

ProLine Tax Import

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Evaluating ProLine Tax Import

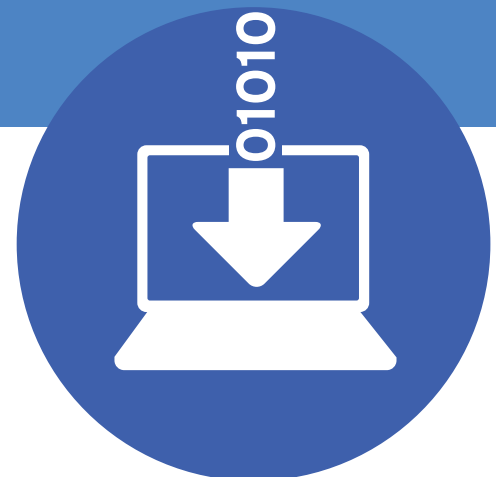
Q&A with Ken Gabelmann, CPA

Ken Gabelmann, a CPA in the Dallas area, was looking for a way to reduce the amount of time his firm was wasting by manually entering data into his tax preparation software.

Part of a fast-growing firm, Ken specializes in tax preparation and planning for small-to-mid-size businesses, as well as monthly and quarterly tax accounting work. He has a CPA with a Masters in Taxation, and is a member of the AICPA & TSCPA.

Each tax season, Ken looks to take the next logical step in streamlining and optimizing his tax preparation workflow. He heard about a new product that was integrated into his tax preparation software that would allow the tax software to automatically import more of the data that he had been manually entering in the past.

The solution is called ProLine Tax Import, and we talked with Ken after he evaluated it for implementation during tax season 2010.



What problems in your workflow made you look at an import solution?

I'm always looking for ways to streamline my workflow and save time. Typing in numbers manually when perhaps technology could do that step for me seemed to make a ton of sense.

What were the biggest concerns you had in considering adding a solution like ProLine Tax Import to your firm, and how were those concerns alleviated?

My biggest question was "Would this product actually be a time saver? Was the OCR technology good enough? Would I spend a lot of time correcting what was imported?" These concerns were eliminated by using the product and testing its accuracy.

Another concern was price point. The unlimited use license eliminated this problem for me. If I use this technology for all my clients, it could cost me as little as \$3.75 per client.

What was your tax preparation workflow last tax season?

Clients would drop off their source documents and we would then assemble and copy the documents and arrange them in the same sequence of Lacerte's tax organizer. We would then key this information into the program. As part of our input process we would highlight all numbers on the source documents that would be included on the return. After input we would run a tape total of all the highlighted items. We would then reconcile this total to taxable income on the return by accounting for various carryovers and phaseouts. This process was done in order to ensure that there were no input errors. The filing copy and client copy were then processed and packaged up with the original source documents and given back to the client.

What are the benefits of ProLine Tax Import?

It will certainly make our staff's lives much better as they will not have to work as hard. But the real question is "How much money can I earn because of the software?" First, the time savings will allow me to spend more time researching issues, which translates to more billable hours. The presentation of the tax return is also much nicer, in that there are no unsightly "See attached documents", etc. This also will translate into more profit for those who use a value-billing approach in their practices.

What workflow changes have you made as a result of ProLine Tax Import?

We did make some workflow changes that weren't too painful. Before I get the file on my desk, my staff can scan and send documents for me and I will then just have to import and review them. I'm getting maximum output from my whole team, including office staff. My time is better utilized as well, as I can spend more time reviewing and less time preparing.

Do you expect ProLine Tax Import to save you time this upcoming tax season? If so, how much time do you estimate it will save you?

I see ProLine Tax Import saving me time in many areas.

First, our firm never e-filed returns for our clients, so we never inputted the address and EIN #'s of the payors and employers. With the new mandate to e-file, I plan on scanning documents and eliminate the tedious task of input. I also feel more confident that the OCR technology will make fewer mistakes than my personnel. So this will cut back on e-file rejects.

Second, we have many clients with voluminous capital gains and losses. In the past, we would make copies of the schedules and just attach them to the return. In the new e-file mandate world, we must incorporate these transactions directly onto the return. ProLine Tax Import makes this task simple and is very accurate. The time savings on these types of accounts will be great.

Third, we expect to save time on the normal input of the numeric data.

My guess is that this process could save us about 15 minutes per return. This could translate to upwards of 100 hours in time savings.

What will you do with the time you will save?

I'll be able to spend time in areas that will make my firm more profitable, like tax consultation and review.

What is your favorite feature in ProLine Tax Import?

The capital gain & loss import function. The fact that the program gives me a choice to directly input or create a separate Excel file which I can massage and later import is an valuable feature.

A close second is the way that ProLine Tax Import sends me back my files. The scanned documents are put into a client folder. I have now automatically stored my clients' documents electronically rather than creating bulky paper files. The scanned documents show me exactly which information was picked up by the OCR technology and which information was ignored. People who use dual monitors can quickly see what was imported and make changes easily in Lacerte for information that was not picked up by the program.

What would you like to tell your colleagues about ProLine Tax Import?

I would recommend it, most definitely. It takes the drudgery out of inputting mundane information into the tax program. It frees up valuable time during tax season: time which I can bill on other research projects or devote to new clients. Also, I do not have to hire part time tax preparers as my administrative staff can now fill that role.

The technology is surprisingly accurate and, if used properly, can save you time and money.

