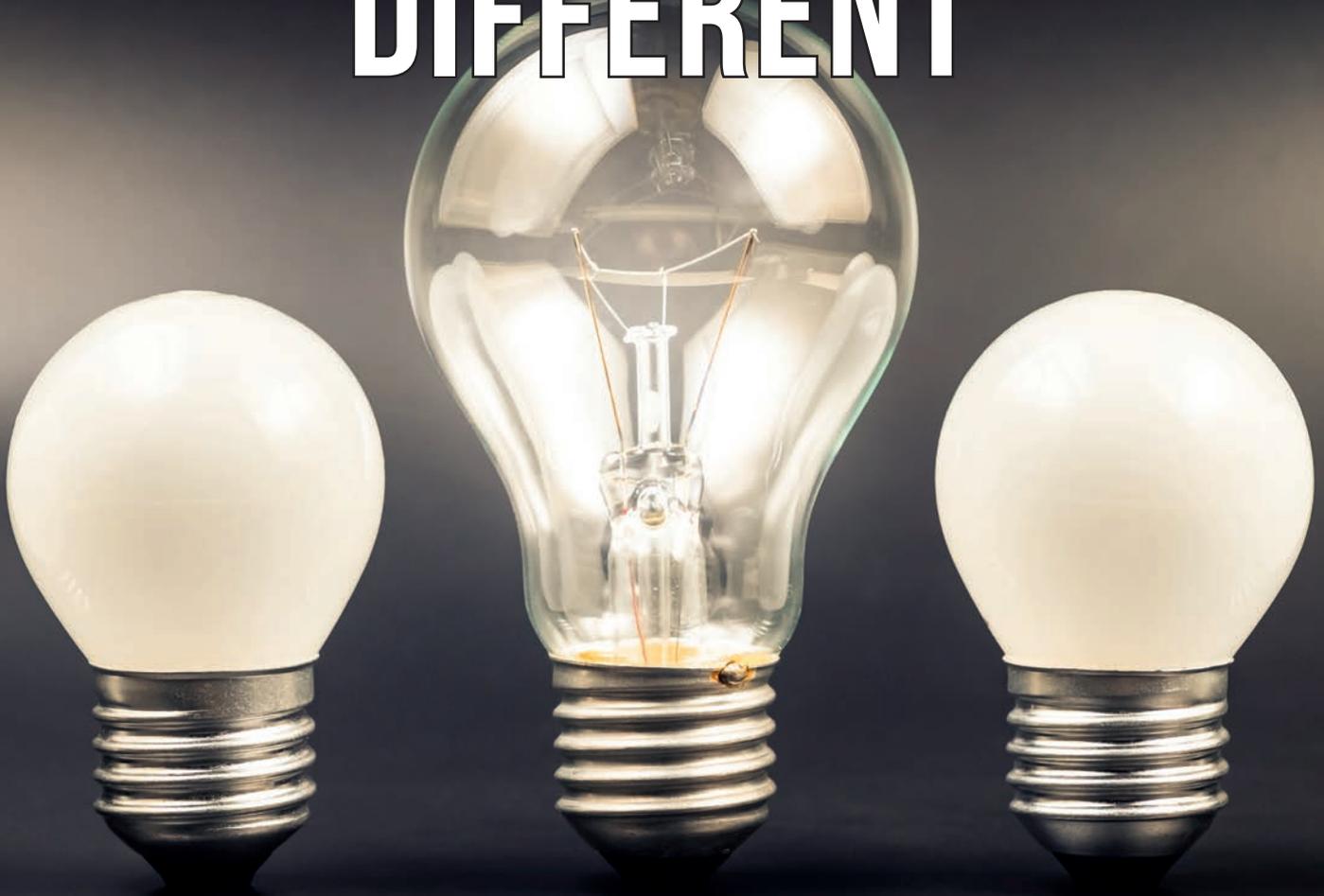




# INTERNATIONAL **Accounting** BULLETIN

## **BIGGER, BETTER, DIFFERENT**



### **MGI WORLDWIDE CEO CLIVE BENNETT DISCUSSES ITS MERGER WITH CPAAI**

#### **FEATURE**

CEOs reflect on 2019's milestones, and outline ESG initiatives for 2020

#### **RANKINGS**

Key industry data and business rankings for the UK and the eurozone

#### **INDUSTRY FOCUS**

Why the widening skills gap in accounting differs from those in other sectors

# DIGITAL ACCOUNTING AWARDS: CRM SOFTWARE OF THE YEAR, 2019

Leading accountancy firms have turned to award-winning client relationship management (CRM) and practice management software solution provider Symphony, to help them implement software platforms to enable higher levels of client management and the ability to gain greater visibility of the opportunities being pursued in their firms. *Brian Coventry*, CEO at Symphony – APS, writes



**A**ll too often we hear about the challenges of firms not being connected with relevant information that will allow them to benefit from the insights that can be gained from having a unified view of client data.

This is usually as a result of fragmented data formed over many years from systems that lack integration capability.

With years of expertise behind the team at Symphony, we have met this challenge by building stronger collaboration between non-integrated systems and teams that use them as part of the introduction of CRM to a firm.

SymphonyCRM, ClientSense, Practice Portal and Advance Practice Management are our prime platforms that facilitate the creation of a new centralised approach, truly integrated, that unlocks the doors to enable opportunities with both prospects and existing clients.

We create a platform that integrates disparate systems including CRM, Practice Management, Marketing Automation, Client Take-On and systems that support the various services accounting firms provide.

## ABOUT SYMPHONY – APS



Since 1999, Symphony has partnered with accounting firms, initially in practice management software solutions and then CRM in 2012. Symphony has evolved to develop holistic, cross-platforms expertise mixing application software and technical disciplines with a consultative capacity.

We aim to see the whole picture. We analyse, we work to understand the issues that are holding you back. We are here to build a coherent, comprehensive transformation strategy aligned to your business ambitions. ■

### CRM: Understanding why change is necessary

The introduction of a CRM platform brings new challenges, and firms can get lost in the options available to them. That is why we created a unique methodology called Envision, to ensure firms understand why change is required.

A technology platform change, such as CRM, on its own will never deliver optimum success. All too often, technology choices are seen to be ‘the panacea to cure all ills’, with key elements of change overlooked – or worse, ignored.

Most firms will know that they should focus on enhancing processes beyond their current state to become more responsive to client management and new opportunities. Platforms that embrace flow, that support behaviour change and process, will develop assets that the firm of tomorrow will benefit by as it seeks competitive advantage and transformation in readiness for the future economy.

The Envision process acts as a precursor to both these change dynamics, forcing the business to gain clarity of the dynamics within the business that hold it back or restrain it from achieving optimum outcomes. By understanding why these retraining forces exist, the firm is able to establish a clear focus on why change initiatives need to happen. To quote Simon Sinek, “People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.”

### CRM specifically designed with focused modules for accounting firms

SymphonyCRM is powered by SugarCRM through a global OEM licence that Symphony has for accounting firms.

Symphony has received the Most Innovative OEM Partner of the Year Award by SugarCRM, as a result of the creation of unique modules and extensions that have been specifically created for accounting firms.

The specific modules we have created include Event Management, Referral Management, Client Take-On and Engagement, Richer Relationships and Publication Management. These modules are positioned alongside Opportunity Management and Marketing Automation.

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR INCREASED VISIBILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES

Pitcher Partners in Sydney looked to Symphony to meet the challenge of getting stronger collaboration between the systems and team. The move to a new centralised system, truly integrated, helped unlock the doors to enable opportunities with both prospects and existing clients.

Adam Irwin, chief operating officer at Pitcher Partners – Sydney, says: “Future-proofing the accountancy practice was top of the agenda, with the main purpose of centralising systems for increased efficiency and visibility, but we needed to link different systems, with multiple data sources, to achieve this.

“Initially, through its Envision process of analysing our existing systems, Symphony helped us to understand the key drivers and inhibitors to making the proposed changes within the business. Once this process was complete, they partnered with us in deploying a client lifecycle management platform, offering consistency of communications to clients, prospects and contacts. It is tailored to our business.”

Irwin continues, “The platform integrates a number of disparate systems including CRM, time and billing, marketing automation and compliance. In doing so, it provides a ‘single source of truth’ and the potential for us to automate a number of repetitive and compliance-based tasks.”



### Cloud-based and mobile CRM

Irwin explains, “This whole process of change is assisting the practice in continuing its shift from predominantly compliance-based to more of a consultative client focus. It has also allowed us to move, or at least start to move, a number of business activities into the cloud, meaning an employee can log and complete any elements of the system on the move, rather than when they return to the office.”

### Centralise for a holistic view

Irwin says, “With Symphony’s expertise, we’ve now got a complete holistic overview of clients and potential prospects. The integrated system has not only allowed us to centralise solutions, providing full visibility across the entire practice, but also to develop systematic automation to some key compliance processes and repetitive tasks, positioning us as consultative, rather than compliance-based.

“Symphony had a great understanding of our business, and intimate knowledge of the key systems used within the practice. Therefore, they were able to provide a truly tailored solution. The team’s willingness to work with the practice to arrive at outcomes tailored to our requirements, and being prepared to start the process without having all the answers and then invest the time in finding them, is second to none,” adds Irwin. ■

### CRM: Integration and automation

A vital component of the SymphonyCRM platform is the integration methodology using SymConnect. This module ensures that firms achieve their desired integration and automation goals. Mazars UK worked closely with Symphony to get SugarCRM integrated to Advance Practice Management, and create efficiencies by getting the systems working better together.

We already had a close relationship with Mazars, providing it with our Advance Practice Management system. As an OEM partner of SugarCRM, we were able to help Mazars when it decided to invest in SugarCRM, which meant that it had two strong relationships it could rely on to drive the success of the implementation.

Mazars has seen an improvement in its business processes, a reduction in the amount of time spent on data entry, and better integration of its systems. Prior to SugarCRM, the business required a manually generated internal billing code for each new client in its finance system. This time-consuming task has now been removed

by the new platform, with billing codes generated within minutes automatically.

By working to deliver one data entry point and improve processes to ensure quality control, Mazars estimates that it has already witnessed a significant 200-hour reduction in manual processing times per month. The firm has also been able to enhance its audit trail and improve its new business processes by integrating risk assessment forms and capability to better monitor its pipelines and analyse bid losses and wins.

### CRM is a game-changer

Co-ordinating data and processes within a modern CRM platform is transformational. The database is unified, it is up to date, and information can be accessed in real time.

The whole client journey is easily accessible to all your team – from lead stage through winning the business to ongoing client management. ■

For more information about SymphonyCRM, visit [www.whysymphony.com](http://www.whysymphony.com) or email [hello@whysymphony.com](mailto:hello@whysymphony.com)

CRM SOFTWARE OF THE YEAR

