



International
Federation
of Accountants®

COMPANION MANUAL

Guide to Practice Management for SMPs

International Federation of Accountants
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This Companion Manual was developed to help IFAC member organizations and other professional accountancy organizations make the best use of the *Guide to Practice Management for Small- and Medium-Sized Practices* (the Guide) prepared by IFAC. The Guide, now in its fourth edition, can be downloaded for individual, non commercial use from <http://www.ifac.org/global-knowledge-gateway/practice-management>.

This Manual includes many examples for illustrative purposes only and does not reflect any policy positions of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC).

IFAC serves the public interest and strengthens the accountancy profession by:

- Supporting the development of high-quality international standards;
- Promoting the adoption and implementation of these standards;
- Building the capacity of professional accountancy organizations; and
- Speaking out on public interest issues.

IFAC is the global organization for the accountancy profession dedicated to serving the public interest by strengthening the profession and contributing to the development of strong international economies. For further information, please email Christopher Arnold, Head of SME/SMP and Research at christopherarnold@ifac.org.

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1. Introduction and objectives

The *Guide to Practice Management for Small- and Medium-Sized Practices* was commissioned by IFAC to provide guidance to small- and medium-sized practices (SMPs) on how to better manage their practice and achieve greater proficiency and professionalism. The Guide provides best practices on a broad range of topics, from strategic planning and managing staff, to client relationship management and succession planning. The fourth edition of the Guide can be downloaded free of charge for individual use at <http://www.ifac.org/global-knowledge-gateway/practice-management> .

As a federation of member organizations, IFAC's primary focus is on helping its member organizations support their SMP constituents. Accordingly, this Companion Manual was developed to assist member organizations in using the Guide to encourage good practice management among their membership.

This Companion Manual presents ways for IFAC member organizations and other professional accountancy organizations to use the Guide, including translating or tailoring the Guide to suit national and jurisdictional needs. The content in the Guide can be used to enhance or supplement existing material and/or continuing professional development (CPD) activities. Organizations may also develop derivative products from the Guide, such as training materials, journal articles, customized checklists and forms, and software for their members. **Before reproducing, adapting, or translating the Guide in any of the ways illustrated in the following pages, IFAC member organizations and professional accountancy organizations must first seek permission from IFAC (see section 2).**

2. Reproduction, adaptation and translation

For permission to reproduce, adapt and/or translate the Guide to suit local, national or regional requirements, best practices, custom/culture and language, please fill out the relevant [permission request form](#) or contact permissions@ifac.org should you have any additional questions. Permission is also required to reproduce, adapt and/or translate extracts from the Guide for use in other publications and/or derivative works. For IFAC's policy statements on reproduction and translation and a sample permissions request, see www.ifac.org/Translations.

Once permission has been granted, the Adobe InDesign package of files will be supplied. The Guide was created in InDesign. Therefore, while not required when adapting or translating the Guide, use of desktop publishing software compatible with Adobe InDesign is strongly encouraged (see www.adobe.com/products/indesign.html and www.adobe.com/products/incopy.html; this is for information purposes only and should not in any way be interpreted as an endorsement of these Adobe products). If your organization does not have access to InDesign, a Word version will be supplied. The Word version of the Guide is formatted and edited to align as closely as possible with the InDesign file (from which the PDF version on our website was generated). However, the content/formatting of the Word file may differ from the PDF; the PDF version should be followed in the case of any discrepancies.

Level 1—Reproduction as co-publication

With permission, a member organization may choose to simply co-brand and reproduce the Guide with minor modifications.

Suggested changes may include:

- Inserting the member organization's logo alongside the existing IFAC logo on the cover;
- Customizing the Preface (page iv) while retaining appropriate acknowledgements;

- Removing the Request for Comments page (page v) or replacing it with member body’s feedback page;
- Removing Use by IFAC Member Organizations page (page x); and/or
- Updating the Contents page (page iii).

These simple changes will allow a member organization to publish the Guide electronically or in print form with minimal additional work. Making such changes will require the member organization to add to the copyright statement to acknowledge reproduction with permission of IFAC. The amended copyright statement will be provided by IFAC once permission is granted.

Level 2—Adaptation

Topics that are jurisdiction sensitive have been drafted in a generic fashion enabling text to be easily expanded or modified to best suit local circumstances.

After adopting some of the level 1 suggestions a member organization may like to make the following additional changes:

Inclusion of local jurisdictional guidance: The Guide is based on global best practices and general principles, so it may be necessary to do some customization to improve the suitability of the guidance to your members. Use the search feature in Adobe or MS Word software to find all instances of the word “jurisdiction,” which has been used to indicate potential areas for review and customization. For example, key areas identified using this search include: privacy legislation, insurance practices, employment law, approved practice structures, technology and XBRL, regulated services, ethical pronouncements, record keeping, and licensing and registration requirements.

Adoption of localized terminology/grammar: Customize the Guide to include local terminology, spelling and/or grammar by using the search feature in the Adobe or MS Word software to find and replace selected words as appropriate. Please note, trademarks used by IFAC and its committees, as well as the independent standard-setting boards it supports, should not be translated into the local language except in exceptional circumstances.

Inclusion of local benchmarks: Consider tailoring the Guide by incorporating the use of benchmark references that are specific and meaningful to your jurisdiction. This will add further value and make the Guide more useful to your members. For example, Section 1.8, “Using Benchmarks to Drive Performance and Improvement,” could be expanded to include local benchmarking services. Section 3.3, “Assessing Growth Requirements and Developing a Growth Strategy,” may be updated to reflect the realities of your local economy. Section 4.6, “Managing and Retaining Employees,” could be customized to reflect local employment practices. Section 8.5, “ Valuation Methodologies,” could include local valuation methodologies for establishing the value of a practice.

Acknowledgement of local cultural issues: The Guide may need to be adjusted to reflect some cultural practices that vary between jurisdictions. For example, in some jurisdictions, it may be inappropriate to meet clients at a place where alcohol is served.

Maximizing use of existing intellectual capital of your member organization: Your member organization may have already invested substantial resources in developing tools and resources for members in practice. Think about how you may utilize a tailored version of the Guide as a means of reminding members about this great guidance material. The following are examples of modifications that could be made to the Guide to enhance the visibility to your organization’s resources:

- Add call-out boxes to draw attention to quotes from your organization’s related guidance.



- Customize the “Further Reading and IFAC Resources” section at the end of each module to include a listing and/or links to your existing member resources, including previously published journal articles that are still relevant, other publications, the website as a whole or an online library, and CPD courses or tools.
- Considering using customized web hyperlinks throughout the Guide to lead readers to your organization’s resources where pertinent.

Level 3—Translation

Member organizations will need to obtain the necessary permission from IFAC before beginning translation (see section 2 of this Manual). Please see the IFAC Translations Database at <https://www.ifac.org/translations-database> for an up-to-date list of all progressing and completed translations.

For ease of translation, the Guide has been written in clear, concise, and simple English. The Guide uses IFAC terminology (for example, the terms defined in the glossaries of the Handbooks of the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board and International Accounting Education Standards Board [IAESB]) to the maximum extent possible. Where this terminology was not available, terms that can be easily translated have been used. Key terms in the Guide are defined in the Glossary of terms (pgs. xi-xix).

3. Publication of stand-alone modules or content

The Guide has been designed modularly and is suitable for use both in printed and electronic formats. Each module is designed to be as stand alone as possible so that each may be published individually, subject to permission from IFAC. Member organizations may customize and publish on a module-by-module basis over a period of time. Individual modules could be used, for example, as supplementary reading material for certification programs, structured training or ongoing CPD activities.

Despite the modular format, there will be some instances where material covered in one module references content in another module. In such cases, this content is cross referenced to those modules where the topic is covered in more detail.

4. Development of derivative products

A member organization may wish to utilize some of the content of individual modules to develop a derivative product. Derivative products could include: publications, guides, checklists and forms, interactive tools, software, or smartphone applications. See the table below for examples of potential products derived from each module.

Module	Examples of potential derivative products
<p>Module 1 Planning for your Firm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample strategic plan for your firm • Sample risk management plan for your firm • Sample office manual for your firm
<p>Module 2 Practice Models, Associations and Networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagrams that show public practice business structures • A list of factors to consider in a public practice partnership or shareholders agreement • A practice referral alliances network guide and/or checklist • Guide and/or checklist on evaluating your potential partners
<p>Module 3 Building and Growing your Firm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide to developing a business plan for your firm • A marketing plan and checklists for your practice • Guide to creating a sustainable practice
<p>Module 4 People Power: Developing a People Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm employer and/or employee manual • HR employment checklist • Firm induction checklist • Individual personal development plans • Staff appraisal and development guidelines
<p>Module 5 Leveraging Technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide to introducing a paperless office • Guide to introducing a firm portal • Guide to introducing an e-business strategy for your firm • Cloud computing evaluation checklist • Checklist to creating a virtual office • Guide to developing a technology strategy for your firm
<p>Module 6 Client Relationship Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample client questionnaires • Guide to client classification and review • Assessing client expectations checklist • Benchmarks for practice service levels
<p>Module 7 Risk Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A guide to developing, implementing, and monitoring a risk management program within your firm • Guide to understanding professional indemnity insurance • A checklist for client engagement and review • Risk management checklists • Cybersecurity & IT system control review checklist

Module	Examples of potential derivative products
<p>Module 8</p> <p>Succession Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A succession plan for your practice • Checklist for purchasing an accounting practice • Selling an accounting practice checklist • Internal succession issues checklist • Admission of a new partner checklist

If there is a need for such development, a permission request must be submitted via IFAC's online permission request and inquiry management system.

5. Continuing professional development opportunities

The content of the Guide may be incorporated into member organizations' continuing professional development (CPD) activities, which are required in order to achieve and maintain membership with IFAC, as stated in the [Statements of Membership Obligations](#) (SMOs). SMOs are issued by the IFAC Board and establish requirements for members and associates. See especially SMO 2, [International Education Standards for Professional Accountants and Other IAESB Guidance](#), which sets out the obligations of member organizations in relation to the International Education Standards (IESs) issued by the IAESB.

The Guide may assist member organizations with implementing IES 7, [Continuing Professional Development: A Program of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Development of Professional Competence](#). IES 7 requires that professional accountants develop and maintain their competence and that member organizations facilitate and enforce CPD programs.

Structured learning and certification programs

Some member organizations have developed formal practice management certification programs. Such programs may take many different forms, for example, full- or part-day training seminars, conferences, congresses or conventions, distance learning, e-learning (i.e., webinars), online, face-to-face, or residential programs. Structured programs help practitioners prepare for the ethical and professional challenges they will face as a partner, principal, or employee in a practice, and promote a commitment to quality services to the clients, the community, and regulators.

Certification programs may take the form of a simple voluntary induction program or a mandatory structured training requirement for members entering practice that results in the issuance of a certificate of public practice.

The content of the Guide can easily be adapted by member organizations for use in such programs, either to build new programs or to supplement existing ones. For example, some member organizations offer online CPD courses based on the Guide. Programs could follow the modular approach of the Guide.

Module	Content
<p>Module 1 Planning for your Firm</p>	<p>Module 1 examines the business and strategic planning processes and the more detailed policies that govern the development and implementation of the strategic plan within your firm.</p>
<p>Module 2 Practice Models, Associations and Networks</p>	<p>Module 2 looks at the structural considerations inherent in owning or running an accounting firm, and the various models available. It includes examination of profit sharing and decision making within a firm and the use of networks to add value and grow profitability.</p>
<p>Module 3 Building and Growing your Firm</p>	<p>Module 3 expands on the themes covered in Modules 1 and 2 by exploring in more depth the issues of developing a growth strategy, coping with increased regulation and competition, marketing, and pricing while developing a long term sustainable firm culture.</p>
<p>Module 4 People Power: Developing a People Strategy</p>	<p>Module 4 examines key elements that will play a pivotal role in achieving your firm’s objectives—people. This module explores your role as a leader as well as the staffing issues that have to be addressed as your firm grows, including your firm’s ability to attract, retain, motivate, and train its employees.</p>
<p>Module 5 Leveraging Technology</p>	<p>Module 5 examines the increasing role of cloud and other technology developments that play in the success of an accounting firm. Effective selection, implementation, and management of technologies, as well as training employees to use these tools, are fundamental to the success of any firm. With firms moving rapidly into this space, issues such as cybersecurity and other technology risks will also be more pervasive.</p>
<p>Module 6 Client Relationship Management</p>	<p>Module 6 examines the development and ongoing maintenance of client relationships, and strategies to improve and cement your client relations including networks, referrals, and other alliances.</p>
<p>Module 7 Risk Management</p>	<p>Module 7 explores risk management and the specific impact it has on practice life. It provides a framework for identifying, evaluating, and acting on risks within a firm. It discusses ethical issues and safeguards which can be used to deal with ethical threats, the role of quality control systems, and additional risk mitigation, such as insurance.</p>
<p>Module 8 Succession Planning</p>	<p>Module 8 examines the importance of a succession plan that allows for the orderly exit of the practitioners, and the strategies that can be implemented to become succession ready. It includes discussion on valuation and pricing, and options for consolidations, mergers, and internal and external buyouts.</p>

6. Incorporation of references into other activities

The content from the Guide could also be utilized in other activities.

Other examples include:

- Member forums or discussion groups;
- Podcasts or webcasts;
- Journal or newsletter articles incorporating links to content in the Guide (for example, see www.ifac.org/publications-resources/how-make-your-small-practice-big-success-practice-management-tips-smps);
- Teaser articles highlighting specific topics from individual modules;
- Website content and cross referencing;
- Online PowerPoint presentations;
- Interviews with local spokespersons highlighting issues of local interest or concern and quoting resources from the Guide; and/or
- Referencing content from the Guide as part of a staff toolkit or resource to assist members.

7. Other resources and tools for SMPs

In addition to the Guide, IFAC has a range of other publications, resources, articles, videos and tools for SMPs, which can be found on the [Global Knowledge Gateway](#). The Gateway is a powerful, interactive website where the global accountancy community can both contribute and obtain knowledge. Member organizations are invited to submit relevant practice management resources to Gateway@ifac.org.



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