



WIN MORE CLIENTS

Become more client- centric

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As accounting technicians, you have prime access to data and most importantly, invaluable skills that enable you to become a trusted advisor to your business owner client. You need a clear understanding of how businesses work.

This puts you right out front in terms of the best person to help your clients to make the most of the technology available to deliver timely, accurate and valuable cloud accounting to the client. To build trust and a relationship that can further develop your value to the client, requires a client-centric approach.

This is the path for accounting technicians to reposition themselves as people who can add value through strategic advice, using data collected from clients. The emphasis of the client relationship moves away from compliance towards advice.



Is the client a good fit for your expertise?

The key is to build a rapport with the prospect. There are times when you have to listen to your gut. When a prospect is very demanding and does not appreciate the value of the services that you are providing, there are times when you need to simply decline the project and let them know this is not a good fit. It is difficult for the inexperienced accounting technician to say “no” to a prospect, but sometimes it is necessary. Experience will refine your gut instincts in this regard.

You can create a good experience for a potential client by listening to their needs and demonstrating your expertise by offering solutions to their problems. Remember to provide examples of similar clients you have worked with and the similar issues you helped them solve. These discussions will naturally build trust with a new client and win their business.

Set yourself up for success in the long term by establishing strong relationships with your clients. One of the more contemporary ways to enrol yourself as a potential trusted advisor is to demonstrate deep knowledge of the eco system of accounting software and the various choices available in SaaS products. Many business owners are not very tech savvy, there are opportunities to help them set up their accounting in ways that help their businesses in other areas.



Know your client better

Ask and listen

More often than not when you meet a prospect for the first time, they have no idea who you are. It's important to lay out a foundation of trust. There are some steps you can take to go from a warm lead to a long-term client relationship.

It is simple yet often absent from the first encounter but a 'pitch' can work wonders in setting the stage for a trusting relationship. Tell them up front of your different support options, and the manner in which you would work with them. Be sure to tell them of other projects you have worked on should you have done work in their industry.

Ask and listen

Understand what the client needs. You can show that you are interested in gaining their business by mentioning that you visited their website. A good rule of thumb is to verify what you gleaned from the website by confirming the industry they are in. Never assume anything.

If the meeting is remote, choose a format like Zoom so that you can be seen to take notes and are able to listen out for their pain points. Find out where they are today and what they are seeing as the vision of their business. Here, position yourself as an expert – to solve the problems.

Be proactive

In short, once you have identified some of the issues, including compliance issues, present solutions. You may not at this stage have any real idea as to the depths of the problems so bets always to take a conservative approach is setting expectations. There will be opportunities along the way for a deeper dive to fully understand their needs. Explain what this process may look like.

Customer intimacy



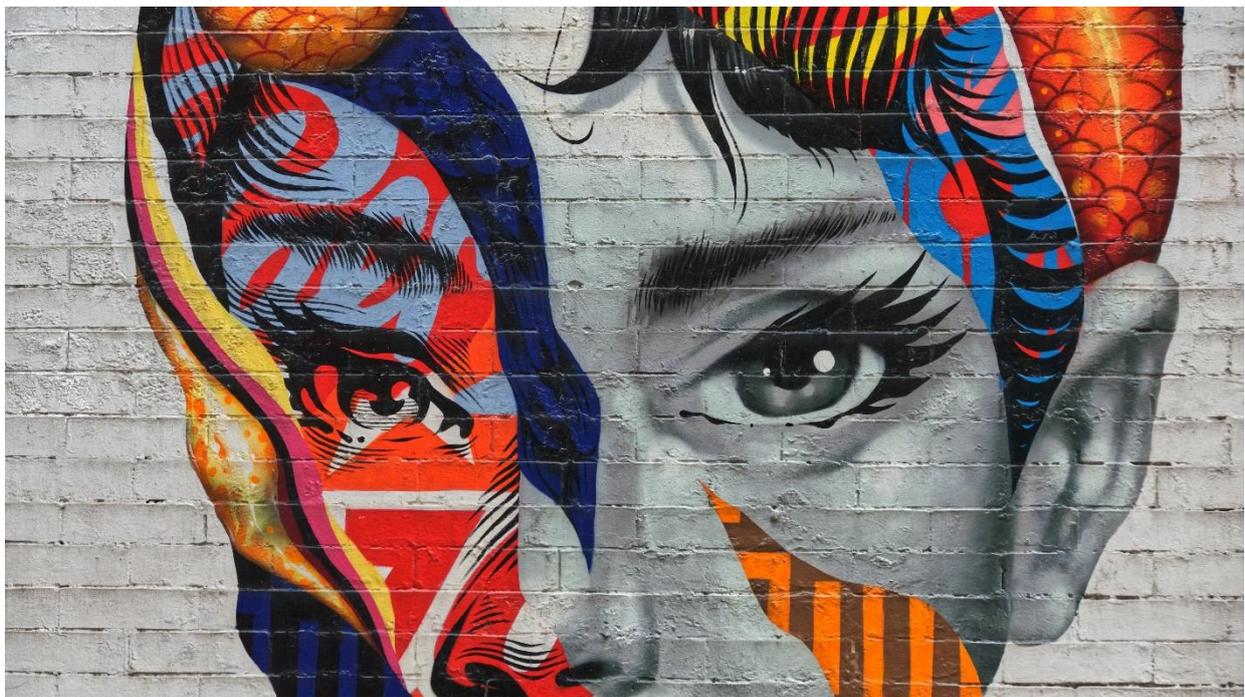
Rather than making you a remote contractor, digitalisation can greatly increase the potential 'touch points' between clients. Whereas traditionally, there may have been a quarterly visit, now there are abundant touch points available which can build 'intimacy' in your dealing with the business owner. Accounting technicians not only gain greater insight into their

customers' businesses and goals but also help the customers to achieve these goals. By spending more time with clients, accounting technicians learn how their businesses work, as well as what their business, and even personal, goals are.

Specialisation is a value generator

Your strengths can lead you to specialisation. By focussing on clients at deeper levels (more touch points) you inevitably gain depth of knowledge of the business and the industry category in which they operate. Understanding and playing to your strengths as a practice is very important and allows you to deliver value-based services from a common template. This can extend the reach of the practice beyond its geographical base.

Service offerings that target businesses in a specific market or industry segment can be offered without the need for face-to-face meetings, and instead rely on virtual communication.



Become business finance savvy. You need to make sure you understand the numbers, because your clients definitely won't. You are the expert when it comes to numbers – it's your job. But you need to make sure that you truly understand the numbers behind every business.

You should be able to look at ratio analysis, trends in gross profit margins, the core numbers in a set of accounts, the last 5 years balance sheets and P&L accounts, and from that draw a

bigger picture of the business. This is an area that requires more homework on your part. You can get a copy of our [Guide to Small Business Finance](#) [here](#) (for subscribers)

It is n understanding of the numbers that can lead to higher value services (and services which the client does not see as pesky compliance costs). It is the a first step of building a business advisory solution is to understand the numbers, and systematically measure the numbers of your clients' businesses so You can spot opportunities to help them

Communicate more often



Here we are delving into marketing of your services. Many accounting technicians tend to see this as selling which is often a bit uncomfortable. But really it's semantics: treat the act of offering higher value services as important for the business and simple another means of building the relationship. Remember you are the first line of contact for a business owner and their accounting needs.

It's not about selling: it's about meeting a need

Demonstrate how the numbers show a need for monitoring and reporting. Identify trouble spots by using forecasting models. Bottom line improvements of course are the most effective method of selling higher value services.

Why technology is so important

So much of our lives and so much of a business activity is enhanced by technology. Indeed the accounting software industry has been at the forefront of enabling rapid adoption of technology into accounting and accounting technology. SME clients are now much more digitally aware of what could be potentially available to them and their business. With cloud accounting adoption and the app-ecosystem so dominant now across the SME and accounting sector, it is important that you are viewed as competent and current in technology and the app ecosystem.

For sure there may be challenges with legacy issues and compatibility with your software and a client's accounting software continues to grow, we expect the accounting profession to become a hub for businesses to ask questions about what's possible. This can be backed up with proper training, which providers should offer as a matter of course.

Promoting technology to clients is a ready means of gaining bonus revenue through integrations services and the added value mentioned earlier, of forecasting tools as a case in point

Creating the perfect App Advisory service for clients means many avenues will need to be explored and considered. The main areas we see firms excel in the most include:

System integration as a revenue stream

As noted earlier, system integration is now de reguer for a new client. In the context of our work here, that is, in building a closer relationship with the client, we use this because of the amount of time and knowledge that goes into this service offering. Above all, it creates high-level value offering for your clients, creating a brand new revenue stream for your firm or a chance to increase pricing for those already charging.

Credit Control as a service offering

Accounts receivables are the bane of many small businesses and present themselves to accounting technicians as an opportunity – again – to deepen the relationship. This are is often referred to as credit control because there is a potential failing amongst many small business owners where they take on customers with due diligence in credit control. In larger businesses this is an area where intensive structuring that incudes credit scoring, credit references and the life are conducted. In these area there is less due diligence.

How do your clients manage their credit control? Do they even know their debtor days? With 50% of businesses being cash-flow negative, it would point towards improved credit control processes being a key aspect of a small business cash-flow improvement.

Here, technology can be the vital tool in the accounting technician's repertoire. It is almost standard in accounting software packages utilising credit control apps which can link into the sales ledger and automate the pre and post-follow-up of sales invoices based on invoice due dates.

It is a reliable growth area where accounting technicians can use the accounting software to utilising the external specialist apps for example, for invoice approval. Now, the era emerging of wallet-style payment systems, there is more at stake in terms of number of transactions and payment security. The role of the accounting technician is identifying some options for your clients then ensuring that they can integrate with your cloud accounting software making our and your client's processing life easier.

You don't need to see yourself as an advisor



With every business advisory project you take on, it's really important that you know your client really well. You need to know their challenges and frustrations, their dreams, goals and aspirations, and what is stopping them from getting there. You can be their trusted advisor: you do need to be confident of that positioning. In introducing yourself to the client and building in the assessment of their needs you are already acting as an advisor

In time, advisory services may have a huge effect on your top line profits, but more importantly, your bottom line profits will see a significant impact as well. You just need to work out what the recurring work will be on a monthly basis.

In building deeper relationships, it's helpful to work on a template driven basis addressing the following (type) questions:

- What reports do you need to create?
- How many meetings will you have with your client?
- What are you aiming to do for your client each month?

It's a rule of thumb to make sure that any contractor who work for you are fully informed of what is going to happen and kept updated on progress. Use social media and tools such as Zoom and Slack for communications as two-way so that people can share their concerns and experiences and support each other .

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