

# The Tech Savvy Accounting Firm

How New Technologies Help You Boost Profits & Penetrate the Small Business Market

Produced by SurePayroll, Inc. and Acclivity



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# The Tech Savvy Accounting Firm:

## How New Technologies Help You Boost Profits & Penetrate the Small Business Market

**Making** profits means adapting to your environment. The days of desks overrunning with print ledgers, relic Texas Instruments calculators from school days and swiping a pencil from your co-worker's stash seem like an eternity ago.

But in calendar years, we're looking at a relatively small timeframe — roughly ten years from the mid '80s to the mid '90s when the small business world transitioned from calculators to keyboards. Technological change happened, and it happened rapidly.

And the technological changes never fully stopped. Practically every small business nationwide is running everything on computers, and many are switching to online services. To the tech savvy accountant, this means more opportunity to tap into underserved markets with your expertise, scale your business and generate more profit from existing customers.

One of your largest underserved markets isn't just small business owners who can't get the attention they need from big-box firms. (They're extremely important, too.) It's also these small business owners who prefer Macs over PCs — small business owners who have fewer tech savvy accountants they can turn to.

## Filling a Lucrative Niche within Small Business Accounting

Macs aren't just for artists and academics anymore. And Fortune 500 companies aren't the only ones who've migrated business processes from file cabinets and the mail room to computers and "the cloud." As Mac-centric small businesses grew, the need for small business accounting software designed for Macs escalated.

Since 1989, Mac enthusiasts have enjoyed AccountEdge small business accounting software for the Mac, developed by Acclivity (formerly MYOB). Wanting to give PC users the same power over their accounting, Acclivity launched AccountEdge for Windows in 1992. Both versions of AccountEdge have witnessed rapid growth ever since. Now over 100,000 North American clients rely on AccountEdge daily to manage their small business accounting. As small business owners have transitioned to small business-based accounting software, so must the accountant community. **The accountant who serves the small business PC and Mac markets holds a key differentiator in an underserved market.**

The majority of these modern-day small business owners have two important things in common: most will opt for AccountEdge software, and most can benefit from a tech-enthusiast, AccountEdge-expert accountant.

Your tech savviness can keep clients unquestionably loyal. Much like finding a good, honest mechanic, customers will seek advice for a slew of financial and administrative questions because you've clearly demonstrated you can address their needs personally. When you directly answer their questions and guide them through a technological minefield, they'll feel like valued customers because you recognize them the second you pick up the phone.

This tactic isn't anything new — this is the long-standing appeal of doing business with accounting firms that specialize in small businesses. It plays a big role in the profits you already make. You're just building upon your foundation with technology that helps you win prospects and meet current customers needs.



### AccountEdge

Acclivity's success in the small-business Mac market has enabled the company to produce a variety of business products under one trusted brand.

#### Products include:

- Acclivity AccountEdge
- Acclivity Accounting
- Acclivity Accounting Plus
- Acclivity Premier
- Acclivity BusinessBasics
- Acclivity JustInvoices
- Acclivity Accountants Office

# Providing that “One-Stop Shop” Small Business Clients Ask For

You already know that the overwhelming majority of your small business owners’ top concern — and rightly so — is maintaining a level of business they’re comfortable with. They want to profit and you want to profit. Finding an easier way to manage accounts receivable isn’t a chief concern when few payments are due. But your technological advice at the time of a business’ inception can be vital in ensuring smooth operations and administration as a business grows.

With technology playing such a prominent role in small businesses spanning every industry, you can help your customers make the right technological choices for administrative and customer-facing services by offering a comprehensive suite of solutions. Rather than building a one-stop shop from scratch, you can save time and money by reselling and referring a variety of services. By doing so, your firm can transform into the most powerful one-stop shop of all: the one-stop “trusted” information shop. Once clients and prospects see how much more you offer than traditional accounting and bookkeeping guidance, they’ll understand the true value of having you as a trusted advisor on their team.

**In addition to accounting and payroll questions, small businesses face many technological questions the tech savvy accountant can illuminate** such as,

- Where to find the most convenient and affordable ACH and Custom Checks/Forms
- Software like Enstore and Checkout, also from Acclivity, that can transform a laptop into a cash register and an online storefront
- Customer relationship management (CRM) products available online like salesforce.com or SugarCRM
- Web site design and development as well as networking and IT solutions



Even recommending free or inexpensive iPhone® apps to help them run their small businesses are useful ways to demonstrate your helpfulness and technological prowess. For example, one free app lets small business owners on the go take pictures of receipts and organize them for quick retrieval online. Another helps small business owners prioritize tasks when they’re away from their computers, a growing occurrence with the popularity of smartphones.

What’s the point of keeping up with these technological trends? Granted, constantly sharing tech tips with your clients and prospects can be perceived as an inability to separate the important trends from the latest tech press release. But the smallest technological suggestions can make one of your small business customer’s lives indescribably easier. **Once you’ve demonstrated your ability to help with simple business processes, you’ve solidified your reputation as the go-to firm that solves real-world problems.** In the small business world, trustworthy information is the ultimate aphrodisiac.



*As small business owners have transitioned to accounting software, so has the accountant community. **The accountant who serves the small business Mac market holds a key differentiator from the rest of the pack.***

## When Payroll Entered the Picture

Payroll has quickly become a popular “sticky” addition to the tech savvy accountant’s tech arsenal. It leads to more profits and customer retention. “Sticky” refers to a service that is so easy that once they’ve used it, they’ll never dream of cutting it. They’re stuck.

Historically accountants either provided payroll for their clients knowing it was a time-consuming and tedious process, or they referred it out. The former required hours of work and little profit margin. But if traditional payroll services took all the profits, they also handle all the payroll headaches—right? Usually not. Accountants still needed critical payroll data and accessibility to reports to advise and support their clients.

So the accounting community turned to technology to help with payroll. Soon, payroll technology advanced from crunching the numbers to tracking all the complex elements payroll involves.

**Marrying payroll with technology meant payroll didn’t take hours per pay period or require outsourcing to traditional payroll services.**

And like most technologies, what started as installed software moved online.

### Case Study: *Team Jenn - A Practice Gone Virtual*

Team Jenn staff could squander hours a week resolving payroll issues on their clients’ behalf with traditional payroll services. Now Team Jenn can remain a viable virtual accounting company and Acclivity Certified Consultant since it has switched almost half its clients to SurePayroll.

By “going virtual” with assisted online payroll, Jenn has cut the time to run payroll for each client to a few minutes per pay period while simultaneously reducing clients’ payroll bills nearly 50%. Now she can write blog posts that share accounting and tax tips as well as casual emails — Jenn’s time-tested method for engaging new prospects — to spread the virtual accounting word with her new-found free time.

Her team members can also focus on supporting her clients with their Acclivity solutions, including AccountEdge, Checkout and Enstore.

And the biggest benefit? As Lisa Anton Hagen, Team Jenn’s payroll specialist, succinctly puts it: “Clients don’t need to call me as much.” When clients aren’t calling with payroll problems, everyone can spend more time generating revenue and keeping customers happy.

## The Benefits of Online Payroll Demonstrated

Like most processes, moving payroll calculations from adding machines and printed payroll tax tables to computers with built-in tax tables vastly reduced errors. Each new payroll software update would include all the tax tables so customers remained in compliance with the latest payroll-related laws and regulations. Yet software updates are only scheduled so often, and shipping emergency updates is costly for the software company.

And the most time-consuming aspect of payroll remained — paying and filing all federal, state and local payroll taxes accurately and on time. Many versions of payroll software didn’t accommodate tax payments and filings. Although AccountEdge traditional software enables you to file and pay your taxes, the process can still be time-consuming. The business need for a payroll solution that eliminated the headaches of payroll taxes while providing up-to-the minute tax tables remained.

While traditional payroll services such as ADP® manage customers’ tax services, they charge a premium. And clients are forced to run payroll on someone else’s schedule when they fax or phone in payroll records every pay period.

Then in the early 2000s, assisted online payroll was born. **SurePayroll debuted as the first service to let its customers submit payroll online while the service made all calculations, produced all reports and W2s/1099s, as well as pay and file all payroll taxes.** At that point, the “payroll problem” was solved. Small businesses owners’ payroll responsibilities went from hours of tedious paperwork or the high price of traditional services to simply entering payroll information accurately every payroll and communicating any payroll changes (such as SUI rate changes, employee terminations, etc.).

Online payroll also conquers the once-troublesome tax table update problems. As tax laws and regulations change, all updates are made to one online server. When customers log in, they're always accessing the latest tax tables without having to download or install (or pay for) anything.

Since then, SurePayroll has introduced a white-label version of its assisted online payroll service for accountants to resell and offer as a new revenue stream.

But what gives SurePayroll an edge over other online payroll services? Its integration with AccountEdge provides your small business customers with a full-service online payroll experience that's hard to come by: one that's built around the technology they use for everyday business, not a piecemeal system that requires hours of technical support to work in their environment.

**Because SurePayroll manages all the hardware, software, customer support and innovation, you can concentrate on more lucrative projects and rest assured your customers receive outstanding support. All while profiting from a revenue share or referring to a service that owns your problems.**

**1** Log in and enter payroll



Log in online or from your iPhone® and enter payroll.

**2** Preview payroll



Preview payroll for accuracy and view the amount that will be debited from your bank account.

**3** Approve payroll!



Approve payroll. You're done.

## Case Study: A Partnership That Puts the Tech Resources in Your Camp

In 2002, after seeking the best solution to make Web-based payroll painless for its customers and provide the small business accounting community with a tech resource that helps boost profits, Acclivity struck a partnership with SurePayroll, the online alternative.

Since then, accountants nationwide can refer or resell AccountEdge Full Service Payroll that integrates with AccountEdge and includes AccountEdge product branding, full tax management, and direct export integration into AccountEdge's general ledger.

For some AccountEdge customers who once processed payroll taxes manually, taking advantage of the Acclivity and SurePayroll partnership has reduced payroll processing time to less than 15 minutes per pay period.

By completely owning their tax worries, we've saved each customer \$845 a year — the average IRS penalty for over 40% of small businesses. Those who switched from ADP® or similar services have saved 50% and never enter payroll into two separate systems.

As a tech savvy accountant, you can provide your customers with AccountEdge Full Service Payroll anywhere, at anytime, all while never worrying about payroll taxes or the wasted time (and potential for errors) of manually entering payroll. In addition to freeing you from managing taxes, unlimited support from SurePayroll's American Business Award-winning Customer Care team will field all AccountEdge Full Service Payroll questions.

## Upsell Online Payroll to Keep Customers Loyal

Accountants who adapt to the new small business landscape often focus on providing sound tech advice as a key selling point. That's a good "in," but the most lucrative benefit of a tech-savvy accounting firm is the ability to upsell your clients — and watch your profits increase — with additional small business administrative and financial services.

**The easiest and more profitable avenue for providing your small business customers with services they need is outsourcing them to businesses you trust.** This strategy, especially when applied to online payroll, doesn't require building and maintaining services, or staying on top of payroll compliance changes — the most time-consuming and important aspect of owning a client's small business payroll worries.

**Outsourcing payroll means you can resell a white-label version of payroll or refer payroll that you and your clients can trust.** Each method is profitable in its own right.

With little start-up investment and customer support off your plate, reselling online payroll (and similar services) will open a new revenue stream that requires little marketing and sales effort because customers already trust you for accounting and technology advice. When you're approaching a prospect, you'll feel more confident with a beefed-up pitch that includes more services dedicated to relieving small business headaches for reasonable prices.

## Refer Online Payroll When You Don't Want to Resell

Reselling payroll isn't your only option to be a tech-savvy and profitable trusted advisor. Some of your clients may not be tech savvy. Others may. You don't want to force technology down the throat of a Luddite customer. In this case, the best method for accommodating clients with diverse needs — especially if some prefer running payroll online and others want to do it the old fashioned way — is referring services that match the way they do business.

**Referring payroll ensures your customers can eliminate their payroll headaches with a service that won't damage your reputation.** Referring quality services shows you know the industry and you know how your customers' businesses really work. And once they trust your referred services, they'll trust your sold services.

To give your AccountEdge customers the best value, referring AccountEdge Full-Service Online Payroll offers your clients a simple way to marry accounting and payroll.

### Referring online payroll can help you:

- Gain online access to payroll reports from participating clients
- Access educational tools that help you meet CPE-hour requirements
- Receive rewards for referring your client
- Earn a free accountant copy of AccountEdge software

### Referring online payroll can help your clients:

- Pay up to 50% less on payroll fees versus traditional providers
- Process payroll online in an average of 2 – 5 minutes
- Pay W2 and 1099 employees via direct deposit
- Receive customer support from a team you don't have to manage
- Earn free AccountEdge Software Integration plus free upgrades after 1 year

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## What Now? Using Your Tech Savviness for More

You've created an accounting firm that can handle an array of services using reliable, easy technology. What now? Since you're touting your firm as technology friendly, it's time to practice what you preach. Several new technologies can help you support your practice.

Your firm Website could double as a portal for your clients to manage and share information you need—only 30% of accounting firms with Websites take advantage of portals. And as you set up your shop, consider as many SaaS-based solutions (including the AccountEdge network addition) instead of paying for costly hardware and software.

If your customers use Macs, they can start a store with Acclivity's Checkout. Sales, orders, quotes, receipts and invoices are just the beginning. Whatever your clients sell, Checkout makes their point-of-sale solution much more affordable and effective.

But using online technology to support your business is only half of the journey. To really leverage technology to grow your business and keep in better contact with your customers, it's time to venture into social media.

### Case Study: *FlyDragon Consulting - The Tech Savvy Accountant and Free Online Advertising*

JoAnn Ortiz, founder of Los Angeles-based FlyDragon Consulting, turned to the burgeoning social media scene to see what business benefits could be found by conversing in this new enterprise. When JoAnn dug in, she found the brave new world filled with passionate but inexperienced small business owners looking for anyone with useful information. And JoAnn had the answers — but she didn't have the time.

To free up her payroll time for social media marketing pursuits and more Acclivity software installations and customizations, she switched FlyDragon to a white-label assisted online payroll service powered by SurePayroll. Almost half of FlyDragon's clients opted for the more affordable alternative to ADP<sup>®</sup> that includes full tax management and AccountEdge integration.

Now the FlyDragon team doesn't waste time trying to get in touch with traditional payroll companies' customer service departments, and the clients benefit from the affordability and simplicity of SurePayroll's online payroll. "People started responding to what I know," JoAnn recalls. "And I'd always include my contact info and a link to my Website in every answer I provided. It took a little time for call volume to pick up, but a quick increase in Web traffic was pretty noticeable. And it didn't cost anything — just a little time."

Clients never notice any lapse in service with JoAnn's emphasis on social media marketing because SurePayroll keeps things running smoothly without FlyDragon intervention. She can spend more time building small business Websites, configuring Acclivity software for clients across all industries, and performing traditional accounting and inventory services.



# Keep Evolving

Technology becomes obsolete. Business needs change. What you're offering today may be useless in 5 years. Or 6 months, as technological format wars like Blu-Ray or HD DVD recently demonstrated.

Conversely, recommending or reselling a new service that your competitors ignore could transform into the industry standard within a decade. Imagine if you had started recommending salesforce.com in 2000. If one of those customers discussed your firm, she'd mention your inclination for services that don't just change the way she does business, but change how business is done.

You can spend time and money trying to offer the seemingly infinite services ADP® does, and you can even reach that point. But when the markets change, so must your products and services. When you rely on reselling and referring services, the vendors bear the burden of upgrading. And if one is lacking in innovation or service, severing ties is much easier than rebuilding your own product. Your customers will appreciate your honest analysis of why they should switch to a better service you've discovered and evaluated.

When you resell or refer SurePayroll's AccountEdge-integrated, small business-friendly online payroll, you **free up all the time you're currently devoting to helping your small business customers do business in an "enterprise" software world.**

So how do you apply all this theory to practice — and, more importantly, to profits? By breaking the process up into a few easily digestible steps, you can start your journey from accounting technophobe to a tech savvy accountant.

**1. Determine the areas where you can expand.** What additional services can you provide that won't demand too much time and produce a new revenue stream?

**2. Investigate opportunities to partner and offer those services.** Who can help you implement and grow your practice using next-generation technologies?

**3. Write a strategic business plan** to fold those services into your practice. How will you sell, train and support your proposed services?

**4. Market and share your new services with your clients.** Many turnkey solutions will offer marketing collateral and sales tools that you can customize in a few minutes.

**5. Sit back, relax and watch the profits grow** as you too have evolved into a tech savvy accountant.

## The Beat Goes On: Continual Innovation from SurePayroll and Acclivity

SurePayroll is well-aware the home office is turning into the mobile office. As the only company with Mobile Payroll and Mobile Paycheck iPhone® apps, SurePayroll is here to blaze the mobile payroll trail. Soon SurePayroll's apps for the Droid® will hit the market, providing customers on two of America's most popular smart phone operating systems access to payroll from their smart phones. And, of course, all mobile apps are free to customers.

To keep accounting firms up to date with technology and better ways to manage their firms, [SurePayroll's Accountant Resources Web site](#) is continually updated with:

- Free CPE-accredited webinars
- White papers
- Sales and marketing tools, including sell sheets, emails and PowerPoint presentations
- Case studies
- Educational materials for practice development

Acclivity ensures the accountant community stays abreast of new trends by continually developing new software designed for small businesses and the small business accounting community.

New services such as Check Out point-of-sale software and Enstore's online shopping cart portal make the most daunting tasks simple. Its Certified Consultant Program lets small business owners know you're knowledgeable and trustworthy.

Its Certified Consultant Program lets small business owners know you're knowledgeable and trustworthy. And you can always count on a free accountant copy of AccountEdge software.





## About SurePayroll

SurePayroll is the online alternative. Our service and team members are dedicated to providing an easy, convenient online payroll service at a price small business owners can afford.

For accountants, SurePayroll provides white-label and private-label services that enable them to offer payroll processing to their small business clients. Tens of thousands of customers rely on SurePayroll to process payroll wherever they want in as few as two minutes. In addition, SurePayroll offers small businesses solutions for managing 401(k) plans, health insurance, workers' compensation, HR compliance and employee screening.

Over the last decade, SurePayroll has received numerous prestigious awards for its innovative technology and outstanding customer service, including recognition from *PC Magazine, Inc. 500, Accounting Today*, the Stevie Awards, and many others.



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## About Acclivity

In December of 2005, sensing divergent strategic directions, two members of MYOB's US management team reached agreement with MYOB Ltd. to purchase the US company and take it private.

In order to craft one's own destiny, one must partake in the act of crafting. With this in mind, Acclivity fashioned a new agreement with MYOB Ltd., this time to purchase their US development company, responsible for making the global Mac product line. Distributors-turned-developers. A small business making small business software. A big company made small. A re-startup. For more information, visit [www.acclivity.com](http://www.acclivity.com).

