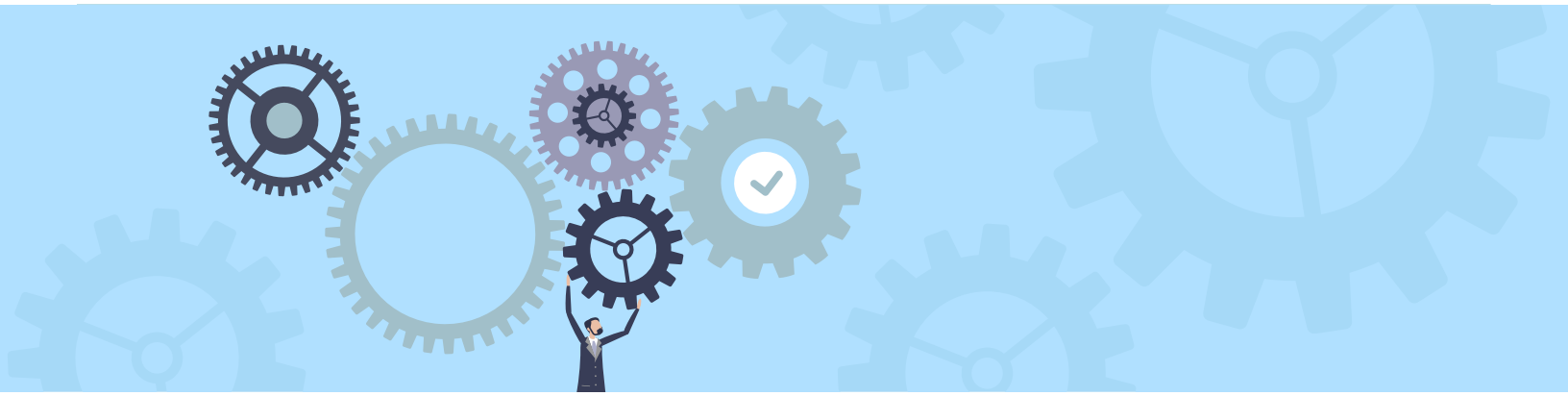




Your Change Management Toolkit

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Introduction

For accounting firms today, there is a brutal reality that we need to accept.

If you don't embrace change, it will be enforced. And if you stand still, you'll actually be moving backwards.

I've been in practice for 25 years this year, having started as a 16 year old fresh out of school, and along the way I've not only seen change, but a dramatic increase in the pace of change. Shifts that previously would have taken years to reach mass adoption now seem to be counted in months. These changes haven't solely been driven by practitioners – instead, there have been external forces that have accelerated the need for firms to be on the top of their game and tweak what they do.

These external forces are numerous, and not just those that you might expect. Of course, we can look at changes such as Making Tax Digital, GDPR, and other legislative and regulatory changes as being one driver of this new landscape. We also have to acknowledge that there are other forces at play here – the tools that we have available to us, such as connectable software that previously would have been the realm of enterprise-level investment, is now available on a SAAS basis; as well as the desires of our customers, whose expectations have been shaped by the likes of Google and Amazon Prime. Simply put, we now have to 'walk the walk' with technology.

Finally, and perhaps the area that keeps us all up at night, is that of cyber security. We all have to actively think about how we manage sensitive and confidential information in the same way that we would previously have thought long and hard about physical protection. These risks are part and parcel of our world now, and we need to ensure that we play our part in protecting our clients, and in turn our own businesses.

Understanding these drivers may make it easier for us to accept the need for change, but it doesn't mean that change is easy. This is where we can learn from examples of both good and bad change management and avoid the mistakes that others have made before.

To fill in the blanks about how I've come to be in a position to share this with you, it could be worth sharing a little about the change projects that I've had to manage. My firm was one of the very first using online accounting at scale, back in 2002. We pivoted the market that we served in approximately 2010 once we'd established our experience in the franchising field, and we more recently migrated from an annual invoicing firm to a monthly subscription model – not an easy change with circa 2,700 clients! Finally, we have changed software vendors, processes, culture – and of course, ownership back when my business partner and I completed our management buy out.

Here are some of the things that I've learned about change along the way.

Be clear on the why

Sometimes, even the most risk-averse of us can suffer from 'shiny object syndrome'. We think that we need to change because others are changing, or because change is the buzzword. It is likely that change will bring benefit to your business if considered correctly, but for it to bring benefit, you need to be crystal clear on the 'why'. Why are you considering this change? What will this change allow you to do differently / better? How will this impact your team and your clients?

Lean on your suppliers

In the case of changing software, you will often have the perfect partner to help you on your journey. Your vendor should be able to provide you with the three T's - templates, tools, and training - to help you manage the change internally and externally. They should have been there, seen it, and done it; and if you can create a great relationship with your account manager, they will be a valuable contributor to the process.

Ensure your team are on board

If you have a team, you need to make sure that they are pointed in the same direction as you. What might seem like an exciting project for a Cloud Software Champion might seem like an increase in efficiencies for a Head of Operations, an increase in profits for a Partner, and a hassle for an Administrator!

Once you are crystal clear on the why, and have your vendors support, make sure that you spend more time with the team than you might ever imagine. A great way of doing this is to consider a 'lunch and learn' – order in some pizzas, and have an open forum to discuss the change, any fears, and also any ideas.

Communicate, communicate, communicate

Here is possibly the biggest failure point for most change exercises – it simply isn't communicated enough. Whilst the decision makers in any change process have often bought into both the 'why' and the 'how', have built relationships with the vendor, and fully understand the logistics of the change; this message often gets diluted along the way.

Put simply, you need to keep talking about the change until you are bored of hearing yourself talk about it! I tend to use the old rule for public speakers – tell the audience what you are going to say, say it, and tell them what you said.

One way you can do this is through your email communications with your customers, and I've prepared three templated emails for you to tweak and use if you find this format could work for you.



Email Templates

Email 1 – Tell them what you are going to say

Dear [client]

I'm really excited to let you know that we are about to roll out a new secure, online document management tool called SmartVault. It's trusted by over 1 million professionals, has bank-level security, and also helps us do some good for the environment by cutting out paper wastage.

You don't need to do anything at this stage, apart from keep your eyes open for an email from the software once we have set you up on the system.

If you've got any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

All the best

[Accountant]

Email 2 – Say it

Dear [client]

I'm really excited to let you know that we have just rolled out a new secure, online document management tool called SmartVault. It's trusted by over 1 million professionals, has bank-level security, and also helps us do some good for the environment by cutting out paper wastage.

You would have received an email from the system very recently. If you haven't done so already, please ensure that you act on it, as this will be the way that we will share sensitive information in the future for our mutual peace of mind.

If you've got any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

All the best

[Accountant]

Email 3 – Tell them what you said

Dear [client]

By now, you will be aware that we have rolled out a new secure, online document management tool called SmartVault. It's trusted by over 1 million professionals, has bank-level security, and also helps us do some good for the environment by cutting out paper wastage.

I'm conscious that sometimes, changes to processes can be a little confusing, so I wanted to reassure you that help is at hand. If you ever find that you could benefit from a little support with SmartVault, I have created a Loom video that you can find [here], and SmartVault have user guides and FAQs that you can find [here].

If you've got any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

All the best

[Accountant]



You are not alone

Last, but certainly not least, you are not alone.

You are not the first firm to change, and certainly won't be the last. Other firms would have experienced the good, the bad and the ugly of change. Team members would have shared concerns, shortcuts would have been found, and case studies would have been created about the benefits of making the leap.

Make sure that you reach out to your community to speak to other practitioners – your vendors can often facilitate this for you – and bounce around the fears and opportunities with any change. Often, it is nowhere near as scary as you think!

Change Management Case Study



Robin Johnson, Owner, TaxAssist Accountants Norwich North

Robin Johnson, owner of TaxAssist Accountants Norwich North, knew that in order to work remotely and securely while continuing to service the firm's clients, he needed to change the way his firm handled document storage and file sharing by adopting a cloud-based document management system (DMS).

"The urgency to move our documents into the cloud was definitely Covid-inspired," said Robin. "I had wanted to move in this direction from our desktop-based system for two years, but it was having to work as a remote team that really made us act on it."

Robin's firm took action to implement SmartVault in August 2021 after using an alternative document storage solution for several years. "The transition to SmartVault only took a week, and our team was essentially able to start using it immediately—it's that intuitive," explained Robin.

Making the leap and leading the way to higher productivity and a paperless workflow with SmartVault

"We are leading the move to the cloud in the TaxAssist business and that is what I have been wanting to do for a long time. The fact that SmartVault is completely integrated with our tax software, TaxCalc, means that next tax season is going to be a lot smoother and we'll reap significant time savings, too."

Robin's firm uses SmartVault exclusively as an internal DMS, printing all returns from TaxCalc directly into client folders. They also save all client documents in SmartVault—a move that aligns perfectly with their ultimate goal of being completely paperless.

"From a business continuity, collaboration, and security standpoint, there really is no other way to work in the times we are living in. It is absolutely essential. Utopia for our firm would be a completely paperless process and SmartVault is helping us get there!"

An integrated solution that provides scalability and security

“SmartVault is the forward-looking solution for document management and secure file storage that I knew we needed. Having the assurance of SmartVault being fully GDPR compliant is also key,” said Robin. “We need to ensure that we are handling all of our client data in a way that meets all regulations while giving ourselves and our clients peace of mind. It’s much more secure than having dedicated laptops and devices. Plus it eliminates the need for installing software, that’s a cost-saving, too.”

SmartVault makes changing to a cloud DMS frictionless

The transition to SmartVault was smooth and seamless for Robin’s firm. By utilising the 1:1 admin training and migration support, Robin ensured his account was set up most effectively and his historical client documents moved securely into the cloud. Robin also uses many of SmartVault’s resources such as the how-to guides and onboarding support. From Robin’s perspective, SmartVault has many strong points for accounting firms — and every firm needs a fully cloud-based document management system.

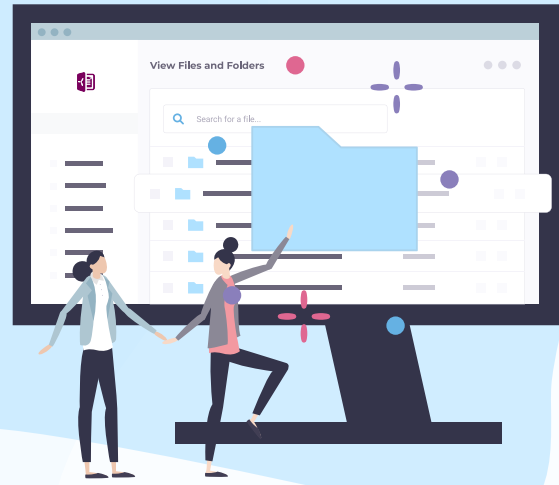
To other accounting firms considering a cloud document management system, or thinking about transitioning to a more robust and secure DMS, Robin’s advice is simple: “Get a demo and just do it. It’s really a common-sense solution.”

How SmartVault Supports Change Management

Whenever you change or adopt new technology, it's important for you to feel that your technology vendor is there to support you. Someone to lean on when you run into difficulties or have urgent questions to be answered. SmartVault is here for you.

1 1:1 Product Onboarding Sessions

Our onboarding sessions are designed to get your account, folder templates and workflow set up as you need it, with 1:1 help from your dedicated Onboarding Manager.



2 Migration Options

Do you have documents you want importing into SmartVault, either from another document management platform or from your own desktop or hard drives? No problem. Our migration team can offer you a white-gloved service or guide you on how to migrate your own documents into SmartVault.



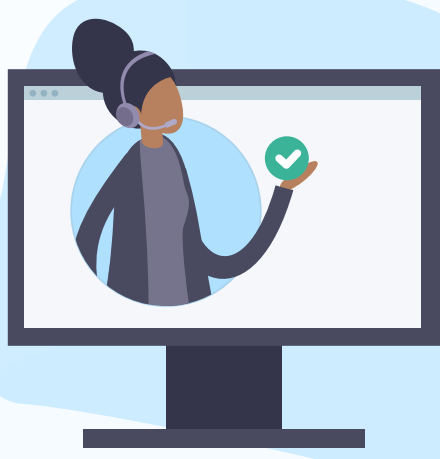
3 Team Training Sessions

Have multiple team members that will be using SmartVault? Arrange a team training session with your Onboarding Manager to ensure they are up-to-speed with exactly how they upload, download and process documents via SmartVault.



4 Smart Hours

Been a customer with us for a while but want a refresher or help reconfiguring your set-up? Book a completely flexible session with a local Customer Success Manager tailored to your exact requirements.



5 Client Guide and Training for Your Customers

Although our client portal is designed to be user-friendly, we appreciate some of your clients may need extra help or guidance when accessing, uploading or eSigning their documents. Our client how-to guides and videos will allow them to be up-to-speed in no time.



6 SmartVault Training Academy

Prefer to learn at your own pace? Want help with a specific feature? Use our self-serve Training Academy, packed with how-to guides, videos and tips on how to use SmartVault most effectively.



7 Local Technical Support Team and Instant Messaging

OK, so no matter how long you've been using SmartVault, we know sometimes issues can arise. Call our local support team to help with any issues quickly and easily, or if you'd prefer, use our instant messaging feature on our website if you don't want to use the phone.



8 Customer Webinar Series

NEW! Join one of our customer webinars as we explore topics that range from our latest Request Docs feature to best practices for inviting clients to your portal.

