

# How ADP Implemented a Successful Multi-Pronged Approach to Industry Intelligence



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ADP is perhaps best known for their payroll services, but in recent years, their offerings have expanded well beyond tabulating and printing paychecks. They now provide dedicated channels and expertly designed business process outsourcing tools for accounting, HR, talent, benefits, and compliance. This includes their award-winning cloud-based solution, **Accountant Connect<sup>SM</sup>**, a free portal utilized by over 80,000 accountants that is revolutionizing the way they work with their clients.

In addition to providing easy online access to small to mid-sized business clients' payroll ledgers, Accountant Connect also offers users simplified client onboarding, report generation, and document transmission, among other helpful features.

When ADP decided to integrate Industry Profiles from Vertical IQ into Accountant Connect, they discovered the many ways that Industry Intelligence could benefit not only CPAs and their clients, but also ADP's own team.



## — • THE CHALLENGES

### Staying attuned to business owners

Today’s small and mid-sized business (SMB) owners are clamoring for personalized service tailored to meet their unique needs. They are looking for accountants, payroll firms, benefits coordinators, and other outsourced service providers that understand the nuances of their industry and can help them identify and tackle issues.

The ADP Research Institute conducted a survey of SMB owners revealing that 62 percent felt that their accountant was in a position to offer them both HR and compliance advice. It’s that desire for additional advisory resources that inspired ADP to consider ways to incorporate industry-specific insights into their Accountant Connect platform.

“What’s happening within industries is extremely critical to accounting professionals as their clients are craving additional intel and guidance pertaining to verticals,” noted Heather Spurduto, Vice President of Channel Sales for Small Business Services at ADP.

“Our thought process with the Accountant Connect technology is that, at their fingertips, accounting professionals should be able to go in and interact with the data for our mutual clients – the ones that also utilize ADP,”

Spurduto explained, “but we also wanted to enable accountants to tap into other best-in-class resources to help fuel their own client advisory services and educate themselves about topics like industry-specific compliance changes or getting a handle on issues occurring within a particular market or industry.”

### Speaking to accounting firms' needs

It's important to remember that many CPAs are business owners themselves. They too are eager to work with service providers who understand the unique aspects of their business, and they are looking for partners who can add value to the relationship.

With this in mind, the ADP team was exploring how they could take their prospecting and relationship development to the next level and differentiate from their competitors by meeting this expectation.

Sperduto continued:

“We strive to arm our small business sales leaders and associates with the training and tools they need to succeed. In addition to strategy, program development, and execution, we also help our salespeople create a process and understand the accountant channel, our solutions, and how we help accountants. It's vital that they fully understand the specific challenges and opportunities faced by accounting firms and how our solutions can solve them.”

Educating your sales force is just the first step in the process, of course. You also need to identify differentiators that can help you get a foot in the prospect's door, noted Jennifer Gesing, Vice President of Sales Operations for the Accountant Channel at ADP.

“We are always looking for ways our team can provide valuable resources to accounting firms,” observed Gesing. “For these prospects, our sales associates need ways to gain access, especially with cold firms, or even warm firms that may not be as willing to meet with us on a regular basis.”

Once ADP has landed a client, the work is not over. They must continue to nurture that relationship with memorable touchpoints that add value from the client's perspective. And we know that business owners crave partners that provide advice that can benefit their firm and boost their success.

“For accounting firms that we do have an existing partnership with,” Gesing said, “we try to create reasons why a firm should sit down and talk to us more frequently. We want to stay at the forefront of their mind so when they're meeting with their own clients, they think of ADP to refer first over any of our competitors.”

How could ADP provide...

...a helpful tool for the accountants utilizing Accountant Connect?

...a resource to educate their sales force on the landscape of the accounting industry?

...a valuable asset to nurture existing relationships and differentiate from the competition?

There was a single answer:

Industry Intelligence from Vertical IQ.

## • THE SOLUTION

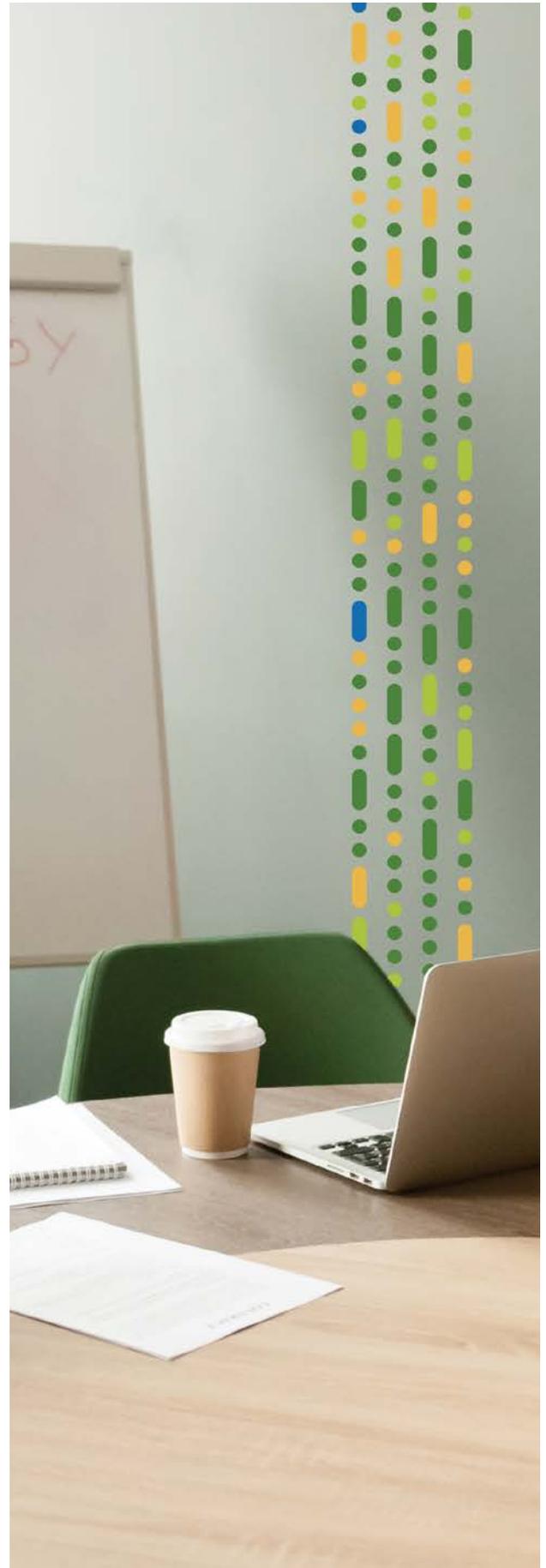
“We were looking for a complementary tool that we could use as we approach accounting firms and to educate and empower our own associates as well,” recollected Sperduto. “We know that you need an area of expertise as you prospect within specific industries, and we wanted a consolidated place where we – and our accountant clients – could tap into some of those industry insights, benchmarks, and statistics in a very user-friendly, easy-to-digest fashion. Vertical IQ checked all of those boxes.”

But before making a commitment, ADP wanted to be certain they were selecting the best option for both their needs and their clients’ needs.

“We did a lot of due diligence on our side before we made the decision to launch the Vertical IQ partnership program,” Sperduto noted. “Internally, we had some of our team members review several of the Industry Profiles to gain insight about how they would use them within their daily activities – whether it’s as a prospecting tool or to reinforce some of the conversations they’re having with our centers of influence [COI].”

ADP also wanted to ensure Vertical IQ’s Industry Intelligence would prove beneficial for their accountant clients. Sperduto continued: “Externally, we tested the reports with some of our partners in the accountant community. We asked them to review how the information was presented, what aspects of the reports they felt would be most useful, and how they would actually use them in their practice and interfacing with their own clients.”

The feedback, both internal and external, was overwhelmingly positive, and beginning in August 2022, ADP added 23 carefully curated Vertical IQ Industry Profiles to the Accountant Connect platform – 20 industries that are consistent plus three additional ones that are selected quarterly based on seasonality. Select members of the ADP team also gained access to the full Vertical IQ platform for training curriculum and collateral development.





## — • WINNING RESULTS

Since launching their Vertical IQ integration, ADP has been reaping the rewards of incorporating Industry Intelligence into their own training, collateral, and relationship management processes. Their accountant clients are benefiting as well, not only with their new access to insightful industry information via Accountant Connect, but also through the value-added, tailored touchpoints they receive from their ADP account manager.

“Vertical IQ’s Industry Intelligence is our go-to as we build training curriculum because we want our associates to be able to go out to the market with prescribed tools and resources that they can leverage in their conversations to help gain access and then effectively run meetings,” explained Sperduto.

“When we’re determining how to roll out a specific topic internally to our associates, Vertical IQ is our first stop as well because we want to have a finger on the pulse of what’s going on in the market,” she continued.

“Their benchmarks, trends, and statistics help validate and confirm what’s happening within an industry, so that becomes a crucial starting place.”

ADP also is using content from Vertical IQ for value-added prospect and client touchpoints. “We’re always looking for a ‘snackable’ one- or two-pager to take into a firm,” Gesing observed. “Our associates like the fact that they can print a relevant chapter of the Industry Profile or pull an industry-focused news article from Vertical IQ that applies to a client or prospect’s industry, and they can leverage that to gain access. They send that kind of thought leadership or news about what’s happening in that particular industry to their COI or their CPA partner, and they’re then able to have an intelligent conversation based on that one article.”

Gesing continued: “Our CPA firms tell us they appreciate the continuing education coming from us – whether it be on a product, a solution, something happening in the marketplace, a challenge – any of our thought leadership, and Vertical IQ definitely brings us this type of valuable industry expertise.”

“We hear a lot from accounting firms, and even brokers in the small business marketplace, who really like these insights,” said Gesing. “Their eyes lit up when I showed them the Industry Profile and what it looked like – especially the Call Prep Questions. They really liked this type of Industry Intelligence for their newer associates since they don’t have the experience or industry expertise that a more tenured accountant or broker would have.”

“ Vertical IQ is a differentiator, allowing us to separate ourselves from our competition – to be that advisor who advises the advisor, which is the accountant. So, it helps them be the hero. ”

— • **JENNIFER GESING**

Vice President of  
Sales Operations,  
Accountant Channel  
ADP

“The real value of utilizing Vertical IQ is that it allows us at ADP to be an advisor to our CPA firms that are then advising their own clients...”

Gesing continued, “We’re able to bring them an Industry Intelligence solution that makes it super easy for them to do their job and for them to brush up on or go a little bit deeper into an industry that they may not be as familiar with. It’s trusted research that’s quick, easy, and convenient for them to have at their fingertips. Knowing that this outstanding resource is coming from us at ADP – it just elevates the partnership, and it’s an additional value-add that we offer to them.”

But the advantages don’t end there, Gesing observed. “Those CPAs also will extend this Industry Intelligence to their own clients, so it’s almost like a free deliverable that they’re able to provide to their clients as well, which is a huge value-add. Vertical IQ is a differentiator, allowing us to separate ourselves from our competition – to be that advisor who advises the advisor, which is the accountant. So, it helps them be the hero.”

Members of ADP’s leadership are even finding value in their access to Vertical IQ’s Industry Intelligence. “Personally, I use it in my daily activities,” Spurduto noted. “If I’m going out into the market, and I uncover that the accounting firm that I’m going to meet with specializes in construction or real estate, I find that I’m using the corresponding Industry Profile as I prepare for those meetings and interactions throughout the day.”

— • THE VERTICAL IQ DIFFERENCE

With Vertical IQ, ADP has found an ideal solution to their Industry Intelligence needs.

“When the Vertical IQ team demoed their product, it absolutely wowed me,” recalled Gesing. “Their platform is more modern, more user-friendly, and there are a lot more features that they offer. Plus, it is updated so frequently, so you know the information is current.”

Sperduto concurred: “We had used other industry insight resources in the past, which were fine for accountants, but in some cases, the volume of information was really a bit overwhelming to our sales associates. For us, Vertical IQ was a nice balance of a tool that we could use in both capacities: for accountants and for our own sales team. It gave us the best of both worlds.”

However, when selecting a partner, there is more to consider than just the product or service they offer, and that is yet another area in which Vertical IQ was able to shine during the ADP vetting process and rollout.

“I like to say that the customer service experience is best when you don’t need it,” quipped Sperduto. “I’ve used the word ‘user-friendly’ before, but that term really has permeated all aspects of our experience with Vertical IQ – from our exploration of the product, through our transition, to the onboarding, and for the ultimate rollout and the training. The Vertical IQ team simplified it in a way that it became very natural for us to be able to embark on utilizing the tool. They are very proactive in terms of sharing with us the usage and the analytics, so we can see what Industry Profiles are being used.”

Gesing agreed, adding, “I would say **you’re one of the most user-friendly partners that we work with.**

For me, the key difference with Vertical IQ is the usability and the depth of the Industry Profiles. You also provide great training collateral that makes it easy for us to then demo and explain the tool to our boots-on-the-ground sales associates. You make it easy for us, and you’re an easy company to work with, so it’s easier to deploy it to the field.”

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— • **IN CONCLUSION...**

For accountants as a benefit of utilizing Accountant Connect, for sales associates learning about opportunities within the market, for marketing developing industry-focused collateral, and for tailored touchpoints with clients and prospects – ADP has discovered the many uses of Industry Intelligence from Vertical IQ.

“For us, it’s a huge differentiator from our competition,” Gesing noted. “Our competition doesn’t offer anything like Vertical IQ – and especially the depth of the Industry Profiles – so it’s a good way to open the door. There are quite a few CPA centrics [account managers] across the country who get requests from the firms in their portfolio on a regular basis requesting a report on a specific industry. So it’s a touch, and it’s a conversation that we can have with that firm, and then we’re able to perhaps turn it into scheduling an appointment or pulling a referral, which is our ultimate goal.”

“Vertical IQ is impactful across the board for every aspect of our business,” Sperduto continued. “Whether we’re talking to that COI, whether we’re talking to a business owner, or whether we are developing our own skillset to be able to go out there into the market, it makes a game-changing difference.” ●

**OUR SUCCESSES ARE ALWAYS CO-AUTHORED WITH OUR CLIENTS.**

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE FROM VERTICAL IQ CAN GIVE YOUR BUSINESS PROCESS OUTSOURCING OR ACCOUNTING FIRM AN EDGE, CONTACT US AT 919.787.4600 OR INFO@VERTICALIQ.COM.**

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ADP GO TO: ADP.COM/ACCOUNTANT.**