

The 2022 Friendly Guide to “Game-Changing” Technology for Accountancy Firms



accountingWEB



glasscubes

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Foreword

AccountingWEB is pleased to be working with [Glasscubes](#) to bring you this handy guide to game-changing technology for accountancy firms. As all accountants know, time is money and the latest technology can really help you be more efficient when dealing with your clients.

With so many different tools available out there, it can be hard to know where to start. We anticipate that this round-up of different enabling technologies will be invaluable in helping you decide what's right for your business. All the software mentioned in the guide is already being used by many firms to transform the way they work.



John Stokdyk
Editor-at-large,
AccountingWEB

At [Glasscubes](#) we help accountancy firms struggling with mundane administration and client communication issues, transform their businesses and become more productive using technology.

This guide will help ensure that you're informed of the latest, leading-edge technology, which is redefining the accountancy sector and the way services are being delivered. Of course, we believe that it's even better to have a single solution that can help you with all of these - and that's what Glasscubes can do.



Craig Hyslop
Director of Customer
Success, Glasscubes

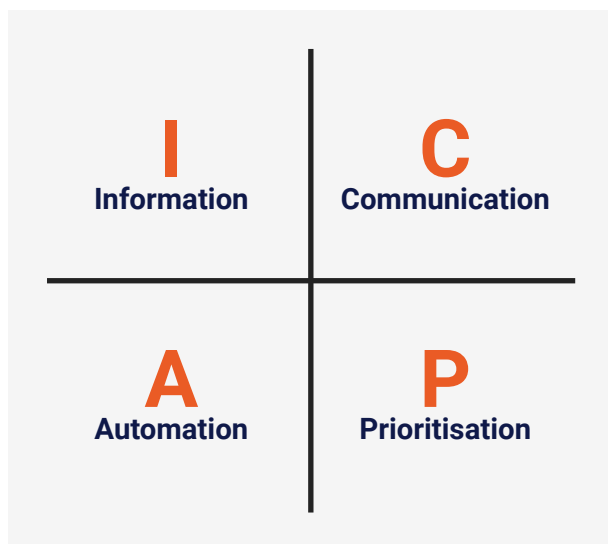


What's the problem?

An accountant's role can be exceptionally administrative in nature. The regular exchange of substantial amounts of time sensitive information between you and your clients, combined with the ensuing back-and-forth communication, generates a workload that can be hard to contain, manage and prioritise.

The solution

Many accountancy firms rely on the ICAP Quadrant as a framework to build a technology stack to improve efficiency. The quadrant does that by focusing on the four pillars of productivity: **information** exchange; client **communication**; process **automation**; and workload **prioritisation**. Each pillar can be strengthened by controlling and then coordinating the flow of information to reduce mundane and repetitive actions.



We've researched and compiled a selection of leading-edge technologies for each pillar and included them in this guide for you.

The technology

Learn why each of these pillars is critical to maximising efficiency and how current technology can help. Then discover what needs to be considered before selecting your chosen solution and a list of the top five technologies that have been proven to drive that change.

We hope that this guide will make it easier for you to consider the best option for your firm and allow you to benefit from the efficiencies that technology can deliver today.

"Many accountancy firms rely on the ICAP Quadrant as a framework to build a technology stack to improve efficiency."



1. Information

Make sure that you receive information from clients, when a comprehensive and timely response is critical

Gathering information from clients in a timely manner is often the biggest obstacle you face in meeting HMRC and Companies House deadlines. Information is frequently sent by clients in a piecemeal fashion, with communication taking place across various email threads. This makes it difficult to keep everything together. Finding specific information in everything that's been received can be a challenge, not to mention the time wasted chasing late or missing items.

The solution

File requests make secure documentation collection effortless, even in bulk.

The progress of your requests is typically summarised in an easy to manage dashboard. Reminders are automated, saving significant amounts of time chasing outstanding or overdue items. Thousands of requests, across hundreds of clients, can be managed without you having to send a single email.

Most importantly, these tools encourage clients to send information promptly. Allowing you to get on with your job,

without the undue pressure of looming deadlines and the consequences of not meeting them.

Considerations

There are a variety of different technologies that will help you request information. Their functionality varies however, from relatively simple requests for files to be uploaded to more comprehensive systems that include collaborative features.

The best solutions include:

- Mandatory requests that enforce a full and comprehensive response but are simple for clients to fulfil. If the recipient declines to upload an item they must provide a justification, which is then fed back to you.
- The option to delegate individual items if the information is required from someone other than the recipient. This facility lets you forward that item to another person for their contribution instead.
- A secure discussion feed that gives your client direct access to you for questions. This ensures that all communication is confidential and linked with the information that's being supplied.
- No size restriction or limit to the number of documents that can be requested.
- The ability to request information from anyone; they don't need to be a paid user of the service.

Glasscubes can help with all of this, but there are other solutions available and throughout this guide, we'll be highlighting some alternative providers who you should also consider.

“Gathering information from clients in a timely manner is often the biggest obstacle you face in meeting HMRC and Companies House deadlines.”





TECHNOLOGY:
Huddle

Huddle is an automated request tool that lets you collect up to 500 files at a time, with assignees automatically notified of new requests. There are no special software requirements. Files can be dragged directly into the browser, where they are automatically added to your Huddle Workspace, and clients can upload files up to 10GB in size.

Huddle claims it can make file collection more secure and up to 80% more efficient. It provides a real-time overview and status of outstanding requests and automatically sends reminders to assignees on your behalf, meaning less chasing from you.

www.huddle.com



TECHNOLOGY:
Smart Vault

Smart Vault offers a Request Docs feature that makes gathering documents and tracking document collection progress easy and simple.

Business users can create any document request lists and bulk send to clients from a central Request Docs dashboard and you can keep track of all the requests in a central location as well as send reminders. Clients also have an online portal that shows what has been requested and lets them see what is outstanding so they don't accidentally miss important information.

www.smartvault.com



TECHNOLOGY:
Suralink

Suralink has a dynamic workflow solution designed to manage hundreds of documents at a time, while allowing you to track the status of an engagement.

It automates the requests and simplifies the engagement process for your clients. There's a real-time view of the document gathering process so you and your clients know exactly which documents have been requested and submitted, plus a timeline of engagements to provide a clear audit trail and accountability of all activity.

www.suralink.com



TECHNOLOGY:

File Request Pro



File Request Pro styles itself as “Secure file upload software for accountants.” It lets you collect sensitive files from clients with drag and drop upload pages that can be used on any device without needing to sign in.

You can use File Request Pro to create client intake forms as part of your onboarding process and support day-to-day work. Your clients simply need to fill in any content questions, and then drag and drop files such as bank statements, interest documents into their folder. Uploaded files can be pushed direct to Microsoft OneDrive or SharePoint, Google Drive or Dropbox, so your files are organised in one secure place.

www.filerequestpro.com



TECHNOLOGY:

File Invite



FileInvite lets you send clients a list of required supporting files, describing exactly what you need by when. To avoid the security weaknesses of email, FileInvite keeps sensitive documents out of your inbox and holds their personal information is stored in a safe, secure place.

Clients have a sleek portal to use and can upload documents from any device. The app also sends them automatic reminders on upcoming due dates.

www.fileinvite.com



2. Communication

Move client communication out of email and collaborate in a more organised manner

Email is great for messaging, but not collaboration. It's not an effective way of communicating with clients while involving other members of your internal team. Exchanging emails in this way adds to inboxes that are already overflowing, and information emailed between individuals excludes the remainder of the team.

The solution

Collaborative software removes the burden from your inbox and allows you to organise client communication in a way that remains visible to all parties.

Team members can share workload and pick up, or contribute to, discussions that they may otherwise not have been privy to in private email threads. Earlier messages are held centrally and can be easily searched, saving time locating relevant information. This also ensures that messages can't get lost or missed among other emails.

Considerations

Instant chat technology and video communication software have taken off since the beginning of the 2020 global pandemic. Although these tools are great for communicating in real time, they're not ideal for client collaboration.

Instant chat and video are good substitutes for a quick conversation or when you need another user's immediate attention. They're not so welcome when they interrupt you, but you're compelled to engage immediately anyway. In contrast, tools that organise written communication into threaded discussions are more convenient; any questions, updates, or issues, are asynchronous and contained. You'll also find responses are more considered, as there's no immediate pressure to reply.

The best tools will:

- Be easy to use and feel familiar to users, as their design and functionality is like popular social media platforms. Including the ability to Like content, @mentioning, polls and emojis. All features that help to encourage client engagement.
- Have a separate news feed, which becomes a central communication channel that's perfect for announcements, updates, or marketing to clients.

Glasscubes makes communication and collaboration simpler, faster and more secure. Other solutions you should consider are listed next.

“Tools that organise written communication into threaded discussions are more convenient; any questions, updates, or issues, are asynchronous and contained.”





TECHNOLOGY:

Slack



Slack replaces email with better organised and more secure instant message communications. Instead of one-off email chains, all your communication is organised into channels that are easy to create, join and search. Channels in Slack give you and your team a shared view of the work being done.

With access to the same information, everyone in the channel can work in sync and new members can see the full context when they join. As you work in channels, your conversations and files become a searchable archive that gets more useful with time.

www.slack.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Chanty



Chanty is an easy-to-use team collaboration tool that offers secure, unlimited messaging, with a “free forever” option that offers many useful features, as well as a more fully-featured paid version.

Chanty enables context-based discussions with threads that can be searched. It also lets you build workflows to set clear goals, assign tasks and start discussions. You can manage who can see projects, archive conversations and set and control permissions and roles.

www.chanty.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Flock



Flock is a shared space for cross-functional work. You can create private and public channels that can improve productivity, with discussions and a central hub that helps teams collaborate.

You can create a public channel to lead a general discussion or deliver a company-wide announcement, or a private channel for each of your clients for confidential collaboration.

Flock’s All Channel feed displays all your new messages at once – regardless of what channel they’re in. Allowing you to sort through everything in one clear feed so you never miss another message again.

www.flock.com



TECHNOLOGY:

AirSend



AIRSEND

AirSend for Accounting Firms helps with many tasks from compiling tax returns to financial planning.

AirSend works with email. Clients can receive and reply to your messages through email, they don't need an AirSend account. It lets you keep everyone in the loop with messages and have voice and video calls in private Channels with clients and team members.

Search and find channels, people, messages, files, and actions in seconds. Meaning you don't waste time searching for emails, lost files or forgotten details.

www.airsend.io



TECHNOLOGY:

Wire

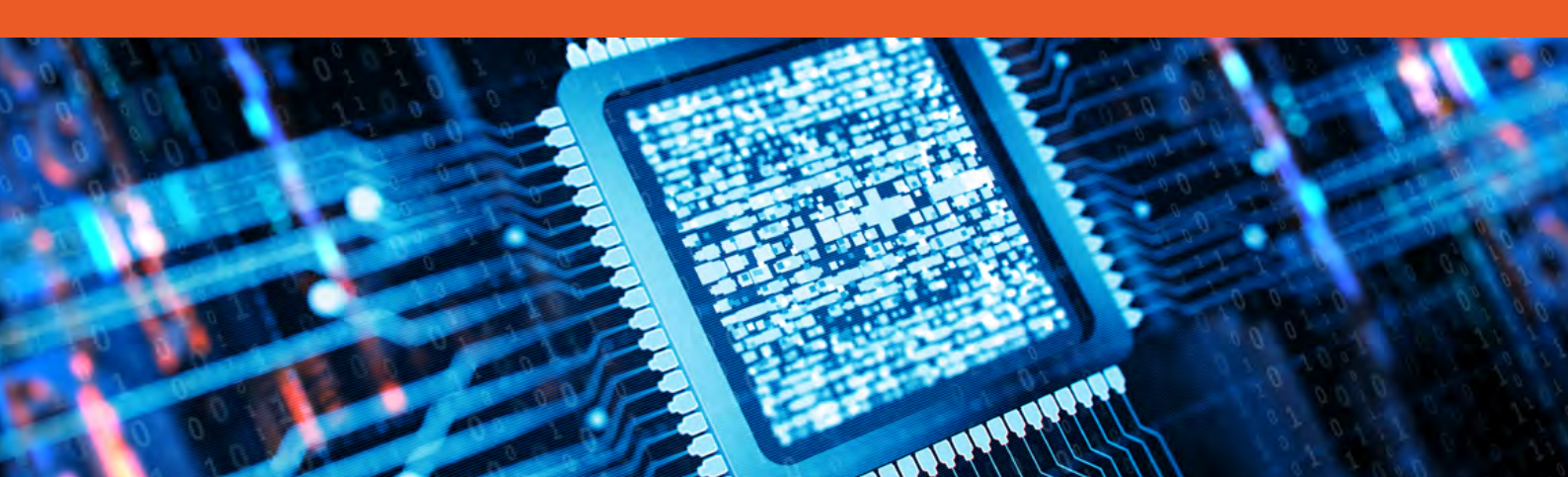
wire™

Wire claims to be made for accountancy firms that require the highest level of secure collaboration.

All messaging in Wire is subject to end-to-end encryption. To send an encrypted message the sender client needs to open a cryptographic session with every recipient – usually all the participants in a particular conversation.

Wire supports private groups, and each group can have many group members sharing all types of messaging, similar to 1:1 conversations. A group administrator can add more participants to the group.

www.wire.com



3. Automation

Control the information that's supplied by your clients and automate mundane or repetitive actions as it's received

To fulfil the core services your firm provides, you need information from your clients on a regular and recurring basis for services such as payroll, management accounts, and tax preparation.

Without controls in place, each client will supply information in a format of their own choice, whether that be summarised in a spreadsheet, as a written email instruction, verbally over the phone, or otherwise. All these different mechanisms can, unfortunately, lead to the distribution of sensitive and confidential information by email and other insecure methods.

When information is received, you usually need to manually collate and process it, which is labour intensive and adds to operational costs. There is no easy way to see a real-time overview of everyone's workload to gauge what work is complete or overdue. Lastly, additional time is wasted having to chase clients for late or incomplete submissions.

The solution

Online information request forms are a great way to gain control over the format of

information that is being supplied by your clients. Forms are most beneficial when information is required on a recurring basis since an online form can be distributed once and then used as many times as required.

When a client's form is submitted, it is often the first step of a longer, repetitive process. Workflow software can automate those follow-on actions to reduce admin and supercharge a firm's productivity. Workflow also ensures that information is acted on the instant it's received, guarantees that information cannot get lost, and removes the potential for human error.

Form submissions are immediately encrypted and securely transferred to maintain the integrity of any sensitive data and unlike email, there's no possibility that confidential information can be sent to the wrong recipient by mistake.

Considerations

The move from paper-based forms to digital is not new. The exciting development, which has massive efficiency gains, has been the addition of automated workflow to forms. Each vendor approaches this differently but the best support:

- Automated filing to nominated locations
- The ability to collect information from multiple contributors in a predetermined order.
- Multiple requests for approval.
- Tasks automatically created and assigned to members of your team.

Imagine the time saving of combining multiple workflows, which are simple to create but together deliver a powerful automated solution. Glasscubes can offer all of this in an integrated solution. Other solutions that provide some of this functionality are included on the following pages.

“Without controls in place, each client will supply information in a format of their own choice. All these different mechanisms can unfortunately lead to the distribution of sensitive and confidential information by email and other insecure methods.”





TECHNOLOGY:

Integrify



Integrify allows you to automate any business process by customising online forms to capture data and apply action triggers to line items or any other form element you need.

Integrify lets you use drag and drop tools to create tasks and connect them into a custom workflow that replaces manual. It includes Workflow Templates and lets you build an unlimited number of automated processes.

www.integrify.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Paperform



Paperform helps you collect financial information securely online and automate your accounting and routine financial operations.

When building your forms and landing pages, you can choose from more than 20 question types, including text, number, date, signature, and file upload. Once collected, the submissions are stored safely in your Paperform account. You can export the information in CSV, PDF, and Word formats – or use third-party integrations to send it where you need it to go.

Using Paperform's native and Zapier integrations, you can automatically synchronise your data between your forms and third-party tools, to automate and save time.

www.paperform.co



TECHNOLOGY:

Content Snare



Content Snare claims to offer organised information collection without email. It's like a checklist for your clients with automatic reminders to cut down email interchanges and save you time gathering information.

You're able to create your own workflows so that you always know what stage you're at. If your information goes through different levels of approval, you can create columns for each stage. Then simply move requests through as they are approved.

www.contentsnare.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Formstack



Formstack is a dedicated automation system for finance professionals, with secure mechanisms to collect, manage and store important financial information.

Formstack forms let anyone in your organisation build custom online forms with an easy-to-use form builder. These let you collect data, and automate processes and tasks in just a few clicks by designing intelligent workflows.

www.formstack.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Jotform



Jotform is an online tool that lets users build forms that use conditional logic, generate reports and automate workflows.

You don't need to know how to code to make it work. Using a web browser, users can layout forms to meet specific business needs. Access to the tools is unlimited, so the option is always there to improve online forms and add integrations to other tools to help speed up and simplify your workflows.

www.jotform.com



4. Prioritisation

Cross-functional workload prioritisation that gets the job done

Consider for a minute, the quantity of clients your firm works with and the number of jobs you perform for each. Then look at the employees who engage with those clients, the roles they fulfil and their workload.

How do you assign tasks and priorities to those individuals in an environment that's secure and transparent to everyone involved? How do you know what needs to be completed, by whom and when, and what holds everyone accountable to ensure the job gets done?

If you don't have a system to prioritise your client workload, how can you guarantee that deadlines are met? Particularly at times when workload increases and bottlenecks occur, such as on the approach to the end of the year, when personal tax returns need to be prepared, approved, and submitted.

“This type of tool becomes even more essential for large and complex audits or corporate finance work.”

The solution

Task management technology is the answer. It makes it easier to manage workloads and the resources required to complete them. Commonly used for audits or tax returns, easily handling thousands of clients, where you have a series of actions to complete within a specified timeframe.

This type of tool becomes even more essential for large and complex audits or corporate finance work. Providing a comprehensive suite of project management tools, which help ensure that everybody's workload remains on schedule and is completed on time.

Team collaboration and external client communications are contained against individual tasks but remain visible to all the relevant parties, keeping everyone in the loop. Visual reporting gives you immediate insight into your team's activity, their engagement and progress. This can be done at an overview level, by monitoring, reporting, and analysing workload firm-wide, or in detail, by individual client, employee, or job.

Considerations

Typically, the system will be arranged in client workspaces, secure online areas that you invite people to join so you can assign tasks, share files, and collaborate. Each workspace is secure and unique, to keep activities distinct and confidential. Some tools allow these workspaces to be customised and individually branded, including a welcome message and instructions that are unique to your client.

Features will vary but the more comprehensive tools will offer task dependencies, critical path analysis and Gantt charts. All of which help to ensure that your project stays on schedule and is completed by its deadline.

Calculating the costs associated with a client project can either be an internal requirement or a necessity for accurate external charging. A few of the advanced solutions, like Glasscubes, allow the allocation of estimated time to tasks and then make it easy to record and report on the actual time spent completing them.

When looking for the right solution for your firm you need to pay attention to the functionality and flexibility of the various tools. Compare Glasscubes to these other leading-edge options on the following pages.

“If you don’t have a system to prioritise your client workload, how can you guarantee that deadlines are met?”





TECHNOLOGY:

Karbon



Karbon is work management software for your accounting firm. It claims to increase your firm's capacity to deliver on time and budget, with a single place to communicate and collaborate on work.

Karbon simplifies and automates client data-collection with Client Tasks and Auto-Reminders that can do all of the chasing for you. The moment a client sends documents and comments, you are notified right where you need them and can see what's outstanding.

You can simplify and scale your client onboarding by standardising your onboarding process with templates that allow you to take on more clients and still give each one the red-carpet treatment. Karbon integrates with other systems to trigger workflows the moment a new proposal is accepted, creating seamless efficiency for everyone.

www.karbonhq.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Jetpack



Jetpack is a workflow solution designed to help accountants stay organised. It comes with a library of pre-built templates that can be adapted into checklists that can be applied across your whole firm. Or create your own from scratch. The step-by-step sequences in Jetflow help you prioritise tasks so you're never left wondering what to work on next.

The software also tracks what your team is working on to help you monitor how much progress your firm has made in a given time period.

www.jetpackworkflow.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Wrike



Wrike aims to maximise billable work by eliminating and automating repeatable tasks. As a fully-featured professional services management platform, Wrike offers tools to optimise communication, internal collaboration and report on progress.

Practice managers get a 360-degree view of projects to better manage resources, track billable hours, and make better decisions, while clients get real-time updates and insightful reports on their projects.

www.wrike.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Monday



Monday aims to let you run all your business operations online. It lets you manage and track your operations effectively in one flexible workspace. Collaborate with your team in real-time, assign tasks and notify your teammates on status changes, online. You can stay on top of every aspect of your business and track progress, timelines, and budgets at a single glance.

There are automation tools to set up workflows in minutes. Reducing repetitive manual tasks and endless email threads, so you and your team can focus on goals and create real impact.

www.monday.com



TECHNOLOGY:

Trello



Trello is built around an online Kanban-style board, with task lists and cards that can be customised and expanded with more features as your teamwork grows.

Trello lets you set up and customise workflows for just about any process, where every single part of your task can be managed, tracked, and shared with teammates. Clicking on any individual card will uncover an ecosystem of checklists, due dates, attachments, conversations, and more.

www.trello.com



Summary

It's a complicated software landscape, which can be difficult and time-consuming to navigate. As well as ensuring you have the right functionality, you need to consider flexibility, integration with existing software and cost. At Glasscubes, we believe that our solution offers one of the very few, true, all-in-one integrated options for accountancy firms.

When putting together this shortlist of tools we focused on what was most important to accountants, based on our experience of working with a diverse range of firms, and the expertise gained from decades of developing and distributing software as a service (SaaS).

We picked what we felt to be the strongest solutions for each of the quadrants' pillars. Although some providers can offer a fit for more than one, in our opinion they were not stronger than each of the quadrant pillar's individual recommendations, which is why they don't appear more than once in this guide.

Uniquely though, Glasscubes is the only solution that can compete with all of the top five picks, across each of the quadrant's four pillars.

“We picked what we felt to be the strongest solutions for each of the quadrants’ pillars. Although some providers can offer a fit for more than one, in our opinion they were not stronger than each of the quadrant pillar’s individual recommendations.”

About



glasscubes

A single technology for your information,
communication, automation, and
prioritisation requirements.

To help your firm become more productive, Glasscubes provides a leading-edge, modern-day client portal for accountancy firms. It addresses all four productivity pillars, and several others, using a single, integrated technology.

Glasscubes will make your job easier, improve your client's experience, and provide your firm with a competitive advantage.

To learn more about how Glasscubes helps
Accountants work smarter, faster and with
less effort visit:

www.glasscubes.com

About accountingWEB



News

The latest news and updates from a roster of expert contributors.



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Community

The leading and largest community within the accounting profession in the UK.

AccountingWEB.co.uk is the largest independent online community for accounting and finance professionals in the UK - providing award-winning content and online engagement between it's members in a true community environment.

Accountants in Practice represent just under half of our visitors and we reach 75% of firms outside of the top 20. Accountants in Business represent the remainder of our audience, typically working in smaller to mid-tier businesses.

Join the community:

www.accountingweb.co.uk