Less admin. More advisory.

Everything you need to know to take your accountancy practice to the next level
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Ready to do less admin, and give more advice?
The best decisions are based on facts and figures. Who better to advise on these than an accountant?

It’s been vital for the accounting profession to adapt to changes in the economy, regulations, and technology. With those changes comes the need to continuously act as an integral part of your client’s business, guiding them through their business cycle rather than simply supporting on an ad hoc basis. The role of an accountant has never been more critical.

CHAPTER ONE

Be your clients’ CFO

The modern accountant is having a moment

You’re the first port of call when it comes to setting up shop, especially for questions on tax, compliance, and liabilities. You’re a client’s very own trusted advisor for their business questions.

The advice you give in the early stages opens the door to what’s possible. But in many cases, there comes a point when the business grows to a size where it may need a dedicated in-house finance team or need you to act as a virtual finance director. Sound familiar?
Why advisory?
Do more of the work that matters

If you think giving strategic advice sounds like more work, it’s not. As an experienced accountant, you already speak the language. In fact, you have probably built up a bank of knowledge that your clients aren’t currently benefiting from.

Less admin, more advisory is about re-prioritising your workload, so you have more opportunities to grow your practice, and your clients get the counsel they need to expand their businesses.

As their accountant, you are one of your client’s biggest advocates when they’re just starting out. If they have a question about setting up their business, you are their first port of call. But the kind of advice needed at this stage, like how to open a business bank account, is pretty accessible online.

But later in the business growth lifecycle, your client may need an accountant who can support them with expansion or succession planning. There aren’t many services that are as important as this.

Industry insights\(^1\) show that small and medium-sized business owner think more positively about accountants who offer advisory services. These trailblazing accountants are deemed to be more trustworthy, communicative, and insightful when it comes to financial planning and advice.

\(^1\) IFAC - Insights on Small Firm Specialization with an Enhanced Focus on Business Advisory Services
Accountants still have a vital role to play as their clients’ companies mature.

As a business grows, accountants will still be needed to undertake critical assessments such as cash flow, forecasting, and liability planning. This information can be used to help clients achieve their current and future ambitions.

In this eBook, we’ll chart the five different phases of the business lifecycle and explain how you can help your clients make better decisions at every stage.
Adding value

How to add value to a client’s business throughout their organisation’s lifecycle

These days, small business owners expect a wide range of services from their accountants. As a result, it’s more common for accountants to provide a variety of advisory services to improve profitability and scale their clients’ businesses.
### Phase 1:
**Setting up shop**

When starting a new business, there are lots of steps your client will need expert advice on. Without this counsel, a businessperson could end up in trouble with the taxman or tangled in red tape.

As the accountant, it’s your job to guide the client through their first year in business as they reach those crucial early milestones. How you guide them is up to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admin</th>
<th>Advice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicate the differences between business structures and point them in the direction for more information.</td>
<td>Give expert recommendations for choosing the right business structure that’s best for the client’s organisation, their long-term goals, and current situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with opening a business bank account and general tips for keeping an eye on cashflow.</td>
<td>Assessing the financial viability of a client’s business plan. As the accountant, you can help your clients interpret the numbers from balance sheets, income statements, cashflow statements, operating budgets, and do a break-even analysis to determine if the business will be profitable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure the business is set up to be compliant. Make sure that the accounting procedures comply with government regulations and mitigate the risk of non-compliance.</td>
<td>Provide advice on the type of accounting software a client needs that best fits their business now and into the future, based on your projections.</td>
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Phase 2:  
Time to optimise

Your client is happy. They just set up their own business, and they’re riding the wave of finally being their own boss. They even have a few repeat customers.

In this phase, measuring performance is key, as it allows business directors to identify areas of opportunity and improvement. This is where the finessing happens. New directors will be worried about developing a business model that is profitable in the long run.

This is the time for your client to really seize the moment to ensure that the business grows into the next phase. As a registered accountant and financial adviser, you can help with the following:

**Admin**

- Explain financial statements to your client so they can understand the ins and outs of their business.

- Oversee company payrolls. Payroll can be a complex and challenging part of running a business, and the fines and potential liabilities associated with getting it wrong can be significant.

**Advice**

- Run the numbers. Analyse your client’s financial statements to provide key insights on operational inefficiencies and deviances within the business. This way, you can all sleep better knowing that your client has made informed decisions based on the figures. These statements can also be used to create cashflow projections.

- Help clients understand RTI submissions, statutory payments, pension, and retention/reward package costs. Payroll can help make a significant contribution to the business’ future growth ambitions if managed right.
**Phase 3: Operation Grow**

This is the phase where all of the pieces start to come together for your client. They’ve had a taste of success on a small scale. They’ve made a name for themselves. It’s time to grow.

There may be a need to hire more employees or even acquire more capital. More money flowing in means more to account for.

Key decisions need to be made at this stage, and a regulated accountant can provide the following:

**Admin**

- Prepare your clients for their first statutory accounts.
- Raise the prospect of leasing or buying property and equipment.
- Help clients obtain their first business loan. Or source additional funds to grow.

**Advice**

- Analyse expenses and find ways to improve cashflow management, reduce debt, negotiate with suppliers, control costs, budget and forecast, optimise pricing, and streamline reporting, to facilitate better decision making (like whether to divest or invest).
- Help your client navigate lease or purchase agreements that work for their long-term goals. Guide them on their business planning strategy. Would they like to defer or accelerate income? Push expenses through or hold off? Or maybe they’d prefer to open a retirement account. What measures can help them lower their tax liabilities and save money?
- Do some digging to find out how your client’s company ranks within their industry. Pinpoint their USPs, the things that will give them a competitive edge for growth. This can support their marketing team with their communications strategy.
Phase 4:
Scale up

It’s the moment you’ve all been waiting for. It’s time to scale up. Psst... Scaling isn’t necessarily the same as growing.

Scaling a business means setting the stage to enable and support continued growth in a company as it matures. It means having the ability to increase revenues without a substantial increase in resources.

Whereas with growth, your client will likely need an increasing number of resources. This phase will look different to each of your customers, depending on their industry. But the same steps and principles will generally apply.

Scaling requires planning and some funding, as well as the right systems, staff, processes, technology, and partners. And you, as their accountant, can help them acquire these things without biting off more than they can chew.
In the case that your client doesn’t have the capital to scale, you’ll need to point them in the right direction of information that might help them identify sources for funding.

Help your client source external funding. Manage cashflow through forecasting. Provide granular insight and visibility into their finances to ensure that they have enough capital to scale. Proper financial reporting will help investors have confidence in your client’s business, which will help your client raise money and keep investors on board for the long run.

Offer strategic support that will help your client’s workforce grow by providing people-focused financial metrics each month. Think operating profit per employee and average expense per employee. Consider how their bottom-line will benefit from hiring different roles and work out the costs of hiring, training, and paying a new employee.

As the workforce grows, your client needs to ensure that they have set up payroll correctly, including complying with government requirements for income tax, National Insurance and workplace pension.

It’s up to them to decide what sort of new hire will boost business the most.

Encourage your client to save when possible. Give them a heads up by keeping an up-to-date knowledge of tax breaks and business incentives, which will help you client save a sizable sum of money that they can reinvest to scale.

This is when things start to get real. As an experienced accountant, you know the difference between good debt and bad debt. You can help manage your client’s debts in a way that works for them. And find opportunities for them to save.

Help your client find the least-expensive borrowing strategies for their business, with the right mix of repayment flexibility and low interest. And if they need refinancing, you can help with that too. You could also advise when spare cash should be used to pay back loans, and when it should be reinvested into the business. Run the numbers, and revisit how the debt is structured to develop a tailored strategy. There’s no ‘one size fits all’ when it comes to debt.
Phase 5: Exit stage left

Winding down a business can be complex, and in some cases it’s even more complicated than starting out. Depending on the circumstances, it can also be an unsettling time for your client. At this stage, they don’t just need their accountant, they need a trusted advisor. Someone who has been there for every milestone along the way. For all the success, and the times when it was hard.

As your client prepares to hang up their many business hats, it’s up to you to help with the following:
When the worst-case scenario happens

If you provide specialist bankruptcy or insolvency service then you can also support with the following:

- Valuation and quantification of any business assets amassed over the years.
- Contribute to proceedings as a credible professional witness.
- In trickier cases, you might need to provide forensic accounts evidence.
- Take on the role of liquidator or receiver, or work with a specialist.

Admin

Remember, just because your client is shutting down their business, doesn’t mean they’re not your client anymore. You can support them through this stage by notifying their creditors. If the company is incorporated, it will need to be dissolved and its business registration cancelled.

Advice

The right advice is just as crucial for your client at this stage as it was when they were setting up shop. You can help them tie up the loose ends so that nothing comes back to bite them down the line.

Make the shutdown as stress-free as possible for your client by mapping an exit strategy. Depending on the company’s structure, your client may need to consult other stakeholders.

Figure out any outstanding tax obligations, like when and how your client will need to settle their tax tab.

Cancel any leases or mortgages on commercial properties and flag the extent of any penalties for early termination with your client.

Working backwards through the early start milestones, ensure that payroll accounts are paid out and closed, including payroll tax payments.

Track proceeds from any “going out of business” inventory sales, as well as proceeds from the sale of company assets.
Ready to do less admin, and give more advice?

QuickBooks can help you become a trailblazing accountant.
Good advice is priceless

Accountants are our people. And we know you’re busy. So here are some of the ways that QuickBooks can help you take your practice to the next level, so you can give your all to your clients.

Find extra hours in your day

We're still working on building a time machine. Until then, QuickBooks software can take on your list of to-dos, removing the admin tasks stopping you from progressing your practice and freeing you up to spend quality time with clients.

Better relationships = better decisions

Now you’re spending less time on admin, you have more time to listen to your clients’ needs. You can strengthen your relationships so they stand the test of time. Don’t forget to celebrate the wins, so they see the value in your advice. This is how you keep your seat at the table.

ProAdvisor Programme

Sign up for free to access resources that you can customise and send to your clients. These materials add value to what you do. They show your clients that you really know your stuff.

Premium pricing, premium profit

You don’t have to be an accountant to understand that increasing prices is a great way to grow a business. By providing businesses more proactive, strategic advice you can develop profitable relationships for your mutual benefit.
Find extra hours in your day
Less admin, more advisory

Don’t spend your time processing expenses. Leave the spreadsheet at home; it’s time to excel.

If your client attends a trade show or takes a customer out to dinner to sign on the dotted line, they can snap a photo of their receipt, log their expense, and even track mileage. All on our cloud-based system.

This makes expense tracking a cinch, and means you’ll spend less time chasing them for rogue receipts as you’ll be able to link them to expenses yourself.

QuickBooks financial management software also lets you keep a birds-eye view of your client portfolio. With QuickBooks Online Accountant, for example, the Client Overview feature shows all upcoming deadlines at a glance. You can even create bespoke expense reports ahead of client review meetings, especially useful for those times when expenditure needs to be reined in.
It’s your practice. Take it Pro

The QuickBooks ProAdvisor Programme is designed to help you build success on your terms – and in turn, you’ll also foster success for your clients.

*Designed for those who have no time to waste and want to get ahead of the game ASAP.*

Sign up for free access to tools, resources, and exclusive discounts, all primed to take your practice to the next level. *(Did we mention that it won’t cost you a penny?)*

With Pro in the name, you know it’s going to be good. In a nutshell, this programme will help you make quick work of the day-to-day stuff, freeing you up to focus on your strategic work.

**Here’s what happens when you go Pro.**

- Manage all your clients in one place
- File all tax updates for your clients
- Never miss a tax deadline
- Save time with smart features like automated data entry
- Prep client forecasts
- Get paid faster with smart invoicing
- Hit us up for always-on support
- Find us in the hub, where all the best guidance lives
- Work together, whenever, wherever

**As for the cons, well, there aren’t any.**
Better relationships = better decisions

It’s basic mathematics

Cloud-based accounting gives you access to the data and tools you need to advise clients anywhere, anytime. So you can deliver cashflow predictions to your clients at the click of a mouse from your home office, in transit, or your favourite beach bar.

Automating your day-to-day admin means that you can deliver more for your clients, bringing you closer together. In fact, many accountants say they soon begin to feel like part of their client’s team.

Our software puts you in the driving seat when it comes to advising clients. Packed with a range of analytical tools, it provides substantial, reliable data and insights to showcase your value.

QuickBooks’ powerful forecasting functionality helps you accurately predict a client’s cashflow over an upcoming period to avoid any nasty surprises down the line.
Premium pricing, premium profit
Every business will adjust their price points from time to time
If you got a promotion in any other company, you would expect this to be reflected in your payslip. As your role moves from traditional bookkeeping to accountant and financial advisor, it’s expected that your rates will also change. Don’t be shy about this.

Regulatory changes like Making Tax Digital present an excellent opportunity to review your pricing structures and increase profits.

With QuickBooks, you’ll be spending less time on lower-value work like chasing receipts, and more time guiding company directors on their next moves.

And as you’ll have real-time visibility on their data, you’ll be able to spot opportunities to provide even more value, increasing your worth. If a director has just taken a large dividend, for example, it might be the right time to mention wealth management options.
Why jump through hoops if you don’t have to?

Escape the admin. Embrace top-tier accountancy.

If this sounds like a bit of you, hit the big green button below to request a call back from one of our experts.