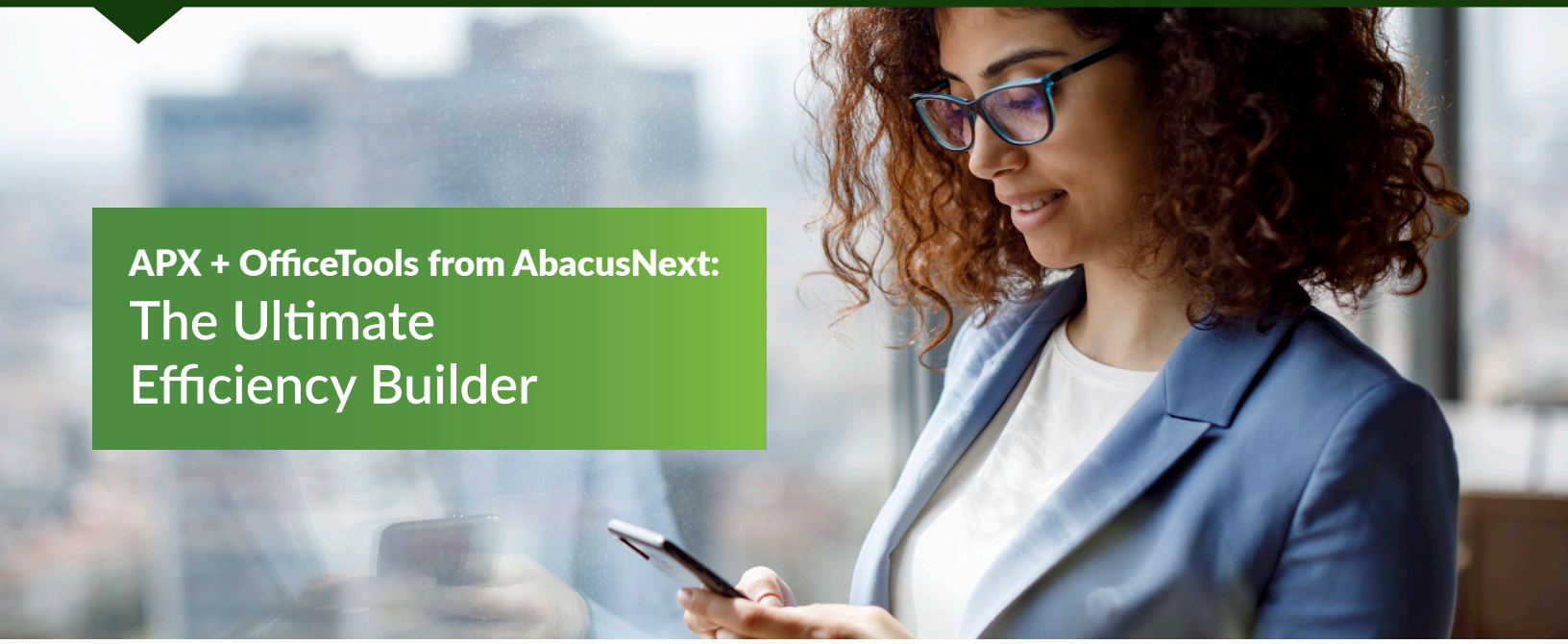

APX + OfficeTools from AbacusNext: The Ultimate Efficiency Builder

In an industry as busy as accounting and financial services, efficiency is everything.

Kristina Khano, director of operations at Forsyth Holtzman & Associates, a CPA firm in Kennesaw, Georgia, that employs 11 CPAs, knows that as well as anyone. The firm offers its roughly 1,500 clients a wide range of services, including accounting, bookkeeping, payroll tax services and audit services. "Basically, anything our clients would like to outsource to us, we happily take that on for them," explains Khano.

When you're juggling that many tasks, you need a centralized system that can help you handle them all. For Forsyth Holtzman, the answer was OfficeTools with Abacus Payment Exchange (APX) from AbacusNext. The firm opened in 2019, and it's been using OfficeTools ever since. Its accountants use it to manage all client data, all workflow processes and procedures and all billing and payments.

Khano puts it simply: "We live and breathe out of OfficeTools."

Why Choose APX + OfficeTools?

When the firm was opening its doors in 2019, it ultimately opted to use OfficeTools because it offered a complete suite of functionality. While the team considered other products, they found nothing to be as rich or comprehensive as OfficeTools. It didn't hurt that the implementation process was a breeze, since the firm was formed from two existing firms that already used OfficeTools. That meant no onboarding process was necessary – instead, the clients and their accounts were simply merged, with a little fine-tuning where necessary.

APX has always been the firm's payment processor for credit and debit cards. Because the firm has always insisted on charging client cards every month and having clients pay online for their own convenience, automated payments through APX was a perfect fit. "We encourage it, especially now that OfficeTools and APX can run automatic monthly recurring payments," explains Khano.

At a Glance

About Forsyth Holtzman & Associates

A CPA firm in Kennesaw, Georgia, that employs 11 CPAs. The firm offers its roughly 1,500 clients a wide range of services, including accounting, bookkeeping, payroll tax services and audit services.

> **"We live and breathe out of Off ceTools."**
>
> **Kristina Khano, Director of Operations**

The firm does a lot of standard billing for its clients, for example flat monthly rates or yearly quotes for bookkeeping clients, paid on a monthly basis. “The incentive for them is that they’re guaranteed to know their bill, and we’re not billing at random times,” Khano explains. “We’re just billing the quote, so they get a more predictable bookkeeping, accounting and payroll bill every month without incurring additional fees from us.”

Every December, Khano can update APX with the latest quotes and set it to run bills for specific amounts on a certain day every month. “So every third of the month, I come to work and there are 45 payments that have already been processed,” Khano says. “It helps us in terms of things not falling through the cracks, and the fact that we can manage things from a macro level is a lot easier.”

“It’s definitely an efficiency builder from a management standpoint.”

What Makes OfficeTools with APX So Great for Forsyth Holtzman

So would Khano recommend OfficeTools and APX to other firms?

“Yes, I would definitely recommend it. I’ve been in operations my entire career. I know so many of these types of software, so I know how rich this program is,” she says. “That’s what I like about OfficeTools – if we want something very customized to just our firm, we can get OfficeTools to do that for us. Other platforms just don’t have that.”

In other systems, workflows are typically prebuilt based on the assumption that everyone is looking to check a tax return, process it, e-file it and then mail it off to their client. Every tax return is not the same, however, so those limited options aren’t always enough. Forsyth Holtzman has been able to add workflow processes when unique circumstances arise or to note unforeseen delays in the system. If something is on hold waiting for information from clients, the workflow process will reflect that, so that anyone in the office can know the reason for the holdup and see exactly what’s missing, rather than thinking someone dropped the ball for some reason.

That’s what I like about OfficeTools – if we want something very customized to just our firm, we can get OfficeTools to do that for us.

“It’s very helpful,” Khano says. “At staff meetings, we’re in and out in 30 minutes. It doesn’t take us two and a half hours to ask everybody what’s going on with specific returns.”

Automated payments also allow the firm to get paid far more quickly than it did in the days of paper invoices and checks. Especially during the pandemic, waiting for clients to mail checks and then having to chase them down in an empty office would have meant a serious lag in depositing that money in the bank. With APX’s Pay Now link, clients are more likely to simply click and pay, rather than leaving an invoice lingering out there and deciding to pay it when they finally deal with the pile of paper invoices on their desk.

Khano estimates that 75% of the firm's clients pay the same day they receive the invoice with the Pay Now link, and the rest are paying within a week. "This definitely gets the money into our bank account a lot faster," she concludes.

Finally, OfficeTools and APX are huge time-savers for Khano. "I used to have to manually enter those payments every single month," she says. "It was just very time-consuming. I can tell you APX saves me an entire day of work with the addition of the new automatic payment system."

Whenever any questions arose, Khano found AbacusNext's back-end support to be very kind and helpful. "If there's ever an issue, I know all I have to do is call them and it'll be fixed in a few minutes," she says. "I've enjoyed not being frustrated."

In the firm's first few years, working with OfficeTools and APX has been the right answer for Khano, and she doesn't predict making a switch in the foreseeable future.

"I love the platform. I think it's great, and I don't see us moving from it anytime soon," she concludes. "And if the partners ever decide they want to take a look at another software, I've got an arsenal of reasons why we shouldn't."

OfficeTools is a registered trademark of Abacus Data Systems, Inc. Other products or services may be trademarks or register trademarks of their respective companies.
© 2022 All right reserved.