

How to Automate Your Accounting Admin

By Bench Accounting

Whether you're just starting out or you've been operating a business for years, well-organized finances are an important cornerstone of long-term success. But that doesn't mean you have to spend all of your time worrying about your financial admin.

In this guide, we'll share effective tools, apps, and methods you can use to put many of your accounting responsibilities on autopilot.

Bookkeeping

As your business expands, your bookkeeping responsibilities expand with it. Eventually you'll reach a tipping point where it isn't feasible to do it all yourself.

Depending on the size and nature of your business, you have a couple of options for seeking outside support. The first is a traditional solution: hire a local part-time bookkeeper to check in with you periodically and handle your books. Traditional bookkeepers often deal with physical, hard-copy records, and manage your books for you.

The second option is to hand the task over to an online bookkeeping service like [Bench](#). Unlike DIY accounting software, you get a team of professional bookkeepers working on your books each month, and access to online software where you can communicate with your bookkeepers, download your financial statements, and monitor the financial health of your business.

With either option, you'll save yourself from hours of bookkeeping work each month, and you'll avoid making costly errors, because a professional will be handling the process for you.

Invoicing

In an ideal world, you would perform work for a client, they would approve it, and you'd receive immediate payment. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work so seamlessly.

[Freshbooks](#) is an online service that takes care of much of the legwork involved in invoicing and collections. In addition to tracking the time and expenses related to each job, the app lets you create, manage, and send invoices branded with your own company's identity. You can create a schedule that sends recurring invoices to clients. You can also accept credit card payments through the invoices themselves.

Payroll

When your team expands, managing the payroll can become a full time job in itself.

You have a couple of options when it comes to outsourcing your payroll online. [Paychex](#) serves businesses of every size, from very small to very large. In addition to payroll support, the platform offers HR and insurance services for businesses. Paychex isn't up front about their pricing, however. You'll need to sign up with them to receive a quote.

[Gusto](#) is an online service that focuses specifically on servicing the needs of small businesses. The web-based platform automates plenty of the tasks involved in arranging payroll and employee benefits. Gusto is

designed to sync up with popular accounting software and online bookkeeping software, and it also offers a [switch assistant](#) to help you transition from your existing payroll solution.

Filing W2 and W9 Forms

The act of filing your taxes via regular post is becoming outdated. Even the IRS is encouraging taxpayers to [file and pay taxes online](#). Once you start filing your taxes electronically, you'll never have to worry about losing or damaging important documents, or having them lost in the post.

The same applies for filing common tax forms. You'll need to [arrange a Form W-9 and file Form 1099-MISC](#) for each independent contractor you work with, who you pay \$600 or more during the tax year. For each of your employees, you'll need to file a [Form W-2](#), as well as withhold and pay [certain taxes and benefits](#).

A payroll service like Gusto can handle this for you. An alternative solution to filing forms digitally—including tax forms—is [FormSwift](#). Their service lets you fill out PDF versions of forms, which you can later submit to the IRS.

Tracking Expenses

[Expensify](#) is the best solution for keeping tabs on your business expenses. Available as a mobile app, it lets you keep track of and classify expenses such as entertainment or supplies, as well as track vehicle mileage for work-related trips. It also allows members of your team to file expense reports for approval.

The best part is that all of your information is kept digitally. Rather than holding onto receipts, you snap pictures of them with your mobile device, and file them with Expensify. If you already have a backlog of receipts that you need to put in the cloud, or if you'd like convert all of your record keeping to digital format, it's time to look at new ways of storing records.

Storing Receipts and Business Records

Effective small business recordkeeping is key to getting the most out of your tax return; in order to claim common [small business tax deductions](#), the IRS requires that you keep documentation to prove that the expense was business related.

Receipts are fragile, easy to lose—and essential for. The best way to keep them safe and in order is to upload them to the cloud, and to do that, you can use [Shoebboxed](#). This service helps you submit business-related receipts and documents online or via FedEx, which it then scans, categorizes, and converts neatly into digital format. All your receipts are stored safely in one place, and once you've established an account with Shoebboxed, you'll be able to continue adding to your collection of receipts with the help of their mobile app. It has a snap-and-upload feature similar to Expensify.

For broader applications—whether recording meeting notes, employee information, or other documents related to your business—cloud storage apps such as [Box](#), [Google Drive](#), [OneDrive](#), and [Evernote](#) are handy for storing a wide range of documents (including photographed paper documents) and sharing them with your team.

Finding the Right CPA

Teaming up with the right CPA can have a huge influence on your business's success. A good CPA will be on hand to support you with long-term financial planning, negotiating leases, managing cash and treasury, and reporting taxes.

You should seek out a CPA who specializes in working with businesses in your industry, and who can explain high-level tax matters in simple language that makes sense to you. They should also have the resources, necessary to deal with your business's needs, such as personnel and software.

Often the best way to start your search for an accountant is to ask your industry contacts for a referral. If you don't have any industry contacts to turn to, or if you'd just like to zoom in on only the CPAs that perfectly suit your needs, there are tools online that can help.

[TaxBuzz](#) lets you search both CPAs and non-CPA tax professionals according to their level of certification, what languages they speak, what industries they specialize in, and where they operate. It's a high-precision tool for finding CPAs who suit your business, as well as other pros who aren't necessarily CPAs but can still help with your accounting needs.

[The National CPA Directory](#) only allows you to search for registered CPAs, but it offers all the same filters as TaxBuzz. In addition to search functions, the Directory features an exhaustive list of "Ask a CPA" answers and questions, as well as free, no-obligations consulting for people who would like to hire a CPA.

No matter what stage of evolution your business is in, you'll be able to save time with automation. With technology handling much of the administrative grunt work, you'll be free to can spend your time on other tasks that guide your business to success.

About Bench Accounting

Bench is a new kind of online bookkeeping service. We pair you with a team of dedicated bookkeepers and use simple, elegant software to do your bookkeeping for you.

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