

Integrated Financial Group

Accounting Firm Attracts 95% of Clients From Out of State

Establishing Your Niche is Easier With Better Tools

Background: About five years ago, the founder of Michigan-based accounting firm Integrated Financial Group decided to move to Tennessee with the intention to continue working with his clients from Detroit remotely. At that time, their client base was focused on tax returns within small communities.

However, after moving to Tennessee, it became apparent that the existing business model needed to change. They realized that the real estate industry was booming nationally and quickly saw the benefits of transitioning to focusing on real estate professionals. Soon after, the firm began transitioning their existing clientele to focus on their new tax strategy for real estate professionals.

Now, IFG has been able to expand their services to focus on the Franklin and Nashville areas with about 95% of their client base located outside of Michigan—even though that’s where the firm is registered.

While remote work was not in IFG’s original plan, it plays a key role in the firm’s strategy—especially considering the co-owner of IFG lives in Indiana.

“We specialize with real estate, and entrepreneurs; our goal is to reduce their taxes they pay as legally and ethically as possible over their lifetime,” explained Shawn Flattery, executive and co-owner of IFG. “We’ve really honed in on a real estate professional niche, it’s got a lot of tax strategies that are unique to that industry that allow us to really make a difference for our clients, and really help them from a cash flow and tax law standpoint.”

The firm services more than 300 clients and since signing on with Canopy three years ago, they’ve managed to do a lot of business in that time. Just this year alone, IFG has created 15,810 tasks and uploaded more than 20,000 files.

Here’s how Canopy has helped IFG zero-in on their ideal client base and streamline their communication.

HUB OF REMOTE WORK

 **20,000**
uploaded files

 **15,810**
created tasks

EXPANDED CLIENT BASE

 **95%**
of client base located
outside of home state

“It’s our hub for everything — it controls our workflow, it controls our clients communication, it is our server, if you will, for client documents and storage. **It’s really the heart of our organization.**” — Shawn Flattery

Remote Working is Better With Canopy

It doesn't matter where you are as long as your clients are happy, according to IFG; even though Shawn works out of South Bend, Indiana, most of his clients are located in Tennessee. Additionally, the firm works with clients living throughout the country. Their business model is something they wouldn't be able to maintain without Canopy, Shawn said.

"They also don't have to be within a 30-minute radius of our office," he said. "No one knows the difference where we are and it doesn't matter, because we can service them."

The ability to easily work remotely has also expanded the firm's talent pool, something desperately needed as the CPA shortage looms.

"Canopy allows us to do this electronically; I can hire someone in any part of the country, and if we decide to go there for that matter, anywhere in the world," Shawn said.

Communication is Key

For Shawn, it isn't about the dollar amount he saves his clients—it's about the impact.

"When I'm working with my client base, I'm not just a number and they're not just a number back. When I save them money, that's money in their pocket for their kids who go to college; that's food on the table," he said. "It makes a bigger impact than even hundreds of millions of dollars in tax saving for a Fortune 500 company. There, you're just a number."

When you're more than just a number, relationships and communication matters. Canopy has helped IFG streamline their entire organization to help cultivate relationships with their clients – in fact, it's become a core tenant of how they do business.

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So much so, that Shawn says their clients wouldn't recognize their firm without Canopy. "It's a very different look and feel for our clients without (Canopy)," he noted.

IFG uses Canopy to house their internal and external client notes and other files they need to keep track of. They also use the client portal to store documents and share files with clientele. Shawn uses tasks and templates to organize their workflow and stay on top of what needs to be done.

"We use Canopy's tasks to control what's being done. So we have a lot of task templates, everything from the engagement renewal process to preparation returns, notices, any review or compilation of financial statements, and advisory services. Those all have templates, and we use those to assign it to individual people," Shawn explained.

If Shawn has learned anything in his years as an accountant, it's that communication matters.

"If there's one reason a CPA firm is going to lose a client, it's because of lack of communication," he said.

But thanks to IFG's focused effort to streamline emails and other communication, that rarely happens. "Canopy is critical for our communication," Shawn said.

