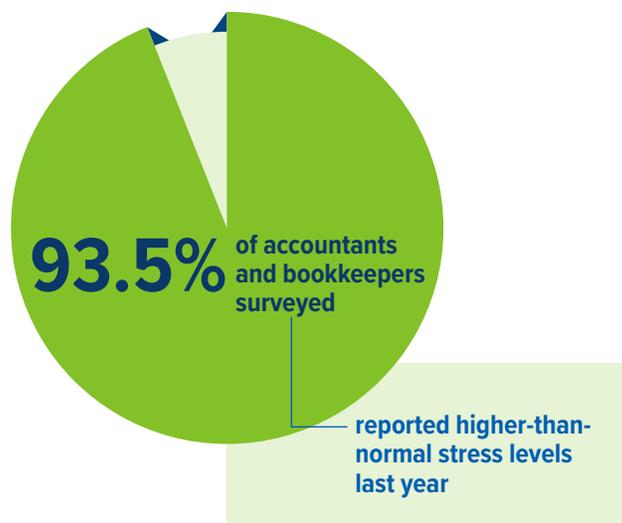




# **3 Steps To Help Give Your Firm a Productivity Boost**

Of all the changes 2020 brought to accountants, bookkeepers and tax preparation professionals, the rapid shift to remote work likely had the biggest impact. Many implemented ad hoc, work-from-home procedures, setting up new technologies on the fly and putting “just make it work” ahead of developing comprehensive policies designed for the long haul. The immediate result was that most accounting professionals experienced unprecedented pressures. Roughly 93.5% of accountants and bookkeepers who responded to [an AccountingWeb poll](#) reported higher-than-normal stress levels last year.

A major lesson firm leaders learned during the pandemic was that their accountants are capable of being productive despite these challenges. Newly-remote workers learned to use collaboration platforms; they adjusted processes to suit their changed circumstances; and eliminated the daily commute from their schedules. Many saw a silver lining to 2020’s difficulties through a shift in how productive their firm could be.



## The Positivity in a productivity shift

Some 38% of respondents to [a Robert Half survey](#) said their relationship with their firm’s leadership was stronger than ever in 2020. Meanwhile, 37% indicated that collaboration had improved within their practice, and 31% felt their firm had become more innovative. As a result, 74% of accounting and finance professionals would like to continue working remotely after the pandemic’s end.

Accounting firms, even firms that go back to mostly in-office work, realized that they need to become more agile and flexible in their industry’s new normal. And, they’ll need to adopt new strategies for boosting productivity and increasing employee engagement.

The good news is there are many things your firm can do to make your team more efficient and productive. Many of these tactics will also increase employees’ enthusiasm for and commitment to their work. These include:



- Revising workflows so as to eliminate mundane, repetitive and boring tasks
- Implementing tools and technologies that will streamline processes and save time
- Investing in training to ensure your team has the skills they need to make the best possible use of those tools.

Together, these efforts can help you reposition your firm as one that both cares about its employees and is ready for the complex challenges that the 21st century will undoubtedly bring. Here's how.

Poll respondents who indicated that collaboration had improved within their practice



Poll respondents who felt their firm had become more innovative



Accounting and finance professionals who would like to continue working remotely after the pandemic's end



## 1

### Eliminate low-value tasks and activities

Perhaps every job has *some* aspects that are inherently boring, but these tasks and workflows are often the ones most amenable to automation. So ask yourself:

- How much time do accountants and tax preparers in your firm spend organizing paper-based workflows?
- What about tracking time using cumbersome spreadsheets or manual processes?
- Or, what about when they write down scheduled appointments with clients on post-it notes?



These tasks are the low-hanging fruit: it's relatively easy to replace them — in part or as a whole — with new technology-aided or automation-based workflows that are quicker, easier and more efficient. So, it makes good sense to eliminate manual data entry wherever possible. If a software solution can manage your contacts, appointment scheduling or billing, this will save you time and eliminate headaches. And having your clients upload documents into an online portal will reduce error, improve workflow tracking and ensure that nothing ever gets lost in the mail.

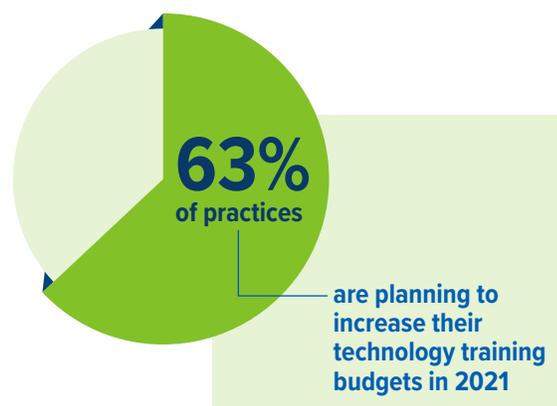
## 2

### Facilitate the transition to greater productivity

One reason the sudden shift to remote work didn't impede accounting firms' productivity over the longer term is video conferencing and collaboration tools are easy to learn. The relative simplicity of mastering these solutions made it possible for firms to keep their focus on their clients' needs during the pandemic.

To make the most of the productivity-enhancing software solutions that are available, however, many employees will require some training. It should come as no surprise that accounting firms are investing more heavily in teaching their staff to use new tools over the coming year.

Approximately, 63% of practices are planning to increase their technology training budgets in 2021, according to a recent survey conducted by [EisnerAmper](#). In the past, busy accounting practices struggled to make time for this sort of professional development for their employees. Today's leaders increasingly realize that sometimes taking a day away from client-facing work to learn tools will their team work more efficiently and can save many days' worth of time in the long run.



## 3

## Shift your firm's objective

As technology continues to advance, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) will increasingly be used to automate the more mundane tasks in accounting workflows. This doesn't mean that there's no place for tax preparation professionals in the world of tomorrow. Nor, does it portend that the robots are coming to take your job. It does show that taking a relationship-driven and strategy-oriented approach to how you run your business will become more and more important in the years to come.

Increasingly, you will want to think about how your firm can deliver high-value strategic advisory services, rather than commodity offerings where you're "just filling out the paperwork" for your clients. Ultimately, automating rote processes will elevate your firm's role – from a company who helps clients meet requirements to a team who helps them future-proof their business, maximize their value and build robust financial plans.

Today's CPAs need the right tools to help them do their jobs more efficiently. Technology can streamline workflows, boost collaboration and eliminate tedious manual processes. It can also enhance your firm's ability to meet clients' increasing demand for the convenience and flexibility that online services provide. And, it'll make it easier for forward-thinking firms to scale up in the future.



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