

SOFTWARE, HARDWARE & THE WEB

BETTER REFERRALS

For all its seeming chaos and pretensions of anarchy, one of the things the Internet does best is to reduce previously haphazard activities — like finding antiques, out-of-print books and rare Beanie Babies — to orderly processes. Now it's working to make getting and giving professional referrals easier and more orderly, too. Where once you had to rely on a grab bag of chance meetings, word of mouth and sheer luck to create a pool of other professionals with whom you could share clients, Referral Key automates the process with a ready-made roster of members in insurance, financial planning, law and more. Started by a tax accountant, the site lets you hook up with referral partners, and analyze, track and rate the value of each referral relationship.

www.referralkey.com

YOUR ARMY

While it's easy for, say, the phone company to appear threatening when demanding payment on a bill, it's a little more difficult for a sole or small practitioner. Fortaccess, a new outsourced time and billing service, gives the independent accountant a little more muscle in collections: Its Web-based time entry and invoice-generation service also includes a fully staffed back office to handle billing and collections. So now you can threaten delinquent clients all you want, knowing you have an answer for when they ask, "Oh yeah? You and whose army?"

www.fortaccess.com

ON THE MOVE

In these staff-strapped times, you might want to consider adding AccountingCrossing to

the list of Web sites that your firm's employees are blocked from visiting, since it contains thousands of job offers exclusively for accountants. On the other hand, you might make an exception for your HR department, so they can post your firm's openings and try to lure staff from some other firm. And, of course, you might want to visit the site yourself — strictly for research purposes, of course.

www.accountingcrossing.com

TAX CALCULATION

Tax technology vendor Vertex Inc. has released Vertex O Series 4.1, the latest version of its Web-based suite of tax solutions for

transaction tax management, and Vertex O Series Retail Solution, for sales tax calculations for stores, Web sites and catalogs. Enhancements to Series 4.1 include broader VAT capabilities and address-cleansing options, while Retail Solution now offers signature-ready returns based on consolidated transaction results, and calculation of accruals and verification of vendor-charged taxes.

www.vertexinc.com

NOW SHOWING!

If we've learned anything from the rise of the multiplex theater, it's that the more screens you have, the more profitable you

are. The new DualHead2Go Digital Edition is a handy little box that allows you to connect two monitors to your notebook or desktop computer. Among the many benefits of more screens are faster data entry, easier tax return review, and better document management. The downside is the potential to be caught visiting twice as many embarrassing Web sites.

www.matrox.com

BIZEXCELERATOR

BizNet Software's BizExcellerator is an easy-to-use financial reporting and analysis solution for users of SAP MAS 500. It ties data from the general ledger

into Excel spreadsheets, and lets users build their own reports.

www.biznetsoftware.com

NEW AND IMPROVED!

Journyx has released the latest version of its time tracking and expense management software, Timesheet 7.6. ... CCH has added resources on knowledge-based audits of health care organizations to its Accounting Research Manager. It has also released Worldwide Tax Rates and Answers: Emerging Markets, an online tax compliance and research product, and has added Sales Tax Office, a tax calculation application, to its CorpSystem suite.

BOOKS

THE LEADERSHIP GAP

Are great leaders born or made? If we could find any great leaders, we'd tell you. *The Leadership Advantage* proposes a direct correlation between a company's longevity and business success and its focus on finding and developing leaders. With case studies drawn from a number of leading companies — including Big Four accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers — the book

teases out the best practices, programs and strategies that you can use to nurture a leadership cadre at your firm.

Among the keys to discovering and building future leaders are the involvement of current ones — as teachers, mentors and development partners — and a willingness to make the whole process a priority. Because regardless of whether they're born or made, leaders can make the difference between success and failure.

Amacom Books; \$27.95

A NEW WORLD OF MONEY

Money makes the world go around, but how it gets around the world is changing. The old world of checks and cash is slowly

giving way to the *New Payment World* described in the book of the same name, where electronic transfers, ACH credits and debits, and e-payments of all kinds are the rule. Written by Mary Schaeffer, editor of an influential newsletter on accounts payable, the book is a thorough introduction to the best and most efficient way to deal with the new payment processes, and can help you help your clients make the most of the new ways that money makes the world go around.

John Wiley & Sons; \$45

STEAL THESE TAX TIPS!

As always, we encourage you to keep Nolo's products away from your clients, or they'll start to think they can do without you. *Lower Taxes in 7 Easy Steps* is exactly the kind of book we're talking about — it's full of the sort of tax planning advice that you should be giving to help clients reduce their tax burden now and in the future. And it explains it all in the sort of plain English that clients find easy to understand, which makes it even more of a threat.

Nolo; \$16.99

BETTER THAN WEATHER

As accountants, you are not likely to be asked to predict the weather — which is good, since meteorology is a complicated, hard-to-master discipline. You may well,

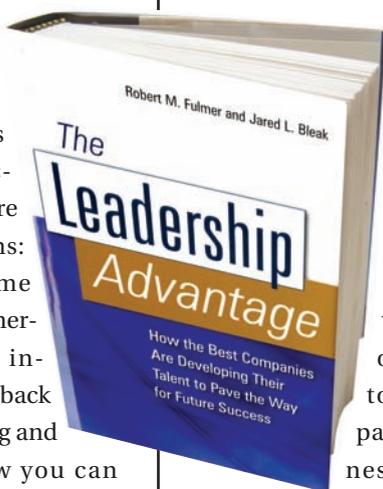
however, be asked to predict the economy — and if you can, you'll be able to offer sounder advice. While *A Concise Guide to Macroeconomics* does not pretend to be a crystal ball, it does teach the ground rules of the economy through a focus on the interrelations of output, money and expectations, and all without dragging in the hard math. With the book's lessons under your belt, you'll be prepared to read the signals the economy constantly throws off, and forecast the economic climate both for yourself and your clients.

Harvard Business School Press; \$24.95

KEEPING SCORE

Never has the outcome of a baseball game hung on the way the fans keep their scorecards — but in your firm, how you manage the scorecard can seriously affect your score. *Scorecard Best Practices: Design, Implementation and Evaluation* shows how a properly created and executed scorecard can make all the difference when it comes to carrying out your firm's strategy. With plenty of tips, checklists, scorecard strategies, and case studies of successful companies, the book can change the way you play the game.

John Wiley & Sons; \$45



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