July 2019

mercia
incorporating swat
Wilmington Professional

# The Future of Audit – Pathways to Paperless

*If you are thinking that your firm should ditch those paper-based audit files and move onto a paperless audit system, there couldn't be a better time to be looking at what is on the market.*

*But before you start to get into the detail, here are our top ten things you should consider as part of your change process…*

### 1. Why are you doing it? What are you trying to achieve?

Is it about the image the firm gives to colleagues and clients, saving space on those bulky files or trying to be a bit greener and saving paper or is it in a bid to improve quality and efficiency of the audit? It is probably a combination of some (or all) of them)!

### 2. Is everyone on-board?

Good implementation needs full commitment from top to bottom. Everyone should be committed to using the new system and making it work for the firm.

### 3. How paperless are you already?

It is rare to see firms that are still completely paper-based; most are doing work on screen and then printing – so the jump to a paperless assignment file may not be as big as some fear.

### 4. Desktop or Cloud?

The big moves in the market currently are to cloud based solutions. This is something which needs to be thought about within the firm as to accessibility requirements but will certainly save space on servers.

### 5. Which platform to choose?

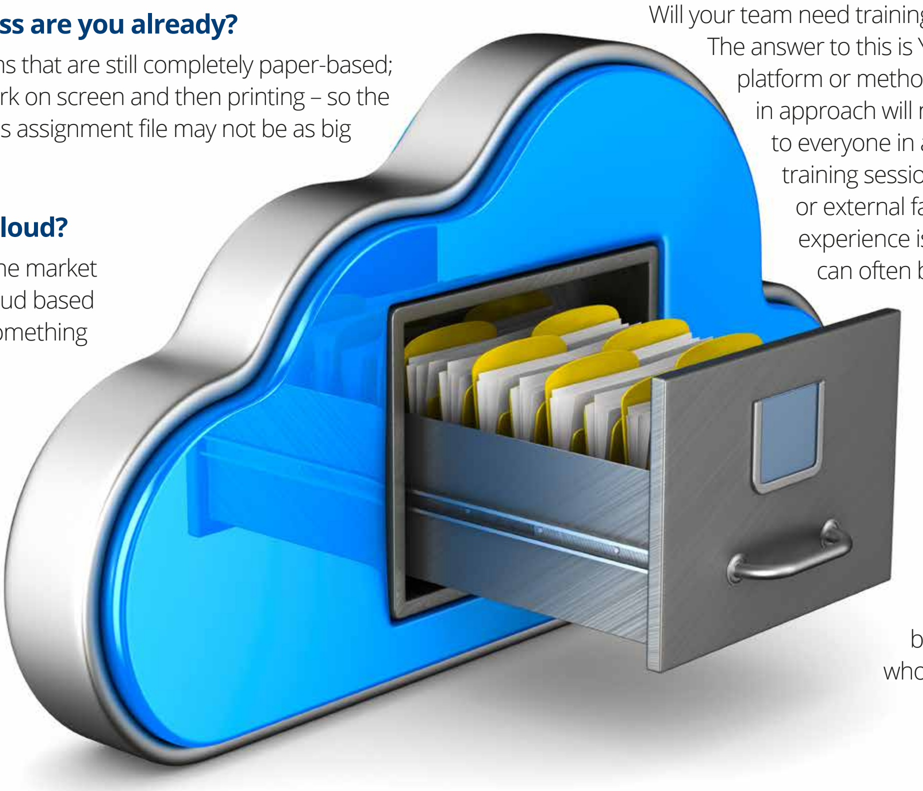
Mercia incorporating SWAT work with **four major software houses** to bring paperless assignment solutions to firms, but which should you choose?

Matters to consider are compatibility with existing systems (particularly accounts production software), the user experience from the system and of course cost.

We are happy to discuss the vendors with you with complete independence before you look at any in more detail.

### 6. Training

Will your team need training on the new system? The answer to this is Yes! Even if you know the platform or methodology already, the change in approach will need to be communicated to everyone in a consistent manner. A training session can be run by an internal or external facilitator, although our experience is that an external fresh voice can often be more beneficial.



### 7. Implementation strategy

Each firm uses systems in slightly different ways and so an approach needs to be developed. Whether you have a single project leader or an implementation team, a few assignments should be undertaken before the whole firm goes live.

## 8. Timing of implementation

Do we start using the new system in the quiet period (when people have time to think/learn/play) or the busy period (when regular use will help the new processes to stick quickly)? There is no right answer to this, we have seen both work, but you need to be clear which route to go down.

## 9. Selecting the first assignments

Do we start off with the easy jobs and learn at slower pace or dive in with that really difficult one where all the issues will crop up at once? Again there is no right or wrong approach although having the right staff and a co-operative, understanding client can be beneficial.

## 10. Going forward

Implementation done. Phew. Let's sit back and relax?

No. There will always be a need to review and refine approaches and learn from others' experiences. Book in a **cold file review** after a few months to get an independent view of how it has gone. Put a date in the diary 6 months after implementation for a team meeting to discuss the new system. Listen to new staff who have used the system at previous firms. It is a process of continuing development.

We work with Caseware, CCH (Wolters Kluwer), MyWorkPapers and Silverfin providing audit and assurance content to their platforms. If you are interested in finding out more about paperless audit systems generally, **click here** or contact Andrew Paul on 0330 058 7141.