

Dext

Case Study

Mary Hollister CPA

How Mary Hollister, turned her tax season around in 3 steps

Saved by the cloud

Increased revenue by 30% + 20% more clients



“This past tax season, I worked about 48 hours per week, down from 65, and we served 20% more clients.”



Mary Hollister
President
Mary Hollister, CPA



About

Dext partner Mary Hollister is a CPA based in Whitehall, NY. Despite being based on a working dairy farm, her practice puts many urban outfits to shame in its commitment to technology and efficiency.

For accountants and bookkeepers, tax season brings to mind epic workloads, tight deadlines, extra-long hours, and a whole lot of stress. However, there are certain steps you can take, not just to lighten your load, but get more out of the busy season.

Mary made the conscious decision to use smart planning and technology to have her best season ever. Mary’s previous tax season experience might ring a bell for other accountants and bookkeepers.



Challenge

The first step to improving this was using technology to do more of the heavy lifting. “We looked at our processes with regards to what we were analyzing and what we weren’t, and what tools we could use to focus our time.”

To decide whether they needed to dig deeper into a client’s records they created reports to track changes from the prior year.

The key difference between this new process and doing it manually was that her software could pinpoint areas of variance in spend or cost allocation faster and more efficiently, allowing her team to spend their time-solving issues, rather than just hunting for them.

“Before, I was doing about 100 hours a week, with no days off. “

The second key element was using the cloud to get ahead.

“Most of our clients are now on QuickBooks Online, so we have access to that information throughout the year. Prior to tax season, we start looking at the records for the first nine or ten months in advance. Having that head start really made a huge difference because we can then ask questions on a current level when things are fresher in clients’ minds and they’re more responsive.”

The final step was taking a firm line when it came to new clients. Whereas once she would have taken all new business for tax work, she now focused on making decisions that would benefit the practice for the whole year.



Clients are really happy with what we're doing, and they're talking about it - 100% of my new business comes from recommendations."

"If you just want to be a tax client, I'm not interested. But if you want to work with me in a collaborative environment where we give you real-time advice on your business then I have room on my client list for you."

"Before I never would have said that," claims Mary. But the response from clients was surprisingly positive.

"One client told me that I was charging three times more than his previous accountant, so I sent him an email detailing the services we offered. Things like working in the cloud, having a CPA on speed dial, real-time information throughout the year."

"If you just want to be a tax client, I'm not interested. But if you want to work with me in a collaborative environment where we give you real-time advice on your business then I have room on my client list for you."

He signed an engagement letter the next day and remains a client. "I spoke to him to see how he felt 45 days in. He said 'Thank God I paid your fees - I can't believe how much more I'm getting.'"

We got more work done during tax season than we ever have before, without working as many hours. It doesn't get any better than that!

It goes to show that once clients see what you really have to offer, it stops being about money. The combined approach yielded impressive results.



Solution

"We got more work done during tax season than we ever have before, without working as many hours. It doesn't get any better than that!"

"Before I embraced technology, I worked way too many hours and didn't have the work-life balance that I was seeking."

After first implementing Dext, Mary saw a decrease in her hourly bills which presented a conundrum. As she became more efficient and saved more time, her revenue dropped 50% under her time-based billing system. So, with those hours saved, she decided to do more of what she enjoyed by offering new value-added services and taking on new clients, all resulting in a 130% increase in year-over-year revenue.



Tax Season is never going to be easy, but I am confident that as we go forward that it will definitely get less taxing.”



Results

The software she uses is now an important part of her conditions for new clients. “The combination of Dext and QuickBooks Online is now the crucial moment - I tell them if you’re not in the cloud I won’t work with you.”

Luckily, the easy data capture that Dext offers is also a tool for winning new business.

“The fact that clients won’t have to search for their invoices, later on, is critical. We’re always chasing clients for things like closing statements when they buy a piece of property. But if they can just take a picture of it and it appears instantly in front of us, it’s easier for everyone and it makes us more efficient.”

The new efficient processes and improved client experience are also driving growth in Mary’s practice.

“This past tax season, I worked about 48 hours per week, down from 65, and we served 20% more clients.”

“Clients are really happy with what we’re doing, and they’re talking about it – 100% of my new business comes from recommendations.”

The success she had also meant that Mary was able to pay bonuses to her team for the first time ever, and she plans to do the same this year.

“Tax Season is never going to be easy, but I am confident that as we go forward that it will definitely get less taxing.”

**Ready to
redefine
business
advisory?**

Book a consultation
with a member of
our team.

dext.com/get-in-touch