



The secret to practice success? Making clients part of the team

We explore how proper client collaboration can make your accounting and bookkeeping practice more successful



Understanding your clients' working styles

Clients have different working styles; some may want to hand everything over to you while others want to work more collaboratively.

The former may only have a little contact with you besides occasional emails with receipts and invoices attached, or the odd business update. These clients pay you to complete all monthly or quarterly bookkeeping, compliance tasks, and deliverables like VAT and tax returns. Others only get in touch annually so you can prepare their accounts ahead of tax season.

The trouble is, such transactional relationships limit the amount of strategic advice you can deliver for your clients. When you really get to know the people you work with, you can provide targeted services that get to the core of your clients' needs.

Although some clients may have chosen this kind of transactional relationship, it's worth considering what you want for the practice. If small adjustments to your **clients' ways of working** mean they experience more benefits and access greater support from you, they'll likely be open to changing their working styles.

The alternative to taking on every task is a **more collaborative relationship** – where clients are happy to complete parts of their own bookkeeping and admin throughout the year. They gain visibility over their numbers while safe in the knowledge that you're on hand to support them whenever they need it. This means your role as their advisor becomes more focused on **year-end compliance and delivering strategic services**, putting the numbers to work, so your clients can see the true impact of your skills.

And thanks to **modern accounting software**, working collaboratively doesn't mean doing more. You can streamline, automate, and simplify regular admin tasks so there's plenty of room for high-value, collaborative work.

Let's explore how you can enhance your existing client relationships and potentially transform some of those transactional interactions into more strategic partnerships.



The benefits of effective client collaboration

The more involved your client is at keeping on top of their admin – such as tracking income and expenses – the more accurate your view of their financial position. This enables you to deliver timely advice, so your clients can make proactive business decisions.

The better your advice and guidance, the more satisfied your clients become. **Dependable, data-driven advisory that helps businesses perform better will always be sought after.** Your clients might even recommend you to businesses in their networks.

Collaboration deepens your understanding of client needs, meaning you can tailor your services to be more effective and valuable for them. This creates a **continuous feedback loop** that allows you to refine your services based on client feedback and requirements.

Engaging your clients in basic bookkeeping tasks also helps you **run a more efficient practice**. You don't need to chase clients for evidence since they can upload receipts and invoices using their smartphones. With a **single ledger** for you and your clients, there's no confusion about which data source to rely on.

Modern accounting software gives you and your clients a **clearer financial view**. You can track live cash flow, bills and invoicing, and customise reports and projections. Complete visibility gives you and your clients peace of mind, and the tools to make better business decisions.

Working together creates opportunities for **improved problem-solving**. You can combine your experience and knowledge, learning from each other and gaining new insights.

What's more, **collaboration happens in real time in cloud-based software**. You and your clients can upload information and check transactions at the same time, from different places, whether you're working from your desk or somewhere more exotic.



Xero makes client collaboration **easy**

If your clients are time-poor, they might worry that taking on more of their admin means they'll have even less opportunity to get business done. But regularly tracking their income and expenses will give them a more accurate understanding of their financials. This can build their confidence, and help them manage their spending better.

The benefits work both ways – when your clients are successful, your practice stands a greater chance of being successful too. Just ask Daniel Crowther, CEO at Thorne Widgery:

‘Because we use Xero, everything is up to date. That means I can have much more powerful conversations with clients. I know how they did last month, last week, and yesterday.’

Daniel continues, ‘If you can get clients using Xero and working with it, and us having access to it too, that’s where the real benefits come in. Clients love that it is streamlining their systems and that it’s one source of data that everybody has access to.’

You can encourage your clients to pick up more admin tasks by explaining the benefits of collaborating on a single platform, such as getting a live view of their finances and receiving more personalised recommendations.

Clients also benefit from having a secure, central place for their record-keeping. With **Xero**, they never have to worry about misplacing a physical invoice or receipt – they always have reliable storage for their financial records. And access to a single ledger for you and your clients means you can pick up different parts of the process depending on their needs and capacity.



Daniel Crowther,
CEO at Thorne Widgery

Getting clients regularly using Xero is the best first step

Once your clients are confident with tracking income and expenses, they can build on their financial toolkit with features including:

- ✦ **Accepting payments** straight from a Xero online invoice by debit card, credit card, direct debit (via GoCardless or Stripe), Google Pay or Apple Pay. By giving their customers **more ways to pay**, they'll increase the likelihood of getting paid on time, and reduce the time spent chasing payments.
- ✦ **Tracking and paying bills** directly in Xero, getting a clearer view of accounts payable and cash flow.
- ✦ **Tracking projects** using Xero's job tracking tools for project planning, budgeting, quoting and invoicing, including recording time and tracking costs.
- ✦ **Claiming expenses**, managing spending, and submitting or reimbursing expense claims.
- ✦ Using **Xero Payroll** which allows clients to pay themselves and their employees with cloud-based software that automatically calculates employee pay, leave and pension deductions.
- ✦ **Reconciling bank statements** with predictions that help users match and code transactions – a significant time saver.
- ✦ **Using free data capture functionality** through Hubdoc. This means it's simpler than ever for your clients to upload bills and receipts into Xero.
- ✦ For additional tasks or industry-specific needs, the **Xero App Store** offers apps and integrations that connect to Xero.

We also have plenty of guidance online to support you with client set up – such as our **Client Kickstarter** tools and resources.



Deepening client relationships and offering advisory services



Llyr Davies,
Director of PJE Chartered Accountants

You can use this collaborative business model to attract new clients seeking high-value advisory services and a better understanding of their finances, as well as to deepen existing client relationships.

This was the case for Llyr Davies, Director of PJE Chartered Accountants:

‘The quality of the information that we can provide has made a massive difference to the client experience,’ Llyr explains.

‘You’ve not only got a high quality level of information, but you’ve got time to run through it with them. It means you’re going to build trust with the client, your relationship will improve, and they’re happier and more likely to spend money on some advisory services.’



Building a better practice collaboratively

By working closely with your clients, you can strengthen both your relationships and your practice. The more you and your clients understand each other, the better services you can offer. **Strategic, high-value advisory becomes second nature** and more impactful as you learn what's most important to your clients and their businesses.

Cloud-based accounting software makes it easier to share the load, too. Everything in your practice can be brought together in a **single software solution** – one central place to manage clients, jobs, and complete work. Enjoy transparency across your teams and an easy way to collaborate effectively with clients.



Ready to start building a more
collaborative practice?

Get in touch with your dedicated
account manager or visit the partner
tab in Xero Central to get everything you
need to help you manage your practice
and support your clients using Xero.

