

**September 2002**

*Issue 30*

**HIGHLIGHTS**

*Practice Assurance*

*AGM Date*

*Unqualifieds Survey*

*Bogus Emails!*

*Letters*

**Practice Assurance - Lies, damn lies and statistics.**

Efforts to have the initial vote taken in December 2001 (when less than 25% of Council Members were present in the Chamber) reconsidered at recent Council meetings have been deflected, and this minority decision presently remains the platform on which Council's published approval is based.

As the table at the end shows stark disparity exists between emerging survey figures:

- Peter Mitchell's article in *Accountancy Age* 25 July states 83% of over 1000 small practice responses to the SPA survey indicated that objectives set for practice assurance would not be met.
- The Executive Summary of the ICAEW Member Consultation states that:
  - '1 Members are equally divided as to whether they think a scheme of Practice Assurance will or will not benefit the profession. 20% think it will be a benefit as it would have a positive effect on client and public confidence, providing reassurance, enhancing its reputation and promoting the CA brand. Members in larger practices were more likely to see it being of benefit.'
  - '2 However 22% do not think it will benefit the profession, especially sole practitioners, many of whom thought that the focus of the initiative should be on the largest firms.'
  - '3 Over half (57%) think that it may possibly be beneficial, depending on how it is introduced, who conducts it and what it will mean in terms of time, cost and possible benefits. Many wanted more information in order to judge.'
- An article appearing in *Accountancy* this August by John Edwards of the Professional Standards Directorate concludes that of 760 respondents from practices of all sizes to the Phase 1 Survey of Member Consultation 'the majority (77%) thought that practice assurance will definitely/may possibly benefit the profession as a whole'.

**Summary of ICAEW & SPA Survey Results Whether Practice Assurance Will Definitely Benefit the Profession as a Whole**



Definitely won't  
 Maybe won't  
 Don't know  
 Maybe will  
 Definitely will

SPA Survey %	Member Focus %	John Edwards %
62	22	
19	57	77
11	( 'may possibly' )	( 'will definitely/ may possibly' )
5		
3	20	

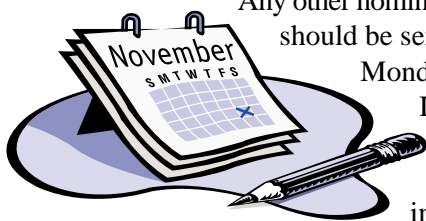
Who's kidding whom whether Practice Assurance will benefit the profession?

SPA remains fundamentally opposed to a compulsory scheme of whole firm review where little or no client benefit is provided. A formal request for a voluntary scheme has been submitted to be provided as a Member service. A debate on this issue is planned for the Council Meeting on 2nd October.

Please look out for and respond to the further consultation processes – amended 'Standards' and a draft 16 page 'Annual Return' are being posted out by our Institute.

## Date for your Diary - Friday 29 November - our 7th AGM

A reminder that the AGM is fast approaching – keep Friday 29 November free to join us again at Stonebridge Golf & Conference Centre in Birmingham. Your Chairman Peter Mitchell is up for re-election and is willing to stand for his fourth 2-year term to lead SPA into what could become a very exciting future – our AGM will tell all!



Any other nominations for chairman should be sent to the office by Monday 18 November.

ICAEW President Peter Wyman has accepted our invitation to attend

and take general questions from members on topical matters at the end of the CPE discussion forum and then join us for lunch.

As Practice Assurance seems to be upper-most in everyone's mind at the moment and Maurice Ede from the Professional Standards Directorate has agreed to lead a discussion forum in the morning on the latest proposals.

Many of you made your views on this issue known very clearly when replying to our questionnaire circulated earlier this year - and those comments have been forwarded to our Institute, but this is an ideal opportunity to establish the perceived impact such a scheme would have on you - the small practitioner. Don't miss out on this opportunity.

A hot buffet lunch will be followed by the formal Annual General Meeting, with close of business no later than 4.00pm. Several of our Group Service providers have confirmed their attendance and to meet members and discuss areas of interest.

Please complete and return the attendance form attached  
**RSVP**

### 'Unqualifieds' - Survey Response

Our thanks to the 60 members who reported new clients arriving with a history of poor quality work by unqualified and also – unfortunately – by qualified accountants!

It seems bad apples appear on both sides and to campaign only against unqualifieds would be invidious – hence no further action proposed at this time.

## Financial Services and the need for Registration

Enclosed is an article written for *Accountancy* by SPA member Chris Thomas. We are pleased to reproduce it here ahead of *Accountancy* for our members. The Institute's Professional Standards Directorate approved the article in June 2002 as being factually correct, albeit they did not like the conclusions drawn!

Chris Thomas would be happy to receive comments from members by email at [ct@thomas-harris.com](mailto:ct@thomas-harris.com)

### Beware of Bogus emails!!

Recently SPA has become aware that two marketing organisations have downloaded email addresses from our website and contacted members direct - The Right Hand Man Group and now Accountant Brokers. SPA would like to make it very clear that we had not been approached to seek our permission nor in any way been involved in either project.

SPA wishes to confirm that members will only be advised of new Group Services through our official publications and such unsolicited emails should be ignored. Please let SPA know of any future similar mailings.

### This Month's Special Offers! Simply Books

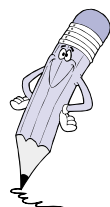
Our sincere apologies to Simply Books (a new Group Service provider) for omitting their flyer from our July Newsletter (Brownie points to those who spotted the mistake). Simply Books is designed for businesses employing up to five people, to be used by non-accountants – ie your clients – with spreadsheet style entry. Simply Books includes free connectivity to Microsoft Excel and Lotus 123 for easy processing of client records.

On top of the already generous offers available to accountants, SPA members are being offered a 50% discount on the normal price of £99.99 for copies of Simply Books used with the practice, plus 12 months free technical support. If you have any difficulty accessing the data a free telephone helpline is available on 020 7272 9700. Their introductory flyer IS enclosed with this Newsletter.

### FT Interactive Data Workshops

A generous £200 reduction on the cost of their remaining 2002 CGT workshops is available to SPA members. There are only limited places left on the workshops and at a price of £250 per SPA delegate these are likely to go quickly. For full details see their leaflet enclosed with this Newsletter.

## LETTERS



### The same old chestnut

In 1992 (ICAEW) President Plaistowe answered my letter calling for continuation of the loose leaf copy of the Handbook. His reply indicated feedback that was approving of the new bound edition.

In 2002 my letter to President Wyman requested a hardcopy – our computer is deliberately not NET enabled for security reasons. He also indicated positive feedback from those who agreed with him.

In both cases fundamental changes were made without consulting members affected by them – ie dictatorship. Isn't the ICAEW there to serve rather than to command. I wonder who the majority of the 90 Council voters were, did they have to connect to the web when an Institute underling said 'jump to it'? DH

*Editor*

*SPA continues to make representations on behalf of those disenfranchised by our Institute's insistence on communicating with only the 'web-enabled' sector of the membership.*

### Email

... I have just read that the Institute are claiming that over 70% of the respondents to their 'consultation' are in favour of Practice Assurance in principle. This is entirely opposite to the results of your (SPA) survey – something is wrong somewhere! AB

*Editor*

*All we can say is that we have extracted our figures from the 1012 returned questionnaires and these are available at our office for anyone who wishes to examine them!*

We could probably dedicate a whole Newsletter to correspondence received on Practice Assurance – SPA encourages you to come to the AGM in November and express your concerns in person!

However we do thank those members who wrote in and assure you that our voice is getting stronger – with growing support for our views coming from within our Institute.

## Cashflow Manager - Early Promise

Initial reports from Cashflow Manager – yet another new Group Service launched in May this year – show that early take up has been encouraging with positive feedback about this product from SPA members who also benefited from the discounts given and is still available on first orders.

This simple computerised bookkeeping package for you or your clients is also available in a paper format for those still without a computer! It handles bank, cash, VAT and invoicing activities.

For more information contact Cashflow Manager on 01376 509101. A representative from the company may contact you in the coming weeks to discuss your needs – it will not be a 'hard sell' approach.

## Relaunch of Fee Protection

SPA is pleased to announce that we have agreed terms with IRPC Taxation Services to give members a 10% discount on its government investigation fee protection insurance scheme, TaxSure for Accountants. TaxSure is the market leader in fee protection and is underwritten by Europe's biggest legal expenses insurer, DAS.

The offer includes unlimited access to IRPC's Business Support Helpline, which provides telephone advice on a wide range of general business issues.

'Enquiries by the Revenue or VAT disputes can eat up an accountant's time' says IRPC business director Alan Frazer. 'They can drag on for months or even years, running up unwelcome bills for the client and putting the client-accountant relationship under strain.

'TaxSure covers the additional accountancy costs and gives you all the specialist advice and support you need to clear up the case quickly.'

The scheme offers unlimited access to IRPC's in-house tax and VAT helplines, staffed by friendly, experienced personnel with a vast body of information at their fingertips. Regional consultants are also on hand to provide external support.

IRPC provide marketing literature to help you promote TaxSure to your clients, giving you a valuable source of extra income. See their flyer enclosed with this Newsletter.

If you are interested in joining the scheme please complete the Answerback at the end of the Newsletter.

**RSVP**

## IRPC/Croner Fee Protection

From 1st July IRPC Group Ltd became Croner Consulting Ltd – now living at Croner House, Wheatfield Way, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 1YG – with the old tax division being called IRPC Taxation Services. The helpline 0800 and 0870 telephone numbers remain the same and although there were some initial problems with accessing these during the office move in mid-August, all seems well now. Croner Consulting Ltd has asked us to apologise to any SPA member who might have experienced difficulty accessing the helpline during this time.

**ANSWERBACK TOPICS**

To: SPA  
**FREEPOST**  
Great Missenden  
Bucks HP6 0BR

Date: September 2002

Firm: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: 01494 864454

Membership No.

---

Help us help you by completing and returning this fact find sheet urgently

---

**Seventh Annual General Meeting - Friday 29th November 2002**

• I will / will not be attending the 7th AGM / CPE Discussion Forum

• I will require a vegetarian meal Y / N

Full agenda and details will be sent with the October Newsletter - this return is to give an initial indication of numbers

.....

**IRPC Taxation Services - Fee Protection Insurance Scheme**

• Please send me full details of the IRPC Fee Protection Insurance Scheme Y / N

• Please ask my local IRPC representative to call and arrange a visit Y / N

Name .....

Tel. No. ....