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2013: A Year in Review

Re-cap of 2013 from the CEO of Tax Management Associates | by Chip Cooke

I guess it's a cliché by now, but where does the time go? I actually made a conscious effort this year to slow down and enjoy each and every day, along with the opportunities that the day provides, but the year still sped past me! I know I'll end up forgetting something, but here is what went on with TMA in 2013...

One of our biggest endeavors was the move from our old operations center in Charlotte to a brand new space down the road. If you have not seen the new space, and happen to be in the area, please give us a call and we would love to show you around. The new Charlotte Operations Center houses part of the Audit Division, Audit Support, Homestead Audit, and part of the Special Projects Division. TMA has roughly 35 individuals in the space with room for expansion, which we plan to fully utilize in 2014.

As seen in a previous edition of the "Audit Report", TMA caught the social

media bug this year and has done its best to adopt a virtual lifestyle. You can catch TMA, various employees, the Audit Report and others on Twitter,

"TMA and LexisNexis' programs have been featured in the Wall Street Journal as well as various government and trade periodicals throughout 2013 leading to increased interest from our client states."

Facebook, and our webinars held throughout the year.

As for TMA's clients and various

services, we have had one of the best years in our long history.

The Audit Division has made great strides in expanding our offering within our core states as well as opening new markets. TMA picked up a few very large clients such as Shelby County (Memphis), Tennessee and Miami-Dade County, Florida. TMA has also added new clients in Connecticut, Indiana, Louisiana, South Carolina and Alabama.

One of our biggest jobs of the year was moving all of our North Carolina clients from a contingency-based compensation schedule to a straight fee-based schedule. Due to the hard work of Kirk Boone and Glenn Cutrell, we accomplished that task and are now fully compliant with HB462. Overall, the Business Personal Property Audit Division has grown 10% as compared to 2012 and we fully expect similar growth in 2014. My personal thanks go out to Tom Tucker, Dale Baker, the regional managers, auditors and support

If you have any questions or comments about this article, please contact Chip Cooke at 1-800-951-5350

staff that has made that commitment to our clients possible.

Renee Abernathy and the CAVS (Cost Analysis Valuation System) Service line had an equally impressive year with the addition of clients in four states (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Virginia). It seems our online tool for assisting in the valuation of smaller businesses is a mainstream tool for the assessment community now, and we have seen interest from all over the country. CAVS has grown a whopping 289% since 2011 and we continue to refine the service to assist jurisdictions all over the United States. Check it out at <http://cavs.tma1.com>

By now you have heard of TMA's partnership with identity giant LexisNexis® and our Homestead Exemption Fraud Detection and Prevention Service. TMA and LexisNexis' programs have been featured in the Wall Street Journal as well as various government and trade periodicals throughout 2013 leading to increased interest from our client states. Bryan Fawcett and Larry Brandon have done an outstanding job starting new projects in Indiana, South Carolina, and Louisiana with interest from a half dozen other states. The Homestead Audit service has grown 42% in 2013, and I see no slowing down in 2014. Congrats to Al Consiglio, Jennifer Wasp and all of the dedicated folks within the Homestead group!

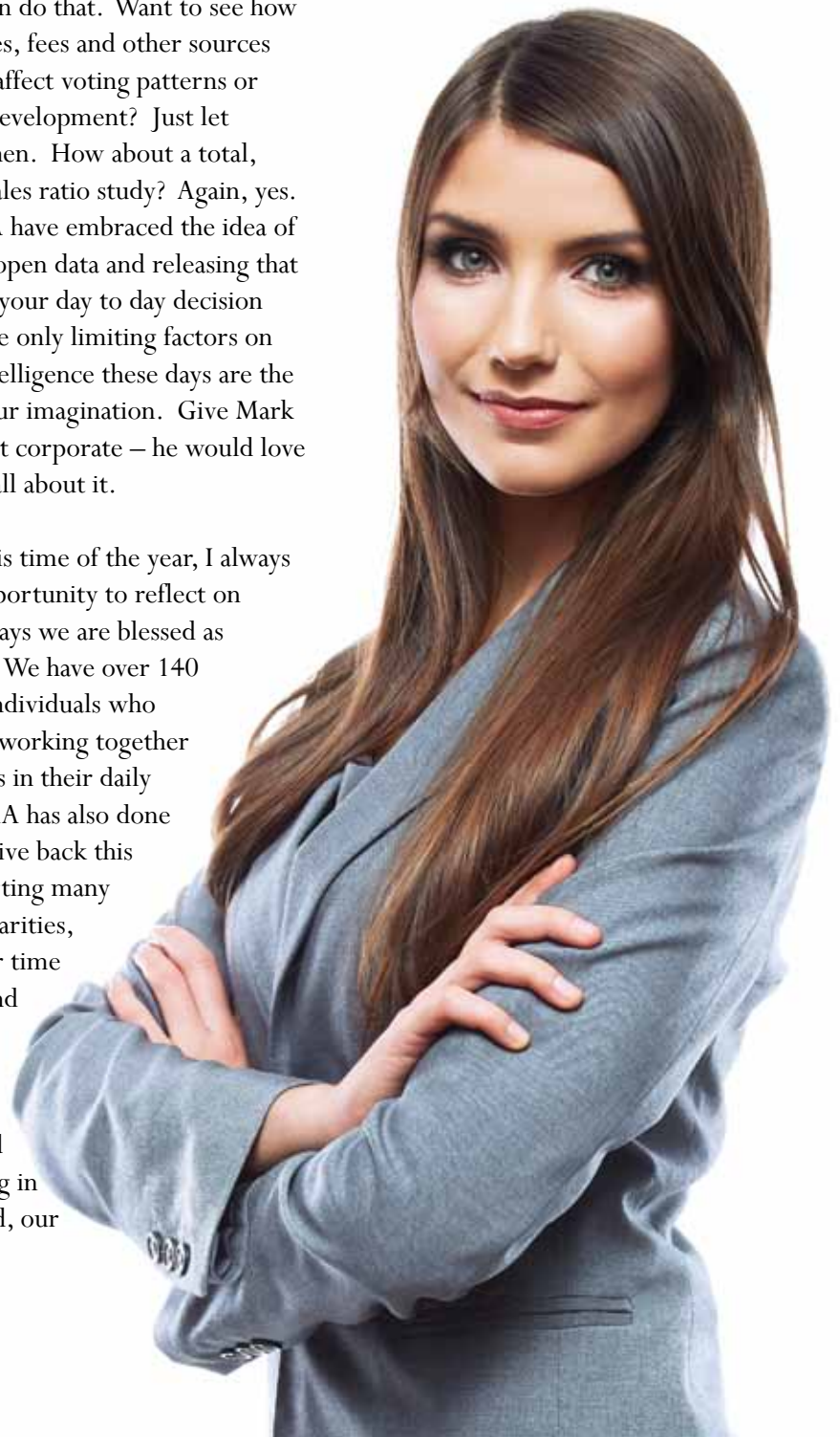
If I am most excited about an opportunity for 2014, it would have to be the services we are currently building in the technology group. Under the leadership of Mark Cooke, TMA's IT Department is currently

offering a myriad of business intelligence and open data solutions for state and local government. Our specialty lies in aggregating data from disparate sources and then finding uses for that data. It doesn't matter what native system or source of the data, we can get to it. Internally built systems, software providers, the internet or even excel spreadsheets – TMA can use it all. Want to supply first responders with real-time real estate parcel data? Yeah, we can do that. Want to see how various taxes, fees and other sources of revenue affect voting patterns or economic development? Just let us know when. How about a total, statewide sales ratio study? Again, yes. We at TMA have embraced the idea of harnessing open data and releasing that power into your day to day decision making. The only limiting factors on business intelligence these days are the limits of your imagination. Give Mark a call here at corporate – he would love to tell you all about it.

Lastly, at this time of the year, I always take the opportunity to reflect on the many ways we are blessed as a company. We have over 140 dedicated individuals who truly enjoy working together and it shows in their daily efforts. TMA has also done its best to give back this year supporting many different charities, offering our time at the Second Harvest food banks across the country and participating in Hero2Hired, our

veterans' outreach hiring initiative. I could not be more proud of this group and everything they have accomplished in 2013.

As always, I can't tell you how much I appreciate your business; and if there is ever anything I can do for you or your community, please let me know. Best of luck in 2014 and I wish each of you great success!





Informer

Do you like to stay in the know? We have the perfect Solution. | by Taylor Ennis

We are a pretty close-knit family here at TMA and many of our employees enjoy getting together outside of the office. Adam Hunter, Lead Developer of Architectural Design and Ryan Hunter (no relation) our Marketing Director are two of those co-workers. They enjoy the ability to bounce ideas off each other in and outside of work.

Both Adam and Ryan worked heavily on creating TAXscribe, TMA's online Business Personal Property listing software. Adam immersed himself in writing code, while Ryan designed the marketing aspects. They constantly collaborated to improve TAXscribe both mechanically and visually. Through brainstorming sessions, they challenged and debated over ideas in order to develop the best product. As a side note, they are both genuinely competitive.

They went to more than 30 people to find out which font was preferred between "Futura" and "Helvetica." I

hope this gives you an idea about their attention to detail and desire for user approval. Of course, Adam's preference

"This portal provides management reports detailing how far TMA has progressed with a jurisdiction's project and what steps are left to be completed. Clients can quickly and easily access project information for their records."

won (I was forced to write that). Ryan claims that the font being debated over wasn't the font presented to the 30

people because "Helvetica Neue was shown instead of Helvetica and that is an entirely different font." The two fonts are below. What do you think?

- This font is Futura, Ryan's Choice
- This font is Helvetica, Adam's choice
- This font is Helvetica Neue, the winning font

With many late night work sessions in 2010, numerous creative ideas blossomed between Adam and Ryan. "We thought, wouldn't it be cool to have all of TMA's product lines in real-time for clients to go in and see their jurisdictions progress online? We should have a dashboard with all of the product lines." It was the beginning of what we know now as Informer.

Two individuals who boast exceptionally different talents were able to create a new possibility. With Ryan's creative imagination and Adam's ability

If you have any questions about this article, please contact Taylor Ennis at 1-800-951-5350. Let our staff assist you

to define and design the software, they developed a brand new product for our clients.

With customers in more than 500 jurisdictions, it's not easy to maintain contact with every client on a daily basis. While our sales team is always accessible, TMA has created an open line of communication allowing our customers to see where we are with their project(s) at any moment in time. Our Informer portal allows our client's staff real-time access to all of our service lines including: TAXscribe, Business Personal Property Audits, Homestead Exemption Audits, CAVS, and Outsourcing.

How can Informer assist you? Using Informer will reduce paper as well as opening, sorting and storing physical files, thus cutting down on wasted time and space needed to store files. This portal allows users to view information according to the TMA services to which they have subscribed.

For example, jurisdictions who subscribe to CAVS can view their CAVS utilization by month. Audit clients are able to view the number of accounts discovered and the discovered value based on the number of accounts for their jurisdiction, and even their yearly audit schedule. The audit portion displays the number of files scheduled for the year, the number of pending audits, and the number of completed audits. TAXscribe clients even have access to approve, accept or reject listings immediately through Informer.

This portal also provides management reports detailing how far TMA has

progressed with a jurisdiction's project and what steps are left to be completed. Clients can quickly and easily access project information for their records. This can be done without contacting anyone at TMA. Through the use of Informer, we provide 24/7 access to your project progress. Have a question? We're always here to assist in any way.

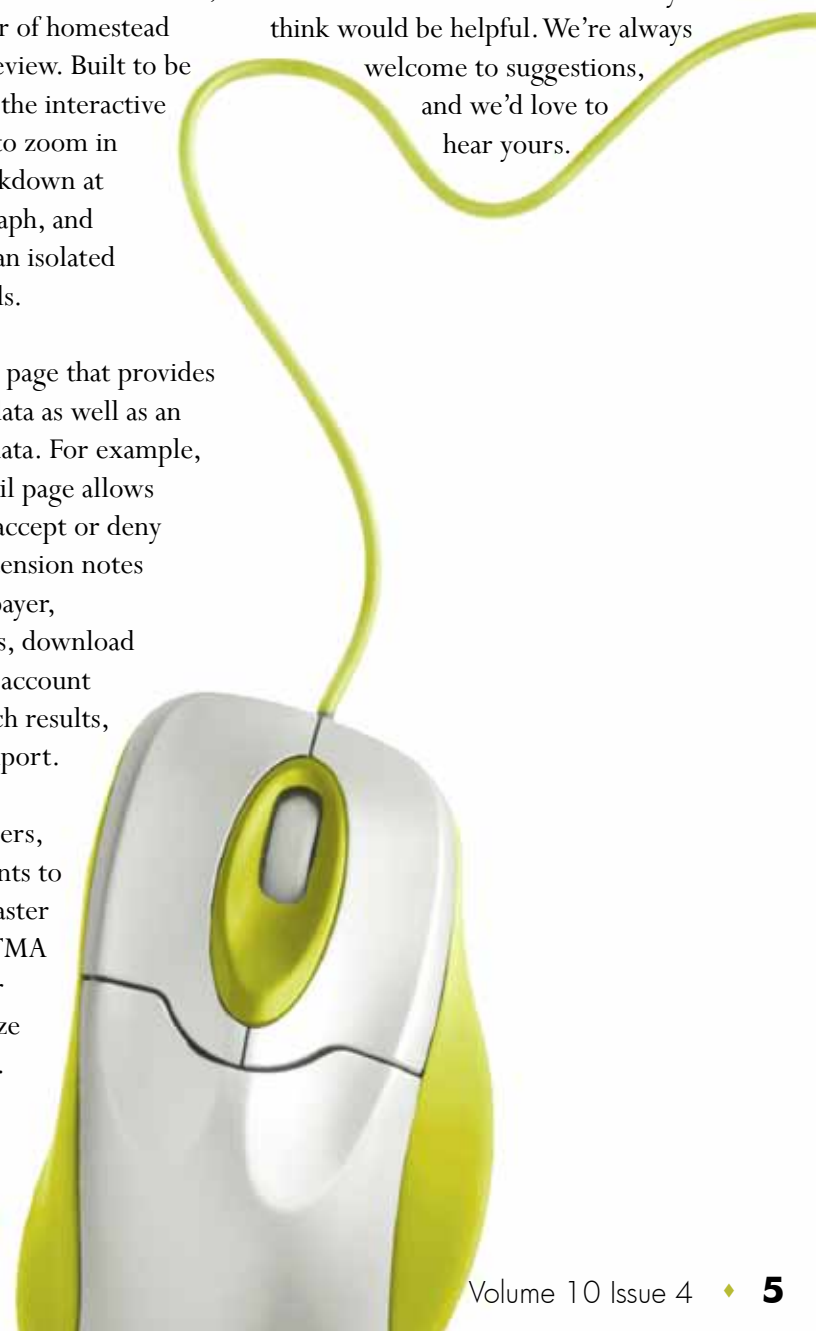
Clients have the ability to: view statistics for TMA services, download listing forms, view audit data and calendar appointments, view forecasts and return on investment, view discovered accounts, discovered values, and view the number of homestead exemptions under review. Built to be a user-friendly site, the interactive charts allow clients to zoom in and out, view a breakdown at each point on the graph, and disable a legend for an isolated view of legend details.

There is also a detail page that provides a graphical view of data as well as an itemized list of the data. For example, the TAXscribe's detail page allows the jurisdiction to: accept or deny extensions, view extension notes provided by the taxpayer, download extensions, download listings, add missing account numbers, filter search results, and request XML export.

With hundreds of users, Informer allows clients to access information faster than ever. Contact TMA to find out how your jurisdiction can utilize this real-time portal. We're here to make

your job easier and Informer does just that. The user-friendly platform allows easy access to all of your project information and presents it in a way that is easily utilized for upcoming meetings.

As part of our Quality by Design mission statement, we strive to create solutions that provide value well into the future. Is there information that isn't provided on Informer that you need? Give us a call or send us an email. We are happy to help you get the details you need. Perhaps we can add more bells and whistles to Informer that you think would be helpful. We're always welcome to suggestions, and we'd love to hear yours.





Giving Back

TMA Cares about the Needs of Others through our Outreach Support | by Scott Smith

“Be of service. Whether you make yourself available to a friend or co-worker, or you make time every month to do volunteer work, there is nothing that harvests more of a feeling of empowerment than being of service to someone in need.” - Gillian Anderson

TMA has joined the global movement to end hunger. We want to be a part of the solution and we invite you to join us. We can end hunger, but it will take all of us. Did you know every \$1.00 provides seven pounds of food? Remember, every little bit helps. You can help end hunger by visiting www.feedingamerica.org to locate a food bank in your community. There are many opportunities to help including: volunteering, food drives, and financial donations.

TMA has long supported a number of worthwhile causes through donations, volunteer efforts, fund raisers, food drives, clothing drives, blood drives and other activities. TMA CARES is

a program where TMA employees, in all locations, have found a shared sense of unity in service to our local communities.

Included in the numerous organizations

“TMA has long supported a number of worthwhile causes through donations, volunteer efforts, fund raisers, food drives, clothing drives, blood drives and other activities”

we support, TMA has specifically committed to help end hunger in the United States this year. Many people don’t realize how prevalent a problem

hunger is in the U.S. Unfortunately, children at risk of hunger is not a myth, it’s a reality. Seventeen-percent of Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina’s service area population lives in poverty, including almost 209,000 children and seniors. Children who are in deep, persistent poverty are at the greatest risk of hunger. Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina (SHFBM) strives through education, advocacy, and partnerships to eliminate hunger by the solicitation and distribution of food.

A critical component to a healthy life is nutrition. From birth, the intake of vital nutrients is essential to the growth and development of a healthy individual. Healthy nutrition, particularly in the first three years of life, is important in establishing and maintaining a good foundation that has implications on a child’s future physical and mental health, academic achievement, and economic productivity. Unfortunately, food insecurity is an obstacle that threatens that critical foundation.

If you have any questions or comments about this article, please contact Scott Smith at 1-800-951-5350

Insufficient nutrition puts children at risk for illness and weakens their immune system. The immature immune systems of young children ages 0 to 5, make them especially vulnerable to nutritional deprivation and as a result, the ability to learn, grow, and fight infections is adversely affected.

Consider this:

- One in seven households in the US struggle with hunger.
- Over 47 million low-income Americans participate in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) to help purchase food. The average monthly SNAP benefit per person was \$133.41 in 2012, or less than \$1.50 per person per meal.
- 76 percent of SNAP households include a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person.
- All SNAP participants saw a drop in their benefits on Nov. 1, 2013. The average decrease was \$36 for a family of four. Over the entire year, the average family of four was \$396 less to spend on food.

Feeding America is a nationwide network of member food banks whose mission is to engage our country in the fight to end hunger. Through our partnership with Feeding America, we have found local food banks in all of the cities where TMA has offices. TMA CARES offers TMA employees an opportunity to give back through volunteer efforts.

A group of employees from the TMA offices in Charlotte recently volunteered at Second Harvest Food

Bank of Metrolina. They worked hard, had fun, and supported a great local cause. Did you know one hour of volunteer time provides the Food Bank with \$21.79 in labor savings? They couldn't do what they do without volunteers.

Second Harvest Food Bank is the largest hunger fighting agency in 19 counties of North and South Carolina and has been in existence since 1981. They distribute food through their main warehouse in Charlotte and through branches in Dallas (Gaston County), Mt. Gilead (Montgomery County), Hickory (Catawba County), and Spartanburg (Spartanburg County, SC). Last year, Second Harvest of Metrolina distributed over 40 million pounds

of food and grocery items to individuals in need through their almost 600 partner agencies.

A whopping 87% of Second Harvest's income comes from fundraising including: special events, grants, corporate donations, direct mail campaigns, etc. The remaining 13% comes from handling fees that are paid by partner agencies on about one quarter of the food provided. The fees are designed to assist with recovering the cost of transporting, warehousing, processing and distributing food. The low-income recipients of the food never pay a fee.

Where does the food come from? 76% of the food distributed is donated, 19% comes from government commodities, and approximately 5% of food is purchased. The remainder comes from food drives.

TMA is looking forward to volunteering again with Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina in February. If you would like to join us, please give us a call at 704.847.1234 for more information.

Check out the sources:
www.feedingamerica.org
www.secondharvestmetrolina.org





Since 1979, Tax Management Associates, Inc. has performed revenue enhancement services for over five-hundred (500) state and local government clients in twenty (20) states including statewide programs for both the Kentucky Revenue Cabinet and the Michigan Department of Treasury.

Over 140 employees and 33 years of experience, TMA is the nation's number one source for excellence in property tax assistance. To date, TMA professional auditors have performed over 163,000 audits for our clients. In addition, TMA has discovered over \$40 billion in unreported or under-reported value.

This translates to over \$1 billion dollars raised for our clients. What's more is that these audits have been completed in a timely manner all while retaining an overall appeal rate of less than one half of one percent. Call now to find out what services would benefit your jurisdiction at 1-800-951-5350.

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