

Web & Mobile in The Modern Firm®



Why web and mobile are important in a modern firm

Putting a sound web and mobile strategy in place is critical as you create a modern firm. And that's why we developed this detailed eBook—to educate you on key aspects of building a strategy that meets the needs of today's online- and mobile-driven clients.

We'll first discuss the need for your website to serve as a digital hub, where clients can conduct business with you and prospects can assess current and engaging information about your firm. We will then cover how to assist your clients in developing a mobile strategy that offers easy, real-time access to their financial data and documents.

Your website should serve as a digital hub, where clients can conduct business with you.

Developing a modern website

There was a time when a firm's website was nothing more than an online brochure. Years ago, the approach was to pack your site with as much content as possible so that visitors had all the information required to understand your business and your level of expertise.

Then, as the profession moved into digital delivery for tax returns and financial statements, sites evolved to support this by offering a login button—the most basic functionality. This elevated firm websites from a simple online brochure and marked the advent of sites that offered clients “a place to do business.”

Today's best websites support clients with a powerful client center—where all client-facing technologies are housed in an organized, easily accessible manner.

Offering basic login functionality seems to be where most firms are stuck today. This means that many have only moved slightly past an online brochure—still offering content-heavy pages and no ability for clients to collaborate with firm staff in a meaningful way.

Today's best websites support clients with a powerful client center—where all client-facing technologies are housed in an organized, easily accessible manner. The fact is that today's clients want to work with their accounting professionals in a highly convenient, digital way. They want to work within a platform that is intuitive and easily accessible.

In relation to prospects, they want the ability to research potential service providers quickly. They want clean, simple, less-is-more websites that offer concise, well-articulated messaging and easily accessible contact forms that are simple to use. Today's consumers seek a modern experience in record time. In fact, many studies show that you have less than 15 seconds to capture the attention of a prospect while on your site. Less-is-more has never been so important!

With all this in mind, how do you feel about your website today? What impact will your site have on prospects in the first 15 seconds? Will they be overwhelmed with clutter, or will they be able to quickly understand who you are and what you offer? For existing clients, are you providing an efficient, convenient and rich online experience that will keep them coming back?

Your website should be driven by your business model. Your business model will define the products you want to sell, the clients you want to sell to, and the tools required to deliver your products. With clarity around your business model, it makes it much easier to define how you present your firm online and the tools required to build a platform for today's tech-savvy, on-the-go clients.



Present a powerful, engaging brand by offering a clean, sophisticated and technologically advanced website.

Gaining clarity with your business model

Each part of your business model drives your website strategy. Here, we will dive into each element a bit deeper.

■ Products you want to sell

A lot of firms struggle with this. Traditionally, firms have taken on whatever task the client asks for, and then billed hourly for the work. The consumer market has evolved into one that expects to know what they will pay up front—they want clarity into what they are purchasing. The goal for firm leaders is to get to a place where they are productizing services. That is, offering consistent, repeatable and predictable products.

Productizing provides standardization across services. This results in higher levels of efficiency among staff, predictable pricing and full visibility into products for clients. Consider productizing each of your core services, including payroll, client accounting, individual and business tax, advisory services, and audit.

Once you've defined each product, it's much easier to articulate your offerings on your website. By clearly stating what it is you want to sell, you are better positioned to attract your ideal clients.

■ Who you want to sell to

It's critical to define your ideal clients from the start. Asking such questions as: Do I want to focus on small businesses or large enterprises? Tech-savvy entrepreneurs or shoe-box business owners? Do I want to dig deeper and specify specific niches, such as optometrists or churches? Or perhaps specialize in optometry, but also support service-based businesses broadly? It all comes down to defining those you are good at serving and those you actually like to serve. These will be your ideal clients. By defining those you want to sell to, it's much easier to develop messaging that will resonate with your defined audience.

■ How you will deliver products

This requires you to define the tools required to deliver each product. These are your client-facing technologies that directly impact the client experience. The technologies you choose must support a collaborative work environment and be easy to use and modern.

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Offering a modern client center

Your website represents the main digital hub of your firm. This is where you house the tools required to support a modern client experience. Leading firms offer clients a designated client center, where all client-facing apps are presented in a single, organized space—easily accessible behind a secure login.

Consider offering clients a digital hub where they can access all needed tools to support, for example, their payroll and accounting needs. Tools within the client center would include:

■ QuickBooks® Online

Intuit's online version that supports browser and mobile.

■ QuickBooks Desktop (hosted)

Intuit's desktop version that works from a browser. By using a hosting provider like Right Networks, QuickBooks Desktop can work from any device.

■ Bill.com

A digital accounts payable and receivable tool that integrates deeply with all QuickBooks products. Bill.com supports both browser and mobile.

■ RUN Wholesale Powered by ADP®

A cloud-based solution that provides clients with access to all payroll information while supporting clients' employees with a mobile app to manage their payroll information.

In addition, your website should also offer functionality to make client interactions as easy as possible, such as online:

- Appointment scheduling
- Secure document and data sharing
- Invoice payment
- Video conferencing
- Prospect and contact forms



6 tips for modernizing your website

- ① State the products you sell.
- ② Attract the right clients by clearly defining those you want to serve.
- ③ Deliver products via modern technologies and organize apps within a client center (your digital hub).
- ④ Provide additional functionality that augments the client experience, such as online scheduling and invoice payment.
- ⑤ Offer current, engaging and helpful content. Ensure content is updated frequently to keep visitors coming back to your site.
- ⑥ Offer a mobile-friendly website so visitors can easily access information on any device.

Building a sound mobile strategy for clients

Your mobile strategy is very different from your website strategy. Your website focuses on the client and prospect experience in relation to working with your firm. Mobile strategy, on the other hand, is focused solely on the client. It is all about helping them better interact with their financial data in an organized, efficient way.

Your client's financial mobile experience is every bit as important as your firm's website when it comes to offering a rich client experience. Clients need a mobile strategy that aggregates the right tools and houses them in a single, convenient and mobile location. Your strategy should be easy to teach and adopt by clients.

So, what comprises a financial mobile strategy for clients? Let's start by looking at the most common financial elements:

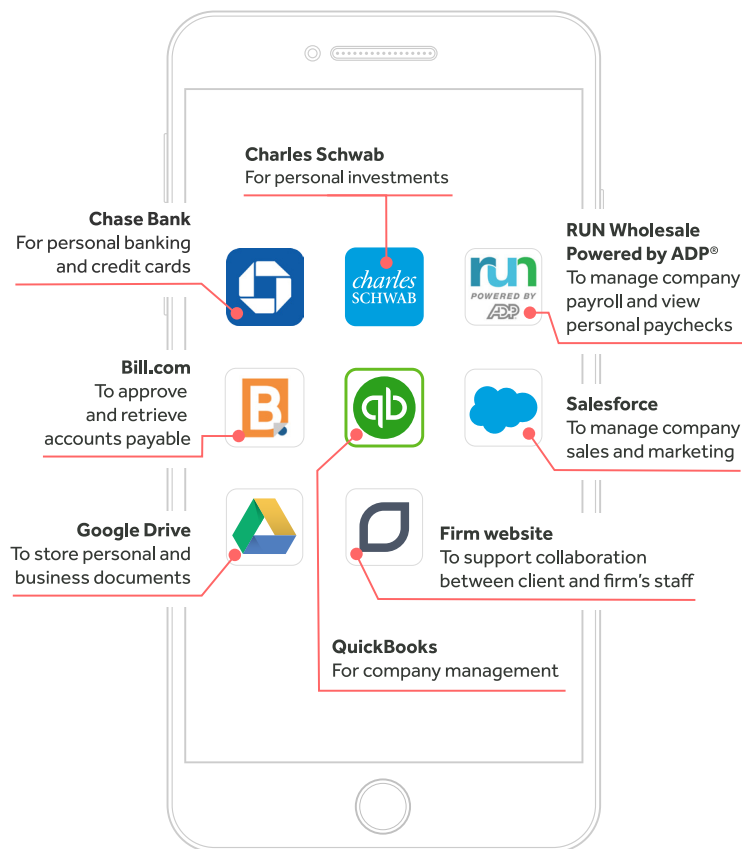
- Banking
- Investments
- Daily accounting (small businesses)
- Payroll data (pay stubs and more)
- Digital document access
- Secure interaction with accounting advisor

Clients need guidance in setting up their mobile strategy. For many, there is little structure in this area—with investments scattered across multiple accounts, pay stubs in paper format, unorganized digital documents, and communications with financial professionals living in siloed, insecure email inboxes. This presents an opportunity for your firm to lead the way in defining your clients' mobile strategy.

The following example offers a glimpse into how to provide clients with a sound plan for organizing their financial lives.

Mobile strategy example

Most people live on their smartphone, using a multitude of apps to manage their personal and business finances. Consider creating a folder on the client's home screen where all their core apps live. You could even label this folder with your firm's name. A client may require the following to be part of this folder. With all needed tools in one organized space, your clients can stay "in touch" with every aspect of their personal and business financial lives.



A well-planned mobile strategy places all needed financial data in a client's back pocket!

Educate clients and staff on mobile strategy

Leading by example is the key to success! Firm leaders should implement a sound mobile strategy for themselves first. This provides a solid foundation for getting buy-in from staff and clients on the need for a well-devised mobile strategy.

For clients, set up a folder on their mobile device with all the tools that power their personal and business financial lives. Then, create a simple presentation that walks clients through each mobile technology, the value proposition for each, and step-by-step instructions on using each effectively and efficiently.

For staff, take them on a guided, detailed tour of your mobile strategy. Offer a clear picture of how the pieces come together and the value of a sound mobile strategy for clients. Also, educate staff on the functionality of each tool and how clients should be using these tools to enhance their mobile experience.

In the end, you want to ensure that clients understand the inherent value of having a defined mobile strategy. Make sure they understand the benefits of having on-demand access to their data and documents via modern technologies, as well as the ability to develop a deeper relationship with your firm.

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Final words...

Web and mobile are at the heart of the client experience. Today, more than ever, firms must offer a digital experience that will keep clients and prospects coming back.

Web and mobile strategies are central components to a firm's broad business model, and they are what clients and prospects are looking at when evaluating a business. To maintain clients and continue to attract your ideal prospects, you must ensure that your firm rates high in both web and mobile.

Want to learn more about how to deliver a rich web and mobile experience?

At Rootworks, we are committed to providing web and mobile solutions that support our members in offering a modern, collaborative experience. Additionally, we continue to develop resources that help members achieve clarity around their web and mobile strategy.

If you want to learn more, please contact sales at membership@rootworks.com

