



PORTLAND ACCOUNTING
FIRM UPGRADES FROM CCH
PROSYSTEM *FX* SCAN TO
SUREPREP TECHNOLOGY
AND SEES IMMEDIATE
RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Share Their Firm's Story

Interviewed: Leah DiGregorio, CPA, MST, Tax Partner
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.



Stats at a Glance

Goals: To implement more robust, modern 1040 tax solutions to support HSS staff and improve their process.

Office locations: Lake Oswego, OR

Employees: 70

Website: hsscpas.com

Association Membership: AGN International

Tax Software: CCH Axxess

SurePrep Solutions: 1040SCANverify, 1040SCAN PRO, SPbinder, TaxCaddy, API, Leadsheets

Introduction

Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C. (HSS) knows the importance of supporting their staff and providing relationship-based client service. With 70 employees, HSS is one of the largest local CPA firms in Oregon. They depend on the latest technology to serve a broad client base.

For eight years, HSS used CCH® ProSystem fx® Scan and AutoFlow Technology (Pfx Scan). While accounting software experienced significant advancements in that time, the firm felt that CCH technology did not. To HSS, it was the same software eight years later.

HSS Partner Leah DiGregorio set out in search of more robust 1040 tax solutions to support HSS staff and improve their process. That search led Leah to SurePrep.

“When I found out about SurePrep, I was interested in the difference in the technology. From what I saw, there was a huge advancement in technology in terms of what the software was able to do.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Leah considered SurePrep the obvious choice when she saw what the technological advancements would mean for HSS staff and clients.

“When I evaluated [SurePrep] and saw the differences compared to what we had, I felt like it would be a disservice not to implement it, knowing the constraints of busy season and the need to elevate people to their highest and best use. We saw that efficiency and a return on our investment in the first year.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

In 2019, HSS made the decision to upgrade from ProSystem fx Scan and AutoFlow to [SurePrep's 1040SCAN PRO](#). HSS also adopted SurePrep's workpaper management system, [SPbinder](#), at no additional cost. The technology upgrade transformed the firm's workflow and returned major efficiency gains within the first year. HSS used the time savings to resolve staffing pressures and elevated junior staff to focus on higher-value work.

Eliminating more data entry with 1040SCAN PRO's advanced technology

Tax preparation is a constantly evolving practice and it's critical that technology evolves with it. Leah and HSS reached a point where their needs exceeded what CCH ProSystem *fx* Scan could deliver.

// I expect the software should be able to read 1099s. That's my base expectation. What else can you do? Software has been able to do that for many, many years.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

When HSS first adopted Pfx Scan, they hoped the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology would benefit staff by reducing data entry. Instead, Leah noticed experienced team members skipping the OCR process altogether because they felt entering data manually was faster than the software.

Leah hoped Pfx Scan would grow with the firm over time, but saw no meaningful improvements to document coverage or User Interface (UI). “[CCH] is not advancing,” Leah explained. “We used [Pfx Scan] for a really long time. And to what advancement?”

In that same timespan, SurePrep aggressively expanded its document coverage and positioned itself as the leader in 1040 automation. **Today, SurePrep's OCR engine:**

- **Recognizes 5 times as many documents as ProSystem *fx* Scan,** including Grantor Letters and State K-1s.
- **Captures fields that ProSystem *fx* Scan misses,** such as margin interest, investment fees, and foreign income.
- **Can auto-verify approximately 65% of standard documents** with patented, AI-powered technology that no other vendor offers.

After HSS switched to 1040SCAN PRO, usage among staff standardized. The expanded document coverage and ease of use convinced holdouts and delighted leadership. SurePrep OCR is now a fully integrated part of the firm's process and saves staff hours on data entry, which they

direct toward higher-value work. Leah knows HSS has found a long-term solution that will evolve with the firm.

“The quality is continually increasing.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Supporting experienced staff by eliminating verification with 1040SCANverify

It's a best practice to verify OCR data for accuracy before exporting to tax software. Leah didn't want to take time away from preparation and review by burdening senior staff with verification.

“What [we] are trying to do is have each person doing things at their highest and best use. And at each level, elevating what they're doing. If you have an experienced associate, a senior, a manager, that [best use] is not doing verify.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

She tried to offload verification work to interns and junior staff, but that required training. Turnover is naturally higher in the lower ranks, and paraprofessionals don't always understand the context of the data they verify. Leah described the strategy as hit or miss. “We tried having a first year [staff] do all the verification and that's hit or miss, right? And then that takes training on our end. We did it a couple times with varying success.”

SurePrep offered a solution: 1040SCANverify. This service level offers all the functionality of 1040SCAN PRO, but also includes an OCR verification outsource service. Professional SurePrep verifiers ensure data accuracy before HSS exports to their tax software.

Leah no longer has to spend resources training verifiers, and senior staff still enjoy the reduced workload compression of automated data entry. After their positive experience, Leah says the firm will likely transition all their returns from 1040SCAN PRO to 1040SCANverify.

“ Even if it’s just one 1099, it’s good to just get it done. The way your people are trained, it’s all they do; they do it better and faster.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

SurePrep verifies OCR data through a combination of patented, AI-powered technology and expert service. In the TY 2021 season, SurePrep’s newest AI enhancements and patented text-layer matching auto-verified 65% of all standard documents. That number is only expected to grow as SurePrep’s AI engine evolves.

Less verification means SurePrep can pass the time savings onto firms like HSS and reduce their staffing pains. CCH ProSystem fx Scan does not offer auto-verification technology or a verification service.

“ [1040SCANverify] is like the ability to add a person for us. That we don’t have to train. The quality and having the ability to offload [verification] was really important.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Streamlining preparation and review with SPbinder

With the bulk of data entry and verification out of the way, experienced HSS staff have time to concentrate on quality workpaper preparation. [SPbinder](#) gives them the tools to prepare detailed workpapers and facilitate a smooth, efficient review.

“ It’s the automation, it’s the linking, it’s the OCR and the calculator tape. It’s way more. [SurePrep’s] technology far surpasses.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Other workpaper management systems are generic or intended for trial balance-based engagements. The CCH solution, PDFlyer, is only an Adobe plug-in. PDFlyer requires users to convert all workpapers to PDF, which not only adds a step, but also prohibits editing.

SPbinder is robust workpaper software designed specifically for 1040 tax preparation. It accepts common

workpaper file types: PDF, Excel, Word, email, and TIFF. Leah's preparers can create annotations and hyperlinked cross-references without converting workpapers to PDF. And they no longer need to convert files just to update an Excel formula. "We have many, many files that have an Excel or Word document," Leah said. "Not having to make that into a PDF, it's reducing what we have to do."

“ Even in the year that we implemented [SurePrep], time was down in prep. New people, experienced people. I saw a decrease in their time. There was definitely more of their time available for [higher-value tasks]. ”

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

One of Leah's favorite time-saving features is SurePrep's OCR calculator tape. Preparers enter values into the calculator with simple click-and-drag select. SPbinder automatically creates hyperlinks between these captured amounts on the calculator tape and the source document. This feature saves preparers time on key-ins and makes review quicker by taking reviewers straight to the source of an amount.

HSS staff no longer spends time on work that can just as easily be done by automation. 1040SCAN enables them to focus on quality preparation and review with SPbinder. Staff spends more time leveraging their expertise as tax professionals and less time performing manual tasks.

Driving success with dedicated year-round support

"When you do an implementation, the setup is so important," Leah explained. "Having people trained and having a good process is what creates success."

SurePrep understands that training, implementation, and ongoing support are critical to success. We see every customer relationship as a partnership. That's why all SurePrep customers receive a [customized implementation program](#), lifetime access to unlimited support, on-demand e-learning, access to a self-serve Help Center, and a dedicated Account Manager. That level of support made all the difference for HSS.

“ I implemented SurePrep. You can’t even compare the support that you get with SurePrep to any other product that I’ve ever worked with.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

HSS schedules weekly calls with their SurePrep Account Manager. “We did have questions every week and Miranda answers everything so quickly,” Leah told us. She pointed out that CCH charges additional fees for access to a product expert like Miranda. In Leah’s experience, wait times for CCH support were often lengthy.

SurePrep support is available year-round via chat, phone, email, or video call—and the average wait time is 3 minutes. SurePrep’s support team has a 98% Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT).

“ I felt like we got a partnership with SurePrep. Success was almost guaranteed because of the resources that we had.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Maximizing workflow efficiency with SurePrep solutions

Making the switch from CCH ProSystem fx Scan to 1040SCANverify/SPbinder gave HSS the technological edge they needed to automate manual tasks and elevate their staff. The automation freed staff to focus on skilled work—what Leah calls “their highest and best use.” Leah told us she saw efficiency gains within “year one” of implementation.

Going forward, Leah expects SurePrep’s evolving technology and supportive partnership to yield new benefits. For example, Leah shared with us that proactive outreach from SurePrep put Application Programming Interface (API) technology on her radar. HSS is now almost finished implementing SurePrep’s free API.

APIs make software integration easier, more efficient, and customizable. The new API connections will automate migration from SurePrep software to HSS’ cloud stage solution. Leah told us CCH charged

a prohibitive fee for access to the same technology.

SurePrep's customer-centric approach and continuous push toward technological advancement resonate with Leah. "People get into the mindset of: 'This is just how it works. This is how it is.' I try to have the mindset of 'What's possible?' Let's see if this pain point has a solution," Leah shared.

“ Having that mindset of what's possible. I think that's part of SurePrep. You're always evolving, you're looking for technological advancements, you're trying to solve those problems.

— Leah DiGregorio, Partner,
Hoffman, Stewart & Schmidt, P.C.

Related content

[Learn all about 1040SCANverify](#)

[Are you familiar with SurePrep's tax automation API Developer Portal?](#)

[5 talent trends in tax & accounting](#)

About SurePrep

SurePrep was founded in 2002 and is the leader in 1040 productivity for firms that process 1040s. We deliver seamless integration with your existing tax software to automate and streamline the entire 1040 process for both the taxpayer and tax professional. Our solutions are used by over 23,000 tax professionals ranging from Big 4 firms to sole practitioners to reduce administrative costs, automate workpaper preparation, maximize review efficiency, and improve client service.

2023.02.23