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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR:

As tax season begins, it's good to keep a perspective on broader firm issues beyond the day-to-day demands of this time of year. To that end, I'd like to encourage PCPS members to begin planning now to attend the AICPA Practitioners Symposium at the Bellagio in Las Vegas on June 12–14, with optional pre-conference workshops June 11.

As you probably know, the Symposium, which I chair, is the only AICPA conference exclusively dedicated to the essentials of being a successful practitioner. It is designed specifically with the needs of small firms in mind. For instance, at PCPS, we are very much aware that staffing is the most pressing concern for many firms, so this year's conference includes a special focus on best practices in recruiting and retaining talented staff. There will also be a wide array of sessions on other issues we know are important to practitioners. In addition, we have created many chances for CPAs to get to know each other at early riser sessions, luncheon roundtables and other networking opportunities. At the same time, there are discounts for PCPS members and for early registration.

I personally have gained a great deal by attending this conference in the past, not only in terms of enhanced understanding of vital issues but also because I can meet and network with so many interesting CPAs. The PCPS Executive Committee is working to raise PCPS visibility at various AICPA conferences so that we can continue to benefit from a large and dynamic membership. We'll be on hand at the Symposium, so please take the opportunity to stop by the PCPS booth, meet our Executive Committee members or AICPA staff, and offer your comments on PCPS membership. For more information on the Symposium, [click here](#).

All the best,

Rich J. Caturano, CPA  
Chair, PCPS Executive Committee

## LETTER FROM THE VP:

I hope that all of you can regularly check out what's new at the PCPS Firm Practice Center ([www.aicpa.org/pcps](http://www.aicpa.org/pcps)), the Web site that provides a host of practical tools, news and other resources. For example, you can access *Preparing for Transition: The State of Succession Planning and How to Handle the Process in Your Firm*, a **free** white paper that's part of an extensive product line on the subject. Furthermore, you'll find the **free** white paper *Best Practices in Recruiting and Retaining Talented Staff* and the latest PCPS/TSCPA National MAP Survey's "Hiring Season Summary Extract," both aimed at helping firms address one of their toughest challenges. And there are many similarly well-organized resources—including articles, PowerPoint presentations, charts and checklists—on other subject areas of great interest to small firms.

We are committed to giving our PCPS member firms the kinds of tools and information they need to succeed. And we believe that when other firms become aware of our offerings, they'll want to become members too. As a result, for a limited time, we are making it possible for all visitors to the site to view everything there. The Firm Practice Center features many useful free resources, but it also contains valuable premium content normally available only to members. Right now, that premium content is open to everyone, enabling all in the profession to learn about the PCPS community and what it offers.

This is a good time for PCPS members to revisit the site, too. We're constantly adding new resources to make your life easier. To continue viewing everything after we relock it, just use the firm-specific unique link we sent you this past summer to activate your access to the PCPS site. If you've activated already, no worries. But if you haven't yet and need the link again, just contact the AICPA Service Center at 1-888-777-7077, Option 3, or at [service@aicpa.org](mailto:service@aicpa.org). Once you receive the link, follow the instructions to enter your AICPA.org or CPA2Biz.com user name and password. Plus, be sure to share the link with others at your firm so that all of you can get wired for success with PCPS.

Best regards,  
Jim Metzler, CPA  
AICPA Vice President, Small Firm Interests

## CHECK OUT THE "SMALL FIRM CORNER"

What resources has the AICPA created for small firms? You can find out at the "Small Firm Corner," an online column written by AICPA Vice President of Small Firm Interests Jim Metzler. It provides regular updates on free practice tools and initiatives designed especially for small practitioners, as well as practical advice. Recent columns have covered issues such as retirement planning tips, how to make the most of the small firm advantage in staffing and work/life balance. Look for current and past issues at the [PCPS Firm Practice Center](#).

## STANDARDS UPDATE: TWO NEW ETHICS RULINGS

Two new ethics rulings addressing independence and objectivity issues for practitioners became effective January 31. They are as follows:

- **Ethics Ruling No. 113 under Rule 102—Integrity and Objectivity, Acceptance or Offering of Gifts or Entertainment.** Under this ruling, AICPA members may accept gifts or entertainment, as long as they are "reasonable under the circumstances" and don't violate the policies of the firm, client or vendor—and any laws or regulations.
- **Ethics Ruling No. 114 under Rule 101—Independence, Acceptance or Offering of Gifts or Entertainment to or From an Attest Client.** Under this ruling, members on an attest team or in a position to influence the engagement can't accept a gift from an attest client unless the value is clearly insignificant to the member. A gift offered to a client must be "reasonable under the circumstances," as should any entertainment offered to or accepted from a client.

The PCPS Technical Issues Committee monitored these rulings during the exposure period and provided comments from the small firm perspective in its comment letter. The rulings can be found at [www.aicpa.org/download/ethics/Gifts and Entertainment Rulings.pdf](http://www.aicpa.org/download/ethics/Gifts_and_Entertainment_Rulings.pdf).

## Q&As ON EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLANS

Does your firm perform audits of employee benefit plans under ERISA? If so, you should be aware that the AICPA Employee Benefit Plan Audit Quality Center offers a question-and-answer document free to AICPA members that explains an important new Department of Labor initiative and provides suggestions on how plan sponsors can get quality audit services. The DOL's Employee Benefits Security Administration recently started an enforcement effort in which it says it will monitor the quality of audits of plans subject to ERISA. As part of this ongoing program, the DOL said it planned to look at more than 500 audits during the next few years. The Q&A covers such issues as how firms are selected for review, when and how reviews will be performed, and how results and other communications will be handled. The document can be found at [www.aicpa.org/ebpaqc](http://www.aicpa.org/ebpaqc).

## XBRL OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS

AICPA members now have easy access to software and support options associated with eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL), a language that eases electronic communication of business data.

Small firms will want to keep up with developments in XBRL because of the effect it will have on their clients, experts say. "Widespread adoption of XBRL would make broader and deeper analysis a reality, allowing the market to pay attention to smaller businesses in a way that is simply not practical today," said Yossi Newman, Senior Manager, XBRL Lead, at Deloitte & Touche. "Lending institutions could leverage XBRL to lower the cost of administering loans. Through lower administration costs, along with reduced risk, through deeper, more accurate credit analysis, XBRL could help bring down the cost of borrowing to many small businesses."

Now, based on a joint effort with Rivet Software, AICPA members can order the company's Dragon Tag and Dragon View XBRL solutions. Dragon Tag is an add-in to Microsoft Word and Excel that provides the ability to mark up and create XBRL data within the Microsoft Office environment. Dragon View provides quick and easy viewing solutions for working with XBRL taxonomies and instance documents. XBRL, which the AICPA has helped develop as part of an international group of financial, government and technology professionals, is a royalty-free standard derived from XML that makes it easier to communicate and publish business report information. Free trial versions of the software are available at [www.rivetsoftware.com](http://www.rivetsoftware.com), where you can also purchase it. To find out more about XBRL, visit [www.xbrl.org](http://www.xbrl.org).

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