SuiteFiles

It doesn't have to be (this) hard

A 4-point guide to making the next end of financial year better than the last

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The biggest EOFY stressors

Long hours, night shifts, and time away from friends and family can come with the territory during the end of financial year (EOFY). The difference between an efficient practice and a lagging one are how long the hours are, how late the accountants find themselves working, and the degree to which they've become social hermits. If it was all a bit too much this year, you're likely making things harder than they need to be. In this guide we'll show you how you can better manage the EOFY using some proven strategies our customers have applied.

What are the biggest EOFY stressors?

Time-consuming administrative tasks

An extra 10 minutes here and there to complete a task can usually be forgiven but not when you suddenly become time poor and the pressure to deliver to deadlines is on. Simple jobs like manually entering data and maintaining information between apps can amount to 1 day (7 hours) a week for an accounting practice.[1] Seeing as the EOFY takes place over a month, that's around 4 days lost during the most critical time of the year! Making up for this lost time often means compensating with late hours and an obscene sleep schedule that'd make a gravedigger blush.

The last thing you need during an already stressful period is to be losing hours and time to rest before the next big day. Working this way increases the chance of making errors as well as the risk of burnout.

Collecting client information

Clients aren't always as responsive as you need them to be — especially during time-critical periods like the EOFY. In a survey of 430 accounting practices, it was found that obtaining documents and data from clients was the top challenge for 74% of practices.[2] It's a statistic that makes sense given you're relying on an external party that's largely out of your control. While you can be selective with the clientele you take on, set up channels for comms, and set expectations as early as possible, there's no guarantee that you'll receive crucial items like bank statements, inventory records, and payroll information in a timely manner.

How to make the EOFY more manageable

Standardize as many practices/workflows as possible

To work faster, you'll need to remove as much uncertainty from your day to day as possible. This means anything that could be interpreted differently by a colleague has to be standardized and documented so they can follow suit. One method could be creating templates for all your standard documents so all of your communications as a practice are consistent. For example, documents like workpapers, engagement letters, and terms and conditions. Anything which is 90% the same minus the client details can be turned into a template to save time and ensure consistency. Next time you need to send that template out you'll be able to simply input the relevant information and move forward with the next job on the agenda. Heading into the next EOFY you'll also be able to edit your existing templates with any new legislation that's been passed rather than starting from scratch.

Get started with some client-ready email templates

Use a digital signing tool to collect signatures

Reducing the time between gaining signatures and lodgment makes for a much smoother end of financial year. The best way to do this is to have a digital signature solution in place so you can send requests out directly to clients and have them digitally sign without making them jump through hoops like printing, scanning, and physically signing. A comprehensive solution will allow you to set reminders, so the chasing up is done on your behalf and you're not drawn away from other pressing tasks. During time-critical periods, a digital signing solution will help you collect what you need with minimal supervision or follow-up.

Limit the double handling of information

Having your information spread across different systems or taking up physical space in a filing cabinet costs you efficiencies. For starters, you're opening the door for user error as data has to be transferred between systems and could be compromised during the process. Secondly, you're adding an unnecessary chore into what is already a hectic period. In fact, 61% of surveyed Australian practices and 82% of their New Zealand counterparts need to manually check data is correct or fix it after transferring between systems.[3] Remove this stressor by first scanning any paper documents into a document management system. From there, you should be making sure your apps integrate well and that there's no need for user intervention to ensure the quality of your data. This is no easy feat, but it's one that many practices are taking on with 48% of small practices and 35% of large practices surveyed identifying automatic data syncing across platforms as a top priority.[4] Think of what your day would look like without having to worry about the quality of your data! Once you've cut out double handling from your day, you'll be treated with up-to-date information and improved governance for your business.

Organize your files for improved navigation

Unkempt client folders can get you into serious trouble during the busiest time of the year. The time spent looking for files adds up quickly and can be seriously frustrating for clients if they've requested something from you and are left to wait. A survey of 150 U.S. based accountants found that 79% of them spend too much time tracking down files in their practice.[5] You can avoid being part of a similar statistic by having practice-wide guidelines about how documents are stored. This includes saving files and emails into a centralized location so you have a record of your client history and any advice you've provided. You'll also want to declutter your system and archive prior year's folders so there's less information to sort through. The end result is faster file navigation.

Taking charge of the next EOFY

Let's review the steps you should take before heading into the next EOFY

Limit double handling of information
Centralize your business information and ensure your apps are integrated so you're always working with quality data and can better manage your files.

Standardize workflows
Remove any uncertainty around your business processes using tools like templates to standardize workflows.

Use a digital signing tool
Gather signatures from your clients faster by sending requests directly to their inbox and automating follow up.

Improve your file navigation
Shave down the time spent looking for files by keeping a documented record of your client history and archiving older folders for faster navigation.

Once you've mastered these steps, you'll be able to focus on what matters next EOFY and enjoy a less hectic busy season. It may also pay to consider some projects like:

Revisiting pricing structures for clients
This is your chance to assess your client profitability and ensure you have the appropriate terms, conditions, and payment structures.

Prepping tax planning
Accountants are likely used to the client who isn't happy with their tax bill. Plan in advance for this tough customer and consider their tax position so you can advise on tax strategies and forecast what the expected tax bill will be.

Introducing advisory services
As the keeper of your client's financial data, you have huge amounts of knowledge and insight that can help them grow their business. If you're well resourced enough why not add an additional revenue stream.

SuiteFiles

SuiteFiles is the secret to supercharging your accounting firm

Our powerful and intuitive digital workspace is the perfect solution for overcoming your business' biggest challenges thanks to our seamless document and email management, secure client portal, vast integrations, task management, digital signing, and so much more.

Book a demo to see how SuiteFiles can make your EOFY easier than convincing your clients that, yes, EOFY does come at the same time every year.

Book a demo

www.suitefiles.com

Sources:

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3. The Digital Disconnection Challenge
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