

# Inside<sup>+</sup>OUTSOURCING

The Newsletter for Forward-Thinking Professionals • 2019 // Issue 8 • [www.advancetrack.com](http://www.advancetrack.com)

## Get on board with customers

Experts reveal the whys and  
hows of onboarding clients



Tech update: Latest  
news from the big  
software companies

## Practice Compliance Outsourcing

Final accounts production • Personal tax returns • Corporation tax returns  
HMRC-recognised iXBRL tagging services • Payroll • Cloud Bookkeeping

Call +44 (0) 24 7601 6308 | [www.advancetrack.com](http://www.advancetrack.com)

advancetrack<sup>®</sup>  
o u t s o u r c i n g



# Getting on board

It's vital get off on the right footing with new clients. As Kevin Reed explains, this means capturing information about them that will mean you can provide the right service at the right price

We continue with the themes set out in AdvanceTrack's recent conference, The Client Journey. In our last newsletter we discussed how to appreciate and understand the value you provide as an accounting practitioner, and then set a clear pricing strategy.

Now we move onto the onboarding process – which can seem fiendishly difficult for accountants to comprehend. Indeed, many still have rudimentary processes in place. This article, covering the views of onboarding experts, will make your potential strategy and processes clearer.

## Onboarding attitude

Accountants, it is well known, have a potential client signed up pretty much from a face-to-face meeting. At that point it's unlikely that there will be much more 'shopping around'.

But complacency at this juncture, and moving forward, will prove costly. Because these new clients are much more likely to move on if the service and processes they have been 'promised' fail to materialise.

"It comes down to 'buyers' remorse'," says Paul Barnes, managing director at Manchester firm My Accountancy Place (MAP) and a co-founder of GoProposal. "Once they've signed up to a provider, they'll then wonder if they've made the right decision, certainly in the first 90 days or so."

This means that you effectively have a three-month window to "prove you're not just all talk – and to deliver on what you've promised".

For practice adviser Paul Shrimpling, putting a systematic approach in

place means that those first couple of meetings should be included within the onboarding process itself.

"If an airline pilot always uses a pre-flight checklist before taking off, then why wouldn't a pre-meeting checklist always ensure a prospect meeting goes well?" says Shrimpling.

"There's a need to start strong and to make this a systemic process – an agenda is the tool that enables everyone to start a meeting brilliantly and demonstrate to business owners you're organised, the meeting is well-structured and that you know what you're doing – rather than winging it."

• See 'Start Before the Beginning' box below

## Systemising to manage multiple clients

A joint webinar between accountancy firm Raedan and The Profitable Firm broached onboarding, with time devoted to understanding how clients progress across a six-month period when coming on board.

This progression includes initial setup, through to taking on apps appropriate for the client, through to more detailed reporting and a requirement for 'business advice' from their accountant to help them steer their future direction.

For The Profitable Firm's Karen Reyburn, this progression requires careful understanding.

"[Clients] move through a progression at their own pace," says Reyburn. "You can't do it all for them in one swoop, or overload them with information. So it's about making a connection with the client on a continual basis and treating them 'as a prospect' again."

Different clients requiring different services at different times (or all at the same time) is an administrative and workflow nightmare for practices.

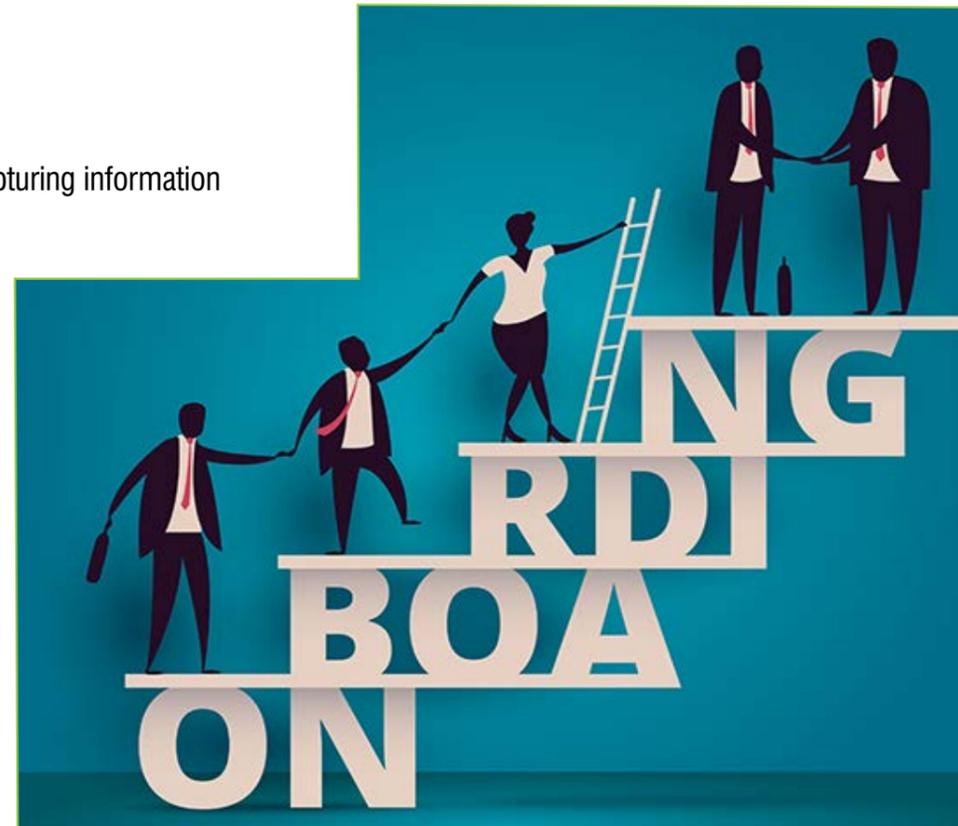
A systemised approach to both onboarding and continued service is therefore critical, says MAP's Barnes.



## Start onboarding 'before the beginning'

When meeting a potential or new client, take a systematic approach to what you want that meeting to achieve for you and the other party, says practice adviser Paul Shrimpling.

Start with an overview discussion. "This should be broad enough to allow a business owner to say what they want to say, but also signposts a discussion about the business's past, present and future," explains Shrimpling.



"You have clients coming in with different needs, levels of sophistication and different starting points," he says. "If you don't systemise there will be chaos."

## Reduce the grunt work

Automation is possible. This includes 'factfinder' documents, through to setting up direct debits and automated client invoicing. Of course, this should feed through to automated task management, "which becomes part of the work of the client coordinators".

In the webinar, Raedan's Jonathan Bareham describes how the team "hated onboarding", while also noticing that clients would use other advisers for different types of service – ones which Raedan could have offered.

"If you don't have a process for re-engaging, it can be hard to convince a client that they need something else, particularly where there's a cost

The next topic of discussion should be about their – and their business's – priorities. "It will prompt a conversation about three primary metrics: Cash, profit and capital value. All three are subjects that accountants are comfortable with and can prepare questions about.

"When a business owner engages in talking about their past, present and future, and their cash, profits and capital value, the 'positioning' and perceived value of such an accountant will be greater than the existing firm they use as their accountant," says Shrimpling.

• Paul Shrimpling is partnering with AdvanceTrack to run the Growth Academy, to help small practices change and become more profitable. Go to [www.advancetrack.com/growth-academy](http://www.advancetrack.com/growth-academy) for more information.



## Vipul's view

AdvanceTrack's MD and founder gives his take on onboarding

I see the onboarding process as your first time to really impress a new client.

But it's not just about impressing them; you have to consider the flip-side – which is to disappoint them. In other words, if you manage onboarding badly, whether it's not capturing their requirements or details, you deliver the wrong service or a bad service. Probably both.

It's a key factor in client retention. You've 'sold them' a vision of what you can do and how it will work, this is the point when you prove it.

A big part of onboarding is communication. And that's not just about talking to your new client, but sharing information between yourself and your practice's team. In many businesses an account handler (or partner, in the case of a practice), initially leads the relationship, and then task a group of people to manage it. This is often mirrored on the client's side as well.

So, if onboarding and sharing of information isn't handled properly there will be disconnect on both sides. You create a fraught relationship almost from the start, and then you have to do ten times as well to illustrate your competence.

attached," he says. "It's important to have something in place that would prompt them in the future."

And how important was onboarding for My Accountancy Place when the firm was created? "It was the place we started," says Barnes. "Once that was in place, then it's about delivery. After that we focused on sales and marketing... If the client has moved on, you won't get the chance to show [your expertise]."

• The Profitable Firm/Raedan webinar can be found by [clicking here](#)



Kevin Reed is a freelance journalist and former editor of Accountancy Age

NEWS

## FIXED PRICE SEAMLESS BOOKKEEPING HAS ARRIVED

#seamlessbookkeeping

Zip through your work with #seamlessbookkeeping with the new AdvanceTrack™ Cloud Platform. Fully Managed Seamless Bookkeeping in the Cloud run by Professionals.

Call 344 (0) 24 7601 6308

## SLICK SECURE SCALABLE

#seamlessbookkeeping

advancetrack™ outsourcing

Fully managed outsourcing. Not an App in sight!

UK Headquartered    ICAEW Member Firm    Run by UK Qualified Chartered Accountants  
 ISO9001:2015 Certified for Quality Management    ISO27001:2013 Certified for Information Security  
 Secure platform with full job management    Job tracking as standard since 2006  
 Process Driven Mass Customisation