Borland Benefield, P.C.
Creates Highly Efficient
Workflows with Wolters
Kluwer Solutions
Borland Benefield, P.C. is a leading accounting firm based in Birmingham, Alabama, with a 90-year history of providing accounting services to businesses and individuals across Alabama and the Southeast. The firm has several specialty niches in construction, banking, and nonprofits, and it completes approximately 150 audit reviews annually as well as many compilations.

Firm Leverages CCH® ProSystem fx® Suite and CCH Axcess™ Software to Achieve Digital Productivity

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Its long-standing history and tradition doesn’t make this firm a stuffy place to work. Borland Benefield, P.C. accountants know how to have fun — playing basketball, jamming on guitars, and comparing notes on fantasy football and baseball teams. When fall rolls around, you’ll find that talk around the water cooler gets serious about SEC football!

Borland Benefield, P.C. Key Data

- Founded in 1922
- Located in Birmingham, Alabama
- 30 employees
- Services include audit and accounting work, tax and business advisory services
- Proud Member of BKR International
“CCH ProSystem fx Engagement is the Cadillac of the audit software market, in my viewpoint. We looked at other products out there and I'll just tell you there’s really no comparison. In the finest firms I peer review — and I do probably 20 to 30 pretty large CPA firm peer reviews — the best of the best firms use Engagement. All of them. Period.”

Benefits of a Fully Paperless Firm
Borland Benefield, P.C. has used many Wolters Kluwer software solutions over the past 10 years, a point the firm credits to what has empowered them to become a fully paperless office and reap all the benefits that come with that. Put simply, getting rid of all of the paper enabled the firm to be more efficient. For example, staff discovered that they can collaborate better as a team, largely because CCH ProSystem fx Engagement makes it easy to locate client information and relevant workpapers.

Both the tax and auditing teams use CCH ProSystem fx Engagement to manage all types of client engagements. When combined with the firm’s other Wolters Kluwer Tax & Accounting solutions, Engagement provides an integrated end-to-end solution as well as a central location where information can flow in and out while still remaining accessible to the entire team.

Some additional benefits of Engagement are that it allows the firm’s professionals to synchronize work from any location and email an entire binder with one click. This makes it easy to pass tax or audit work to reviewers in the firm.

And when it’s time to send work product to clients, Engagement can publish digital documents to CCH Axcess Portal, where clients can securely go get them. Amazingly, throughout this whole process, no paper has to change hands.

Remote accessibility is another benefit. Several firm partners have lake houses outside of Birmingham, and thanks to Engagement they can perform tasks remotely while simultaneously enjoying time away from the office. Chandler recalled one vacation getaway, just after a busy tax season, when his biggest and most important client called and needed a financial statement. With Engagement, he was able to complete the financial statement, have it reviewed and deliver what the client needed using Portal without ever leaving his lake house.

“In the old days, I would have had to go to the office, check the workpapers in, had a second partner review it ... it couldn’t have happened. With technology now, I was able to do all of this stuff,” said Chandler.
Borland Benefield, P.C. Creates Highly Efficient Workflows with Wolters Kluwer Solutions

Using the CCH ProSystem fx Suite and CCH Axcess solutions, Borland Benefield, P.C. was able to:

- Increase volume by 65–75% over 15 years, without increasing staff size, thanks to added efficiency in both tax and audit workflows that helps the firm better leverage its professionals.
- Save thousands of dollars on printing costs by exchanging digital tax and audit documents with clients.
- Compete with larger firms for talented, young professionals.
- Better manage the firm towards strategic goals for client and revenue management.

“A Highly Efficient Tax Preparation Process

Before adopting CCH ProSystem fx Tax, the partners at Borland Benefield, P.C. used their connections at BKR International to find out what other successful firms with good quality control were using in their tax practices. Chandler says what they found is that a “fairly overwhelming” number of the firms they spoke with were using a Wolters Kluwer tax preparation and compliance solution.

CCH ProSystem fx Tax is easy to use and intuitive. It provides automatic calculations, overrides and optimizations for every federal and state return. It also features the industry’s most comprehensive diagnostic system, which tests for omissions and inconsistencies, and then instantly finds related input with a single click.

Again largely thanks to Wolters Kluwer solutions, the firm’s entire 1040 preparation process is paperless. When a client comes in, the administrative secretary in the tax department scans in all of the client’s information using CCH ProSystem fx Scan, which bookmarks the tax documents and groups together W2s and different types of 1099s. Next, all of these documents are uploaded into the client’s binder within CCH ProSystem fx Engagement. The tax preparer then has a scanned library with all of that tax information bookmarked, making it easy to complete the return in CCH ProSystem fx Tax.

Reviewers also have all the information they need to review the finalized return, and then publish it to Portal as the final step for the firm. The client then goes into Portal to access, review and return it to the firm. With Portal, the client can go in and access all their tax work or audit information at their convenience. “We’re actually finding that a lot of clients are starting to allow the portal to be set up with their previous year’s tax returns, current year information, and so on. They’ll just go to Portal multiple times during the year, every time they need a copy of their audit or their review. That cuts me out of the loop, which is saving me money,” says Chandler.

“We looked at three or four tax software solutions side by side, and we adopted CCH ProSystem fx Tax. I think it’s the bomb among tax software! All of the bigger firms are using it, and the more sophisticated firms seem to lean towards that solution.”
Engagement Improves Audit Profitability

Having a paperless auditing process enables Borland Benefield, P.C. to make more efficient use of its auditors. That’s important in a firm that does more than 150 audits each year. Built for engagements of all types, CCH ProSystem fx Engagement is a critical component of Wolters Kluwer’s Integrated Audit Approach — along with CCH® ProSystem fx® Knowledge Coach, which is a peer-review evaluated approach that helps professionals create higher-quality audits. Engagement is used to import raw client data, prepare adjustments, create financial statements and export completed data to tax returns. It also functions as the central location for tracking, reporting, review, sign-off and archiving.

“One of our firm goals and strategic objectives is to quit issuing 1040s in paper form. We use CCH Axcess Portal to upload a client’s tax return into Portal where the client can then go get it, love it, hold it, feel it, sign it, and send it back to us. The client simply uploads it from the Portal. There’s no paper generated at all! That has saved us thousands of dollars in printing costs.”

“Before we hit the field we’ve done risk assessment, we know what’s going on, we’ve read the minutes, we’ve looked at the bank records and AR. It’s so great that the field work is spent doing field work again, instead of trying to figure out what’s going on at the client.”

Better leverage of staff also means audits can become more profitable. Chandler explained, “I’ve got some pretty large audit clients that may file tax returns in 25 states. Once they are set up in year one, the linkage and roll-forward capabilities in Engagement enable us to operate much more efficiently in years two, three and four. I may only need to spend a few hours in those years on setup and I’m billing the client $2,500 for the technology usage.”

Engagement has helped Borland Benefield, P.C. put more responsibility on their clients for providing the initial audit information needed. The Engagement letter describes what the client needs to provide, and they are expected to upload everything into the firm’s secure Portal. Files are set up in Engagement before any auditors go into the field. In fact, before field work begins, the binder contains a trial balance and draft financial statement. Administrative audit staff knows how to enter new accounts, balance the balance sheets, and check the financials — all of which frees up time for the firm’s auditors.

“We’re actually not going to do your audit if you don’t have the ability to scan a document because you’ll take too much time. Leveraging of staff is a key thing for us. To set up a typical file can take a couple days, so our audit administrative people and entry level auditors are doing all of this work upfront. That lets the senior level people do what they’re supposed to be doing … analyzing risk. “Of course, the world is paperless now but in my travels as a peer reviewer, you’d be shocked at how many firms I go to that still have binders sitting out on desks,” said Chandler. “That makes for a less efficient peer review. Using Engagement and other technology solutions is a really big part of our firm’s success.”
“A focus for our firm is to increase efficiency, and through these solutions we’ve seen a great increase over the last two to three years. Our capacity is increasing. We just finished our strategic planning and review, and one of the things we found was that we’ve got basically the same number of people as 15 years ago, but we’re doing 65% or 75% more in volume.”

“When it came time to adopt a paperless system for auditing, we looked at two of the leading brands of audit software. It just made complete sense to go to CCH ProSystem fx Engagement. Most firms that had successful peer reviews that I was reviewing seemed to use Engagement. It offered a leg up because we already used CCH ProSystem fx Tax. The seamless linking between the tax and audit software has saved us a tremendous amount of time.”
Technology Combined with Positive Energy Makes Borland Benefield, P.C. a Great Place to Work

At any firm, recruiting talented professionals is a key part of future success. Chandler describes his firm as “a really, really fun firm to work at. We’ve had virtually no turnover in several years. A great energy runs through the place. We govern by positive mental energy and try to keep it loose. One thing that makes us unique is how much we all like each other. I enjoy accounting to some degree, but most of my enjoyment at work comes from being with my coworkers.”

The firm is picky when it comes to hiring, because it is important to find professionals who are just the right fit. Borland Benefield, P.C. looks for motivated, self-starters who will blend in to the firm’s unique environment and contribute to its positive vibe. Beyond that, Chandler explains, “We really are looking for some personalities. With today’s audit world, you’ve got to be able to get up out of your seat and go talk to some pretty important people.” Last, but definitely not least, Chandler jokes that, “The person we hire has to be technology savvy — they need to already know how to use computers better than us old dogs.”

“We’re bringing in nearly twice as much revenue with roughly the same amount of people. That’s a win-win for everyone; the firm is more profitable, and our entry level professionals are making more money now than ever before. We can offer higher salaries because automation makes our firm so much more efficient.”

“When young professionals interview at our firm, they see a nice, clean office environment without much paper thanks to our good use of technology like laptops and second screens. I think that makes a great impression. It helps us compete with the larger firms when we’re recruiting staff.”
Managing the Firm with CCH ProSystem fx Practice Management

Chandler and the executive team manage day-to-day operations with Practice Management. The solution helps firms like Borland Benefield, P.C. set up projects and budgets, and then track time and billing against personnel and jobs to improve processes and profitability.

With processes in place to capture the necessary time and billing data, Practice Management provides tremendous insight into staff utilization and firm efficiency. The firm tracks how many hours each professional is charging weekly. That information can be compared to the workpapers in Engagement to determine if each employee is working productively.

Chandler said, “If the workpapers are not quite where the hours are, we can make some phone calls and say ‘hey guys, what are you doing? Did you golf yesterday?’”

When it’s time for planning, Chandler and the equity partners have all of the information they need to measure performance against past objectives and set good goals for the future. Practice Management allows them to compare this year’s and last year’s PTD and YTD key figures easily. In addition to better managing employees, management can also analyze client data, including time and expense, invoicing, write-ups and write-downs, payment collections and employee data.

“CCH ProSystem fx Practice Management contains all of the fun ratios we use to manage the firm. It shows us how efficiently we’re working, helps us track progress and how many hours are going towards a project, and how we’re doing against budgets. It does everything. We use the statistical information to compare ourselves to other firms and measure our goals. It is everything to us.”
'Using the audit technology, the tax technology, and the time and billing technology has made my firm incrementally stronger. It’s made us more efficient, and I believe we are leveraging our staff better than most firms through the use of technology. It even helps us follow professional standards. It keeps us more independent with the client as we continue to put more responsibilities on the client.'
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