

Expanding accountancy client base: lessons learned 1/35/20

This article offers a brief insight into our experience.

Acting as a financial consultant

On the face of it, the accounting service appears to be a simple and monotonous process – keeping financial records, making calculations, preparing reports and filing them with competent authorities. Does it matter who is doing this job? What difference does it make if the job is done by an in-house accountant, by another large company, or by a local accounting service provider?

Over time, we have found that what matters is the consulting function. Every accountant can keep financial records and prepare statutory reports, but only a few can be valuable advisers and problem-solvers. For example, the added value available from PwC is our wide range of accountants, tax consultants, lawyers and other experts – we are able to find a solution to any problem our customers might face.

We keep working on the automation of our internal processes, including the accounting function. The optimisation and automation allow us to devote more time to the consulting function, and we can offer our accounting services at more competitive prices.

Now, is it our accounting service or the advice we provide, say, on tax planning that our customer is going to appreciate first and foremost? The customer will probably appreciate the consultant's time and if the advice is valuable, the customer will definitely remember it as a welcome experience.

For just about any company, the most valuable customer is an existing one, because winning new customers is an expensive and slow process. Advice representing added value for the company's services will definitely help it retain customers.

Specialising and being competent in a particular industry

As the complexity of today's business world is increasing, data, analytics, specialisation and experience are becoming more and more industry-specific. Each accounting professional is expected to understand general economic, commercial and accounting principles, yet an accountant that knows a bit of everything will not be so useful as one that specialises in a particular industry. Such industry specialisation in addition to the usual processes makes it possible to automate and optimise industry-specific processes in accounting and data analytics.

Picking the right technology

Almost everyone has heard that accountants have to adopt and master new technologies. We are increasingly hearing keywords such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain, cloud, and robotic process automation, as well as how these technologies might in theory transform the accounting industry.

While accounting is definitely being affected by these technologies, the transition is not going to happen in

one fell swoop – this will be a slow and gradual process, not a revolution. What this means is that we do not have to hurry to invest in expensive technologies that have not yet proved their efficiency in practice. Each potential investment should be assessed in a cost-benefit analysis – what value will this new product bring? Will the likely benefits be perceived at once? Does the investment involve any intangible costs/benefits?

Accounting companies that understand the value brought by the technological approach coupled with business advice will appreciate the benefit from optimised accounting processes and happier customers. The right technology just makes your company and your human capital function more efficient.

Entrusting all accounting tasks to robots is not a realistic solution. While automated tools can help us perform simple tasks, technology will never replace the accountant as a professional and a consultant. Technology should be used to improve and ease the work for us and our colleagues. We should first encourage the use of digital tools among our colleagues and then search for the best solutions to provide support to our accounting customers.

More details of practical accounting automation can be found in MindLink Flash News.