

CPAFMA 2021 Digitally Driven (Paperless) Benchmark Survey Results

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The CPA Firm Management Association completed their 2021 Digitally Driven (Paperless) benchmarking survey in December 2020 to find out the status of digitally driven office practices in member firms for the 2021 busy season. This “paperless” benchmarking survey has been conducted every two years since 2003 to help identify digital trends that medium and larger firms are adopting within their practices. This year 124 firms participated in the survey with the results summarized and compared to the 2019 findings below.

2021 CPAFMA Digitally Driven (Paperless) Benchmark Survey	2019	2021
<p>1. Tax: What digital workflow tool does your firm utilize to manage due dates and tax return progress?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -22% XpitaX XCM (21% in 2019) -18% CCH Workstream (13% in 2019) -15% Thomson Reuters Practice Management (Projects-6% in 2019) -14% Thomson Reuters FirmFlow (14% in 2019) - 6% CCH Practice Management (Projects) (10% in 2019) - 8% None/Not Applicable (21% in 2019) 	79%	92%
<p>2. Tax: If your firm delivers the majority of your organizers via digital means what tools do you utilize?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -11% Thomson Reuters NetClient CS Portal (8% in 2019) -11% Citrix ShareFile (3% in 2019) -10% CCH Axxess Portal (7% in 2019) -49% Our firm is NOT delivering the majority of organizers digitally (69% in 2019) 	31%	51%
<p>3. Tax: What internal software or external services does your firm utilize to organize/bookmark scanned client source documents into a standard PDF Format?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -36% CCH ProSystem fx Scan (45% in 2019) -19% SurePrep (9% in 2019) - 5% Gruntworx -19% Other (includes Adobe, Thomson Reuters, Foxit, Doc-It and other) -21% None/Not Applicable (24% in 2019) 	76%	79%
<p>4. Tax: What Optical Character Recognition application does your firm utilize to automatically transfer data from scanned source documents into your tax program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -33% CCH ProSystem fx Scan with AutoFlow (38% in 2019) -18% SurePrep (9% in 2019) - 4% Gruntworx -31% None/Not Applicable (44% in 2019) 	56%	69%

<p>5. Tax: What digital annotation tool does your firm utilize when working on Adobe/PDF files (check all that apply)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -48% CCH ProSystem fx PDFlyer (57% in 2019) -15% cPaperless Tick Tie and Calculate (11% in 2019) - 4% Mofsoft Calculator -12% Other (includes Adobe, Doctt, FoxIt, SurePrep) <p>-23% None/Not Applicable (18% in 2019)</p>	82%	77% use at least one tool
<p>6. Tax: What application does your firm utilize to deliver the majority of your tax returns in a digital format?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -25% Citrix ShareFile (21% in 2019) -23% cPaperless SafeSend (16% in 2019) -12% CCH Axxess Portal (13% in 2019) -11% Thomson NetClient CS (11% in 2019) <p>-11% Our firm does NOT deliver the majority of tax returns digitally (26% in 2019)</p>	74%	89%
<p>7. Tax: What is the primary monitor configuration for tax professionals on their desktop (including laptop display if utilized)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -2% Single Oversize (30" or larger) (2% in 2019) -33% Dual-Oversize (20" or greater) 32% in 2019) -59% Triple Monitors (59% in 2019) - 4% Quadruple (3% in 2019) - 2% Dual <20" Legacy monitor configuration (4% in 2019) 	96% use more than two traditional monitors	98% use more than two traditional monitors
<p>8. Tax: What digital eSignature tool does your firm utilize for tax returns/authorizations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -22% cPaperless SafeSign (14% in 2019) -19% Citrix RightSignature (17% in 2019) -16% DocuSign (6% in 2019) - 7% CCH ProSystem fx Axxess eSignature (7% in 2019) - 5% Thomson eSignature (5% in 2019) <p>-20% None/Not Applicable (43% in 2019)</p>	57%	80%
<p>9. NEW Tax: What workpaper manager does your firm utilize to organize your business and complex individual tax return working documents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -43% CCH ProSystem Fx Engagement -12% Thomson File Cabinet Solution -11% Thomson Engagement CS/Advance Flow - 8% Caseware - 7% SurePrep Binder -15% Other (various document management applications or 4% None) 	NEW	96%
<p>10. Audit: Does your firm primarily link its audit applications to its tax application to digitally transfer trial balance information? 66% YES</p>	59%	66%

11. Audit: Do your personnel working outside the office (as a typical rule, not due to COVID) access firm applications and information via a remote connection (SaaS, Virtual Private Network, Citrix/WTS) more than 50% of the time? 87% YES	77%	87%
12. Audit: What type of external monitors do your auditors primarily carry in the field? -40% ASUS (37% in 2019) -23% AOC (21% in 2019) -16% Lenovo (14% in 2019) -21% None-our auditors do not take dual monitors into the field (21% in 2019)	79%	79%
13. Audit: Do your auditors carry any of the following into the field the majority of the time (check all that apply)? -51% Scanners (51% in 2019) -14% Printers (12% in 2019) - 5% Multi-Function Devices (5% in 2019) -79% Mobile Hot Spot/MiFi Device (62% in 2019)	51% Scanners	51% Scanners
14. Audit: Does your firm utilize a single vendor for audit programs/engagement binders? -33% CCH ProSystem Fx Engagement (77% in 2019) -27% Thomson Engagement CS/Advance Flow (17% in 2019) - 7% Caseware (6% in 2019) -33% do not utilize a single vendor for audit programs/engagement binders <i>*Combined question reworded in 2021 to ask what specific audit program and audit binder combination utilized.</i>	60%	67%
15. NEW-Audit: What audit Engagement Binder does your firm utilize? -58% WK/CCH ProSystem -20%Thomson Reuters -12%Caseware -10% (AuditFile, Custom, or Do Not Do Audits)	NEW	58% WK/CCH ProSystem
16. NEW-Audit: What audit program vendor does your firm utilize? -70% Thomson Reuters/PPC -19%WK/CCH ProSystem -11% Other	NEW	70% Thomson Reuters Checkpoint (PPC)
17. Audit: What data extraction tools do your auditors utilize on the majority of their engagements (check all that apply)? -61% Excel (59% in 2019) -17% IDEA (18% in 2019) -10% TeamMate Analytics (CCH) (3% in 2019) - 4% InformationActive (3% in 2019) - 8% Other (includes ACL, Validis, Alteryx, CelerOps, and InFlo) -20% None/Not Applicable (22% in 2019)	78%	80%

<p>18. Audit: What digital tool does your audit team use for scheduling?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -37% Excel (51% in 2019) -13% ProStaff (13% in 2019) - 4% XCM (2% in 2019) -15% Other (includes Outlook and Practice Management) <p>-30% None/Not Applicable (24% in 2019)</p>	76%	70%
<p>19. Audit: What application do your auditors utilize to receive the majority of source documents from clients digitally before the start of an audit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -29% Citrix ShareFile (18% in 2019) -17% CCH Axcess Portal (18% in 2019) -15% Thomson Reuters NetClient CS (11% in 2019) -14% SuraLink (9% in 2019) -17% Other (includes various portals) <p>- 9% None, we do NOT receive the majority of source documents before the start of the audit (23% in 2019)</p>	77%	91%
<p>20. NEW-Administration: What percentage of firm personnel do you anticipate will be working remotely on a day-to-day basis through the upcoming busy season (assuming COVID restrictions)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -17% expect <11% of staff to work remotely on a day-to-day basis -12% expect 11%-25% of staff to work remotely on a day-to-day basis -19% expect 26%-50% of staff to work remotely on a day-to-day basis -35% expect 51%-75% of staff to work remotely on a day-to-day basis -17% expect 76%-100% of staff to work remotely on a day-to-day basis 	NEW	52% expect >50% of staff to work remotely on day-to- day basis
<p>21. NEW CAAS: Has your firm identified a digital “tech stack” of applications to support your firm’s Client Accounting and Advisory Services? 33%-YES</p>	NEW	33%
<p>22. Administration: Which tools does your firm primarily utilize to store firm wide information or as an intranet (i.e. personnel manual, best practices and internal firm procedures)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -25% Microsoft SharePoint (11% in 2019) -23% Document Management (30% in 2019) - 3% WordPress (4% in 2019) -23% Other (includes Microsoft Expression/Teams/PPT, iChannel, GoFileRoom, Google Sites, Jostle, Paycore, Right Networks Cloud, and Weebly). <p>-26% None, we do not utilize Intranet tools (33% in 2019)</p>	67%	74%
<p>23. Administration: Does your firm have an electronic document destruction procedure to ensure deletion of outdated electronic files on the network? 58% YES</p>	60%	58%

<p>24. Administration: What tool does your firm utilize to provide clients with a self-service payment option on your website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -21% Affinipay/CPACharge (6%-9 firms in 2019) -17% QuickFee (9%-14 firms in 2019) - 3% PayPal (8 firms in 2019) -25% Various providers including Authorize.net, QBO, Heartland, Capital One, CardConnect, Converge, Elavon, eProcessing Network, Omega, Stripe, TermSync, Trust Commerce) -35% None, we do not have a self-service payment option on our website (57% in 2019) 	43%	65%
<p>25. Administration: What method does your firm utilize to <i>pay the majority of</i> accounts payables via electronic means?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -19% Credit card for Points/Miles (22% in 2019) -19% Credit card for Cash Back (16% in 2019) -17% Bill.com (11% in 2019) -15% Other (includes ACH/EFT/BillPay through bank) -31% None, we primarily pay vendors via checks/manual methods (44% in 2019) 	56%	69%
<p>26. Administration: Does your firm utilize a remote check scanner in your office to deposit client checks? 84% YES</p>	79%	84%
<p>27. Administration: Does your firm deliver digital payroll stubs via secure email or portal? 81% YES</p>	78%	81%
<p>28. Administration: What method does your firm utilize to create and submit digital expense reports to administration?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -30% Excel/Adobe (23% in 2019) -24% Practice Management/PDF (29% in 2019) - 4% Expensify (3% in 2019) - 1% Tallie (3% in 2019) -14% Other (includes Concur, Bill.com, Ascentis, Bamboo HR, Chrome River Clarcity, Divvy, Expense Approval Pro, OpenAir and Paylocity) -28% None, our expense reports are manual (34% in 2019) 	66%	72%
<p>29. Administration: What dashboard/digital data analytic tools (other than Excel) does your firm utilize for internal report creation (check all that apply)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -59% Practice Management (9% in 2019) -20% Microsoft Power BI (5% in 2019) - 3% Tableau (1% in 2019) -14% Other (Domo, MS Access/SQ/SharePointL, QuickBooks, Fathom, Practice Insights, Practice Pro, SAP Business Objects, XCM). -21% Not applicable; our firm does not use digital dashboards or reporting (73% in 2019) 	27%	79%

<p>30. Administration: What digital tool does your firm utilize for managing the recruiting/hiring process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8% BambooHR (6% in 2019) -18% Other (included ADP, Ascentis, Paycor, UltiPro, ZipRecruiter, Bernie, Handshake, Jobvite, LinkedIn, Newton, OnePoint, Paylocity, Taleo) -75% None, our firm does not utilize a digital recruiting tool (80% in 2019) 	20%	25%
<p>31. Administration: What digital HR tool does your firm utilize to manage employee evaluations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5% Trackstar (3% in 2019) - 4% Bamboo (4% in 2019) - 4% Halogen (3% in 2019) - 2% HR Performance Pro (2% in 2019) -21% Other (Included Quantum, ADP, UltiPro, Google Forms, Airtable, Ascentis, Impraise, Kazoo, ReviewSnap, Survey Monkey, Top Performance, Truevelop) -64% None, we do not have a digital tool to manage evaluations (68% in 2019) 	32%	36%
<p>32. Administration: What digital tool does your firm utilize to track CPE compliance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -18% Practice Management (28% in 2019) -11% Excel Spreadsheet (15% in 2019) -10% Thomson Learning/Rewired (11% in 2019) - 3% Micron CE Manager (4% in 2019) -24% Other (includes CCH CPE Link, -34% None, we do not track CPE via electronic means (28% in 2019) 	72%	66%
<p>33. Administration: What tool does your firm utilize to store CPE Certificates in a digital format?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -39% Adobe PDF on Network Drive (15% in 2019) - 7% Thomson Learning/Rewired (8% in 2019) - 5% Micron CE Manager (4% in 2019) -23% Other (Includes Prolaera, CPELink, Ascentis, BambooHR, LC Vista, PFX Engagement and various document management apps) -23% None, we do not store CPE certificates digitally (52%in 2019) 	48%	77%
<p>34. NEW-Administration: Do firm personnel utilize information dashboards within your Practice Management application to update internal reporting information? 52% YES</p>	NEW	52%
<p>35. Practice Management: Are the majority of invoices prepared onscreen rather than completed on <i>manual</i> billing sheets? 84% YES</p>	72%	84%
<p>36. Practice Management: Does your firm deliver client invoices electronically? 79% YES</p>	60%	79%

<p>37. Practice Management: What tools/APIs is your firm utilizing to automate input of client bank statements, invoices, receipts, etc. (check all that apply)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -68% QuickBooks downloads (5% in 2019) - 6% ReceiptBank (2% in 2019) - 6% Expensify (2% in 2019) - 5% Hubdoc (3% in 2019) <p>-28% None, Not Applicable (85% in 2019)</p>	15%	72% use some API automation
<p>38. Communications: Does your firm provide internet enabled devices (other than smart phones) for senior management working outside the office (i.e. tablets, notebooks, etc.)? 51% YES</p>	53%	51%
<p>39. Communications: Has your firm implemented Unified Messaging Technology for all staff (voice message/integrated fax delivered electronically via email)? 75% YES</p>	49%	75%
<p>40. Communications: What collaboration/instant messaging tool does your firm primarily utilize internally?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -62% Microsoft Teams/Yammer (4% in 2019) - 2% Microsoft Skype for Business (32% in 2019) - 2% Slack (3% in 2019) -16% Other (includes Zoom,Google Chat, RignCentral, WhatsApp, Jabber, Save EIOBoard, Mitel Connect, Zac) <p>-18% None, our firm does not utilize a collaboration tool (44% in 2019)</p>	56%	82%
<p>41. Communications: What video calling/conferencing tool does your firm utilize?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -64% Zoom (17% in 2019) -26% Microsoft Teams (Skype/Yammer were 19% in 2019) - 3% GoToMeeting (25% in 2019) - 3% WebEx - 4% Other (RingCentral and LifeSize) <p>-0% None, we do not utilize video conferencing (26% in 2019)</p>	74%	100%
<p>42. Technology: What Multi-Factor Authentication application does your firm utilize to login to the firm's network?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -45% DUO (41% in 2019) -24% Other (included Microsoft, Okta, AuthControl Sentry, LoginTC, SecureAuth, and Ubikey USB Fob) <p>-31% Not Applicable, we do not utilize Multi Factor Authentication (48% in 2019)</p>	52%	69%

<p>43. Technology: What remote access tools does your firm utilize to connect to client computers to provide support, training or remote work (check all that apply)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -36% Microsoft Teams -23% GoToMeeting/Assist (26% in 2019) -19% LogMeIn (18% in 2019) -14% TeamViewer (3% in 2019) -21% Other (included ConnectWise, RAS/RDP, Zoom, VPN, Rescue Assist and Splashtop) -23% Not Applicable, we do not connect to client computers remotely (34% in 2019). 	66%	77%
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Roman Kepczyk presented a webinar outlining the results of the survey and how your firm can integrate them on January 15, 2021, which was recorded and made available for members on the CPAFMA.org website.

Roman H. Kepczyk, CPA.CITP, PAFM is the Director of Firm Technology Strategy for Right Networks and works exclusively with accounting firms to implement today's leading best practices and technologies incorporating Lean Six Sigma methodologies to optimize firm production workflows. Roman is a CPAFMA Advisory Board Member and been consistently listed as one of Accounting Today's Top 100 Most Influential People in Accounting, INSIDE Public Accounting's Most Recommended Consultants, and CPA Practice Advisors Top Thought Leaders to the profession.

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