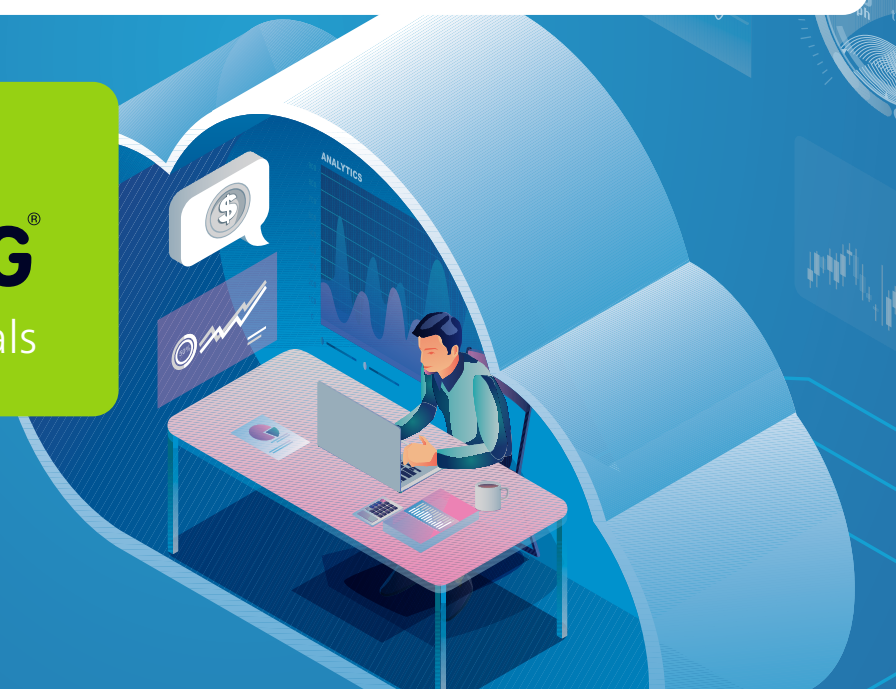


Inside⁺ **OUTSOURCING**[®]

The newsletter for forward-thinking professionals



Whatever the weather

As more and more firms shift towards cloud-based operations, what can you do to have a 100% guarantee the tech will 'always be on'?

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Practice Compliance Outsourcing

Final accounts production  Personal tax returns  Corporation tax returns  Management accounts
HMRC-recognised iXBRL tagging services  Payroll  Cloud bookkeeping  Dedicated offshoring

Dark clouds overhead...

In a world where technology and data is cloud-based, what do accounting practices need to do to mitigate against 'downtime'? Advancetrack founder and MD Vipul Sheth explains.



THE OUTAGE THAT IMPACTED Microsoft platforms, caused by an update from third-party software CrowdStrike, was a sobering example that IT 'robustness' is not just a B2B problem.

As the outage spread from airports to supermarkets to GPs – even Sky News's ability to broadcast – thousands upon thousands of people had their daily lives disrupted.

While we use Microsoft technology at Advancetrack, we weren't affected. There was no gloating or backslapping at all from our end – no system, whatever the checks and balances, is failproof. And we've had downtime in the past.

TAKE CONTROL

From an IT robustness point of view, what can we do as an accounting outsourcer to control that? Secondly, and as importantly, what happens if IT systems go down?

It's difficult to cover all the ins and outs of our IT plan in a blog – and our accountancy practice clients wouldn't want us to air all the details in public anyway.

What we can do is point to our ISO accreditations. These cover a breadth of key areas that you would expect of an outsourcer: quality systems; data privacy and security; and business continuity.

These globally recognised standards are audited yearly by the BSI. It is a thorough external audit across several days. Their sceptical approach keeps us on our toes and, quite frankly, makes us a better business.

We're also not standing still. As our business continues to grow, then extra investment is required. We are moving onto new IT support provision.

No business, whether an outsourcer or supermarket or airport, can guarantee zero outages. But they should set a high bar in reducing the likelihood of that happening, and mitigating for when it does happen.



[Click here](#) for more details about our accreditations.



The cloud looms after Xerocon Nashville fireworks

With US accountancy firms set to embrace the cloud, a glorious Nashville was the setting for Xerocon, writes Vipul Sheth.



IT WAS A REAL pleasure to be able to represent Advancetrack at Xerocon Nashville. For me the city felt really pleasant and comfortable to traverse – though not quite so easy after their humungous plates of food... I often snacked in the evening after a big lunch! Definitely meals fit for cowboys.

The bars and music were amazing, with converted warehouses and barns holding sway to different musicians on different floors. It was a pleasure to visit the Country Music Hall of Fame, and many of us got to watch an NFL American football warmup game at the Titans' Nissan Stadium.

Xerocon itself was lively, and getting to hear from North American practitioners about their challenges and opportunities was gold dust, really. Certainly, they are facing staffing challenges – a shortage of talent. Ironically this





Image credit: Xero.com

was something Advancetrack was aware of, recently flagging it up in our groundbreaking research The Accounting Talent Index, which you can request access to by [clicking here](#).

There was certainly discussion about practices making the move to the cloud, which the US has been behind the curve on. I'm prepared to stick my neck out and predict that between 40%-50% of North American

practices will be using a cloud accounting system within three years.

TIPPING POINT

This move to the cloud represents a gamechanger for that market, and opens up many opportunities. Certainly, Xero has put a huge amount of time and investment into positioning itself to take advantage of that development.

It's a market that has been dominated by Intuit, and it's been difficult for anyone else to get a foothold. The US tax system is notoriously complex; there are different rates on a state by state basis, and even within cities – there are thousands upon thousands of codes.

However, Xero has worked alongside app partners Avalara and Gusto to cut through these issues. There are other hurdles to surmount: namely, bank feeds. There are thousands of small and regional banks with which to link to.

However, Xero now looks like a real option for businesses and practices across the US; its ecosystem of app partners is unparalleled. Major accounting firms across the world are using Xero, and I expect their US counterparts will start to follow suit – in tandem with switching to the cloud.

SILVER LININGS

Moving to the cloud will open up new ways of working for the accounting practices, and the talent issues will, I believe, see outsourcing and offshoring become a part of the US accountancy market too.

More about that from us at Advancetrack in the very near future.



In profile: Rishi Ruparelia

Tech sales chief Rishi Ruparelia discusses sharing a supportive mindset with accountants, and his first few weeks learning about Advancetrack's outsourcing and offshoring offerings.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

I'm the sales account executive for Advancetrack. That means I look after existing customers from a sales perspective – i.e. do they have the right hours and people to get work undertaken; and then I actively engage with other firms about using Advancetrack.

WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?

I'd say that I've been in the professional services sales environment for ever! I initially sold legal software and then was headhunted by Xero back in 2014 to look after its London area. I 'fell in love' with accountants during this time.

I then spent some time in the payments arena, first at Dojo and then Airwallex – helping the latter build its UK accounting channel.

I think I fit in well with accountants: they genuinely want to help clients and have a variety of skills and experience to use when supporting them. My instinct is to help the businesses I work with and sell to, whether it's being more efficient from a process or financial perspective.

Accountants are in an amazing position to build deep relationships with their clients and I want to help with that.

HOW DID YOU GET THE ROLE? HOW HAVE THE FIRST FEW WEEKS GONE?

I've known Advancetrack MD Vipul Sheth for about ten years, and we've worked closely on a few firms for which Advancetrack and Xero had mutual clients.

There were a few offers floating around,



but because Vipul is seen as a 'white knight' in the industry; I wanted to align with that. Ultimately, Advancetrack is viewed as a company that 'does things the right way', helping its people and that of partner practices develop.

Outsourcers and offshorers often provide 'bodies' to undertake work, whereas it differs at Advancetrack; not only are the staff well-



“The next step for me is to more deeply understand all the offerings and how they fit with clients’ particular needs – the nuances that make one of Advancetrack’s offerings a better fit than the others.”

rounded, but there is great support from the managers behind the scenes – there is a team in the background providing support and making sure things get done properly. The practitioners I’ve spoken to have flagged up this positive aspect of their working relationship with Advancetrack’s people.

I haven’t been working here long – weeks

rather than months – but I feel I’ve slotted in fairly well. I certainly know the questions I have to ask of existing and prospective partner accounting practices – the next step for me is to more deeply understand all the offerings and how they fit with clients’ particular needs – the nuances that make one of Advancetrack’s offerings a better fit than the others.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS IN YOUR ROLE, AND FOR ADVANCETRACK, LOOK LIKE? Well, part of it would be enabling Vipul to spend so much more time with his family that they get fed up of seeing him!

The other thing would be helping accounting practice leaders manage their productivity and resource needs, supporting them to achieve their firm’s ambitions. Practices have to get a grip on efficiencies (and having quality and timely data at hand) to both free up resources and then provide a more valuable service.

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