tech support group as well as customer service reps that needs to interact with prospects *and* customers, and you want to know the details of all those conversations? That’s an opportunity to consider a sales force automation system that has a back-end infrastructure designed for multi-department use. Multi-department use is usually handled by a Siebel implementation, for example. Tech support and customer service reps enter the results of their phone calls into the database, as does sales, and the databases are commingled so the information can be cross-referenced by each department.
- ◆ Do you want to have a record of everything said to a prospect by the reps so you can sort all the data and determine which approaches are most successful? That defines a back-end data warehouse with drop-down script capture. Instead of typing in text as a way to record the answers to every question, the caller can choose several choices from a drop-down menu, and pick a specific choice that best matches what the prospect or customer said. As a result, there are only a limited number of choices for each question and it’s much easier to analyze the data.

Knowing what solutions fit your scenario is merely a matter of creative market research. As soon as you define the area you would most like to improve, start talking to local call centers about what they can do for you instead of you doing it yourself. If they can’t help, get a referral. Eventually, you’ll find a call center that specializes in outsourcing exactly what you want to improve upon. Ask them how they’ll do it and the tools they use. That will lead to the solutions, which leads to the vendors that specialize in the specific equipment or software the call center is using.

The Cost of Sales Force Automation

Sales technology can cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars for phone switch improvements to a few million dollars for a new sales force automation (SFA) system; however, there are solutions available for virtually every budget.

“The most expensive thing about sales automation is mistakes,” says Garzillo. “Even if you expect to do a great job of defining your needs, always start by bringing into the conversation your best possible technical resource, hopefully your VP of IT or CIO, and define what your environment and budget can and can’t handle. That will wisely narrow your choices.”

The most common investment is usually a more sophisticated SFA. In addition to an outsourcing model, SFAs can be priced at a monthly cost per user, or a single fee for the software based on number of users, plus any necessary hardware.

“Try before you buy is always a wise strategy,” says Garzillo. “If you can outsource on a test basis or subscribe to an application service provider that charges you monthly for an SFA, that’s close to what you want, and a great way to see if the process increases your sales results as much as you’d hoped. In addition, data import and export can be a challenge, but is always cheaper than a system you shouldn’t have bought. That’s the best part about automating sales; you can usually tell very quickly if you’ll eventually see a significant ROI. You’ll also learn more about what you *don’t* want, and that helps too.”

Adopt new Behaviors

Many disappointed companies thought that investing in sales automation technology would solve their problems, but their sales force found ways to keep doing what they were doing before, which was much more of the problem than the previous tools.

According to Garzillo, “A new technology solution can create a mandate within the sales organization to suddenly adopt more consistent behaviors. Combined with technology, this will produce significant revenue increases. Call center technology is sophisticated and niche-specific because call centers already have accomplished what few sales organizations can achieve — narrow roles interacting with a tool that takes advantage of that consistency.

To take full advantage of call center technology, take an approach that focuses on changing behaviors, exploits technology efficiencies and depends on a marketing strategy to drive the machine.

Contact Bob Howard at bobhoward@sales-logic.com. 

MANAGING INFORMATION BREAKS GROUND WITH NEW OPTIONS

By Richard Oppenheim, CPA, CITP

Richard Oppenheim, CPA, CITP, is founder of IdentiRISK, a provider of products for the assessment, verification and certification of an enterprise's operational reliability. He has worked with computer technology, information systems and business operations for more than four decades.

From the beginning of personal computer implementation, one of the most significant applications was information management. Over the past two decades, most examples within this area have focused on managing personal information and contacts with software programs like ACT!, Goldmine and Microsoft (MS) Outlook.

Two of the American Institute of CPAs' 2003 Top Technologies reference the need for excellence and quality with the management of information, including Business Information Management (#2) and Customer Relationship Management (#9). Within these two areas, there are many examples that apply both to CPAs working in business and industry, as well as public practice.

Where did this begin? Originally, all we needed to know were the names, addresses and phone numbers for clients, vendors, associates and friends. This process made great use of the spinning Rolodex wheels. Over time, however, we learned that information gathering is endless; we are constantly adding new names, email addresses, birth dates and all sorts of information and facts to what was originally intended to resemble simple mailing data.

Today, CPAs who thrive in daily contact with customers and clients, want more help in this information gathering

process, and as a result, we now have software for management information assistance in addition to the tried and true contact management software packages we have on our shelves. Here are two examples of this new breed.

Juice™ Software, www.juicesoftware.com Release 3.0

Juice is a sophisticated data gathering tool. The data can be retrieved from any application that you have access to — either internally generated with databases and spreadsheets, or external to the company that you access over the Internet. Juice collects a variety of data that you analyze with spreadsheets or word processing. If the data changes on a timed or random basis, your application can be set to retrieve the current data, update your analysis and then repeat the process at any time interval you set. As a result, your review process always will start with the most current data.

Using the application allows you to create Excel spreadsheets, for example, containing data from external sources like data management and transactional applications. The information is continuously updated in the MS Office application, and changes made within the Office environment are pushed to the original source. Juice also can deliver XML-tagged data into and out of Office applications.

Specific retrieval can be done by a single query or many queries strung together to form a building block of what-if scenarios and conditional models. For more sophisticated users, the Juice application can find and execute

Web-based services, using data it extracts from MS Word or Excel.

With Juice, CPAs can create analytical tool sets to be used over and over again. For example, if the business is in the financial services industry, there are many securities market indicators. Gathering this information and matching the data to the company's internal databases can provide a proactive analysis that can be generated daily, hourly or each minute. Juice can create reports and operational monitoring using your existing data. The use and reuse of existing analytical models and reports can enable the sharing of documents across one or more offices.

This tool is typically most useful and cost-effective for the medium- to large-scale enterprise.

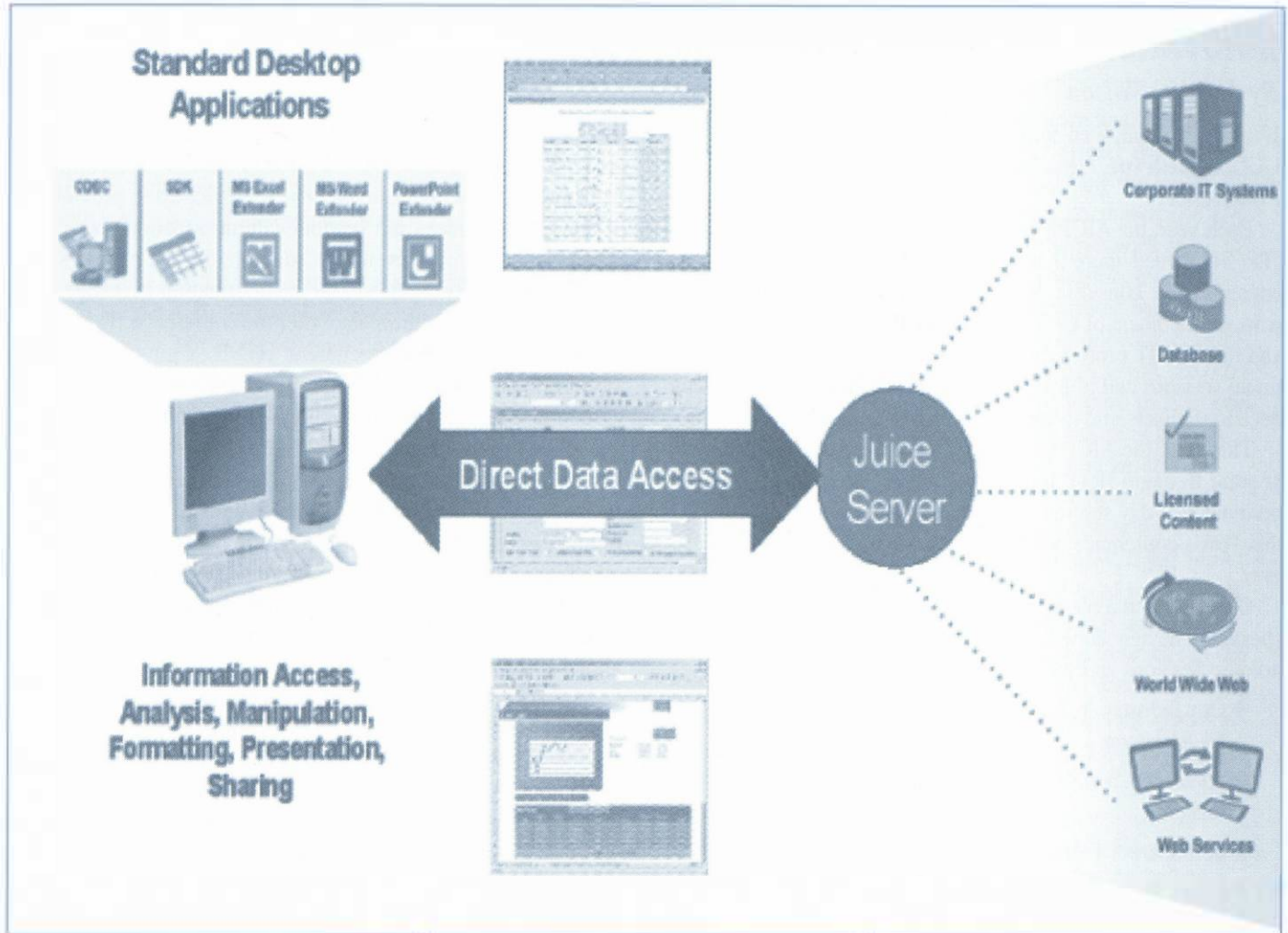
Six Degrees, www.creo.com/sixdegrees Version 1.5

Six Degrees creates a database of links to documents and email, and then keeps that database synchronized on a continuous basis. One of the cool elements of Six Degrees is that it creates permanent links to individual files so that the task of accessing a name, task or date can be collated for your review. This facility decreases the amount of time spent using the search feature of Windows Explorer, and most of the time you spend searching can be reallocated to other tasks inside or outside the office.

Six Degrees builds a comprehensive database of important data. The concept for use is similar to a Google search with less document volume. When you need that image, PowerPoint or contract, Six

continued on page 9

Managing Information Breaks Ground With New Options *continued from page 8*



Degrees is designed to provide multiple search paths to get to the right document.

The Six Degrees interface is called the Legend, which helps create the database of links to files and then automatically categorizes each new document. When you search for connected information, Six Degrees helps you navigate through your selected hard drive(s) and automatically shows the related items.

There are three ways to establish filters when accessing files through Six Degrees — Time, Relevance and Sequence.

- ◆ **Time:** Selects all the messages and files received in the last time period

identified by hour, date or a range between two dates.

- ◆ **Relevance:** When files are retrieved, you can request the most frequently accessed files first. Based on the volumes, this can provide a quick way to the right file.
- ◆ **Sequence:** Six Degrees can sort alphabetically or in any other format you want. The program does not require a complete folder string to obtain the one file you are seeking.

This program runs on Windows 2000/XP or Macintosh OSX desktop, and connects to MS Outlook 2000/XP

or MS Exchange. Typically, Six Degrees would be used by one individual or a small group that normally shares files.

Applications that enable better use of the continuous data cycles to gather, store, analyze and review are important. We used to collect only what we could touch from within our own companies. Now, the wide world of data resources (Internet) hosts an endless supply of more useful and better data for us to review to support the decision-making process.

Contact Richard Oppenheim at roppenheim@identirisk.com.



INNOVATIONS ABOUND WHILE TRADITIONS REMAIN

By Jennifer Wilson

Jennifer Wilson, a co-founder of ConvergenceCoaching, LLC, in Bellevue, Neb., is chair of the TECH 2003 Conference.

Each year, the AICPA Information Technology Conference (TECH) attracts more than 500 accounting technologists engaged in IT consulting or internal IT work. TECH attendees, who are members of CPA firms, non-CPA firm IT consultants and industry IT professionals, gather to attend a bevy of educational sessions and to network with other technology consulting decision-makers and influencers just like themselves.

This year, the AICPA TECH 2003 Conference returns to the popular Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, Nev., June 23-25, with optional half-day sessions held on June 22. Without a doubt, this year's conference promises to be our best and most fun ever.

Offering both a blend of new and nationally recognized speakers, the agenda will cover the most pressing issues in technology. Sessions and speakers include, among others:

- ◆ Our Industry in Transition: An Insider's Perspective — Al Anderson
- ◆ Leading Change: How to Compete on Clarity — Bill Jensen
- ◆ Tomorrow's Technologies — Rick Richardson
- ◆ Linux Business Opportunities — Dr. Bob Spencer
- ◆ Security Essentials — Lisa Traina
- ◆ Security Audit Assessments: Internally and for Clients — David Cieslak
- ◆ Profitability and Financial Metrics in Consulting — Taylor Macdonald
- ◆ Pay and Performance Measurements — Bellann Morales
- ◆ Developing Leaders — Sandra Gamble
- ◆ Burying the Billable Hour — Ron Baker

In addition to an excellent line-up of speakers and breakout sessions, we are bringing back one of last year's most requested events: the Vendor Walking Tour session. This session features a guided tour across the trade show floor in one of three areas of interest: consulting, CPA firm software (practice management) and technology.

As chair of the conference planning committee, it has been my pleasure to coordinate the efforts of a committee comprised of technology professionals in public accounting, IT consulting,

and business and industry, and to work with them to develop a number of innovations. One of these is our new conference Web site — www.cpatechconf.com — dedicated to providing prospective attendees and vendors with information about TECH and associated events. In addition, the site provides our TECH community a place to go for information exchange and networking before, during and after the conference. The site features the conference brochure in HTML, a growing list of resources, community building tools and the exhibitor list.

In addition, we have an exciting new "guerilla" scavenger group we're calling the "TECH Extreme Team" led by two of our planning committee members, Susan Bradley and Joe Schendel. They are putting together a series of exercises and online discussion forums on "Streaming Business Workflow" and "Firm Best Practices" that Extreme Team participants will engage in before and during the conference. It is an ambitious, value-add to those who register to be one of only 50 firms allowed to join this inaugural group.

TECH wouldn't be "TECH" unless there were plans for organized fun. On Sunday, June 22, we're planning an optional visit to see Blue Man Group, which we thought appropriate given their participation in a certain technology vendor's advertisements. On Monday, June 23, the Conference's Gold sponsors will host the Opening Reception and Vendor Display, and on Tuesday, June 24, conference attendees will have an open evening to attend the various vendor hospitality receptions that have become a conference tradition. And, of course, you'll have a chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones throughout the conference's many breaks, lunches and unstructured activities.

Contact Jennifer Wilson at jen@convergencecoaching.com. 

AICPA TECH Conference

June 23–25, 2003

Optional Pre-conference Sessions:
June 22

Bellagio Hotel, Las Vegas

For more information, call 888-777-7077
or visit www.cpatechconf.com

E-BITZ

E-BITZ focuses on practical applications of various technologies to enhance a practice or business.

E-BITZ WITH SUSAN BRADLEY

How to Build a Paperless System

The infamous tagline for a popular bug spray, “Roaches check in, but they don’t check out!” describes how I feel about my firm — “Paper enters our firm, but it doesn’t ever leave!”

Because national, state and local governments require much longer document maintenance periods than in the past, all of us are facing issues of long-term storage and document management. To address both the retention and storage process, our firm recently installed a high-speed scanner, and we are now beginning to migrate our firm documents into more of an electronic format.

No matter what shape you’re in with respect to document management, here are some of the considerations we looked at to help us make decisions on technology and software.

First and foremost, document imaging makes you think about how your firm processes paper, who documents that processing and who processes that paper. Traditionally we have files and folders that requires someone to poke holes in the top of that paper and “tack” it down with metal fasteners. Instead of this manual process, we look to computers and storage media to perform that process for us. There are several ways you can do this, and depending on your firm’s structure and processes, you have many options to determine the best method that works for your environment. The information on which I base the decisions in my office may not work for you. In addition, your choices will have ripple affects within your organization, so involve representatives from all parts of your organization in making the decision.

In my firm, we perform “traditional” accounting and “specialty consulting.” As a result, paperless office solutions that are built around a predefined “audit” workpaper product or “tax” engagement software were deemed a bit too limiting for us. These systems traditionally build an “electronic” binder on your server systems. You then launch this desktop application to file and store Microsoft Word, Excel and Adobe Acrobat .pdf documents. While these types of systems are perfect for a more “structured” firm environment, it was not flexible enough for our “boutique” style of firm. I also wanted to have an easy learning curve and use types of tools with which we were already familiar.

We went with a method that was more flexible. First, we leased a network-based copier/scanner/printer that has the ability to scan to .pdf or .tif image files. Using the freely available Acrobat Reader, we view these documents on any computer. The scanner is attached to the network and assigned an IP address just like our network computers, and can be set up as an Internet-based printer because it accepts IPP protocol. The system scans in documents and emails them directly from the keypad. Lastly, it can scan to a FTP site on our server — the primary method to scan documents and move them into our server and filing system.

As a recent recipient of a Global Security Essentials Certificate, I would be remiss if I didn’t point out some security issues that just arose. I merely installed a copier/scanner/printer into my firm’s network, right? How could installing a scanner affect the security of my network? In setting up this device, I made decisions that absolutely affected the integrity and security of my systems. First, I did not set up this printer to be accessible for Internet printing. I also adjusted the Simple Network Management Protocol String (SNMP) that was set up as “public,” a known, potential security issue, discussed in detail at [SNMP Vulnerabilities, www.sans.org/lrr/threats/SNMP.php](http://SNMPVulnerabilities.www.sans.org/lrr/threats/SNMP.php).

While I set it up to allow for “anonymous ftp” posting to my firm’s internal FTP site, this server is located behind a firewall on a private IP. The scanner did not contain a “maintenance” dial in port, but you should be aware that some models do contain modems that could introduce unwanted “back doors” into your network. Bottom line: In today’s environment, it is *imperative* that we think of the security issues when adding functionality to our networks.

The next concern focuses on backing up and restoring. The perception is that electronic media is not as dependable as paper. Yet, you can ensure redundancies in electronic media that just cannot be done as efficiently or as cheaply if you rely on paper. Never skimp on servers or on tape backups. Have a rotation schedule and take tapes offsite. For additional archiving, prices of DVD-RWs are decreasing every day, as are snap servers and disk imaging to hard drives.

In a paper environment, you traditionally have one copy. That’s it. That copy can be damaged while in storage. While things can happen no matter what method you use, the ability to make multiple copies of electronic media is much

continued on back page

