



PAPERLESS OFFICE FOR CPA FOR UNDER \$1,000

Considering what CPAs are being asked to pay for pre-packaged paperless solutions for their offices, the title of this article is quite radical. Since the title and what is discussed here is based on actual experience of the author, it is alright for it to get some media attention.

Most CPA practices these days have a small office network in place to handle the operations of the business. Rather, it is almost impractical for them to be operating without some kind of a computer network in their offices. Most CPAs and accountants also efile their clients' tax returns and so they need a reliable internet connection in their office. Unbeknownst to them, CPAs have over 90% of what they need to go paperless, at least on the hardware and the software side.

CPAs have almost all the hardware and software needed, in their office, to convert their practice into a paperless practice. Almost means close to 90%. However, they need to build up another asset to be able to go paperless in a very short time. The asset they need has to be built in house and cannot be purchased. They have to first recognize the extreme importance of the need to go paperless and then develop a strong determination to do so within a short time and limited budget.

Recognition of the importance of going paperless is the major hurdle facing the accounting industry at this time. Many CPAs are still waiting on the sidelines to watch how this trend evolves. Generally, that is not a very bad strategy. Not all trends become permanent in any industry and so a lot of times it is good to wait a little before getting on the bandwagon. However, paperless movement has been building momentum over a long period of time. In fact, it probably has been in discussions for over a decade. There have been some early adopters who benefited from it. It has not become a general trend yet in accounting industry, other professional services industry and business in general. But there are signs that it is picking up speed.

It is during the last few years that the capacity of the technology, that is being used in accounting offices, like other businesses, has increased tremendously at very affordable prices. Until a few years ago, going paperless in an accounting office was a major undertaking as it would require upgrading of hardware and software in a significant way. Now, there is no need to upgrade. If the hardware was purchased during the last 2-3 years, it probably has adequate capacity and speed to handle a paperless office without much upgrading.

In that case, a typical small CPA firm just needs to add a couple of scanners at \$300 each and a PDF converter software that can be purchased for about a \$100 these days. A strong commitment to go paperless and a determination to get it done within a given time frame is short in supply and is not available with any hardware or software vendor.

It is a very strange phenomenon. The technology is available and the need is there and yet most small CPA practices are not paperless, and one would hope that they are at least thinking about going paperless sometime soon. Why shouldn't they go paperless if they could do it within a \$1,000 of additional hardware and software?