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Working Remotely – What Is It and What Does it Mean to You?
Part 3 in our On-Going Series

Welcome to Part 3 of *Working Remotely!* Be sure to read this month's Advisor Interview with **Dennis Najjar of Balance Your Books, LLC** on how his company is successfully using a hosted QuickBooks solution to offer real-time support and outsourced bookkeeping to their clients!
<http://www.idnac.org/newsletters/dennis-rta.pdf>

In the past few months we have discussed various ways of sharing your data files remotely, such as basic file transfers, file sharing using the Internet, and desktop sharing. (If you missed any of the previous articles they are available in the Newsletter Archive on the IDNAC site.)

This month we are going to take a look at the virtual world of Application Service Providers (ASP's); you may hear this referred to as 'hosted applications', 'terminal server' or 'WAN' (Wide-Area-Network). Whatever term you choose to use, the end result is the same; the 'live' data file is in one location that can be accessed securely by several people or from several locations, avoiding file transferring hassles, and limiting the possibility of working in the wrong data file. We have the option of QuickBooks On-Line; however, for many clients this solution is not versatile or powerful enough, due to limited functionality, such as Inventory tracking.

ASP's/Terminal Server/WAN

What are they? How do they work? Why and when would you choose this option? This option may not be viable for all of your clients. In many cases, this is another 'tool' available for those clients that fit into a specific category.

'ASP' refers to the service whereby Windows based software is delivered online over the Internet, using

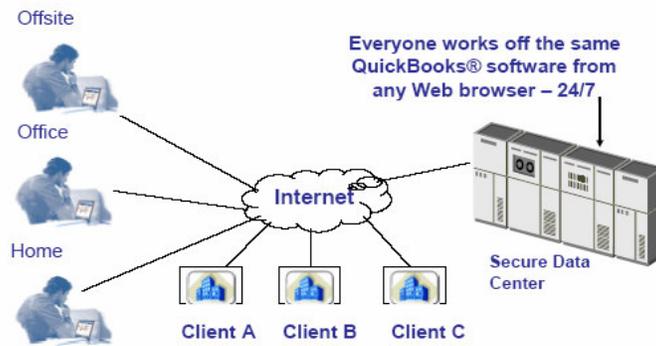
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Anytime, Anywhere Computing – 24/7



Benefits of using an ASP service to access your QuickBooks data files include:

- Access to your client data files anywhere, at anytime, as long as you have a PC with Internet access.
- Help your clients keep one set of books, instead of several floating around that will need to be merged in one way or another.
- No need to manage back-ups, or worry if they are any good; back-ups of your data will automatically be made each night and stored securely.
- No need to manage software upgrades; if an upgrade is released, the ASP service will take care of downloading and installing them. Everyone will always be on the most current release, instantly.
- No need to worry about viruses, worms, trojans, hackers, etc., as your files are protected from insecure networks or infected e-mail attachments.
- Security from potential disasters such as fire, flooding, theft, and network or computer crashes. All reputable ASP providers have special facilities that are extremely secure, similar to what banks use; and have gone to great lengths to not 'advertise' their location.
- Convenient access for all authorized users, such as:
 - Your Client
 - CPA
 - Bookkeeper and/or the data entry clerks
 - Multi-Partners in various parts of the world or who are traveling
 - Anyone that has been granted access may log-in whenever they need to work in the file or simply pull reports for review. They can access the data simultaneously with others, freeing up 'scheduling' access, reducing downtime, and eliminating the need for files to be transferred or restored.
- Reduction or elimination of travel time: a great way to offer real time, up-to-date bookkeeping services to your clients.
- Real-time data entry and troubleshooting of the client's QuickBooks file, eliminating the need to e-mail your changes or instructions on how to find or solve a problem they are having.
- Centralized QuickBooks data file from several office locations, such as franchises and multi-site businesses. Centralizing the data file in one convenient place for everyone can save thousands of dollars in the course of a year; just think of the wasted hours spent in backing-up, restoring, sending, verifying, making your changes, and then backing up the file again, sending it, hoping they can restore it.

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Internet Based/Hosted QuickBooks – Helping Your Business Grow

A key benefit of remote QuickBooks hosting and access for your business is the ability to increase revenue by serving more customers in more locations with less travel time and overall expense. In addition to some of the overall client benefits discussed above, let's think about how an ASP solution can directly help YOUR business.

- Internet-based/hosted QuickBooks takes on the responsibility of nightly back-ups and adds banking-class security so you can stay focused on your business and your customers. As a smaller business, most of us cannot offer the same type of security as a business that specializes in that market.
- The idea of remote access **AND** having the QuickBooks program hosted in a virtual environment is no longer 'the new thing.' The service has been around for many years and has become increasingly more mainstream and affordable in recent years.
- The remote access/hosted solution should **not** take away QuickBooks features, especially from our customers. If the client does not need all the features available in the desktop version of QuickBooks, there is QuickBooks On-Line.
- You can simplify your PC management. Do you really want to be an IT person, as well as a QuickBooks Advisor, Bookkeeper, CPA, Consultant, and all around business person? Do you really want to spend your time performing PC maintenance, or having a staff member doing it? By using a hosted solution, the ASP provider handles updates, back-ups, security, and installation the newest version of QuickBooks when it is available so you can upgrade your clients without hassle.
 - Remember, it is not necessary to update the clients to the newest version, however, if you are using an ASP solution for them, it is easier to keep everyone on the same version.
- If you have to have QuickBooks installed on your local PC, as many of us do for other clients, you can make a back-up and save it to your local drive for access when you are not online. You would simply restore the file like any other back-up, this comes in handy when you need to pull a large number of reports, or if you will not have Internet access for whatever reason. With a hosted solution, you get data center reliability **and** the ability to keep a local copy of the data if you choose!
- By using the Internet as an inexpensive wide area network, companies and organizations of all sizes can have access to each other and the information they need to conduct business. Your staff can be at home or halfway across the globe and still connect to your network and access everything!
- Virtual Desktops/ASP solutions are easy and affordable to use, requiring no big initial investment. Your service can be installed in a fraction of the time that a traditional network takes, without all the mystery. If you already have Internet access in your business, you're 95 percent installed!

Now that you know all about ASP's, how a virtual desktop/environment works, and how you can use it in your business, where do you get the service? Glad you asked - of course we have a few suggestions for you! There are several companies that offer the **Hosted QuickBooks** solution; many of them also offer other programs (such as Microsoft Office), and offer different pricing levels.

It is important to research your options and select a company that has a track record, that have been around for a while, one that you have heard of before, or you know of others that have used their service.

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A few of our favorites are, (in alphabetical order):

- ✓ eAccounting – www.easeaccounting.com
- ✓ InsynQ - www.cpassp.com
- ✓ Mangosoft - www.mangosoft.com
- ✓ Personable - www.personable.com
- ✓ Real Time Accounting - www.realtimeaccounting.com

Be sure to check out this month's Developer Interview with Jim Zachman of 'Real Time Accounting', (<http://www.idnac.org/newsletters/rta.pdf>) as well as the Advisor Interview with Dennis Najjar. Dennis shows how using an ASP solution can open a whole new way of doing business efficiently and effectively!

In our next issue of *Working Remotely*, we will discuss a new feature available in the 2006 version of QuickBooks, so stay tuned.

See you next month!

Rox ☺

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