

Unlocking Business Value *with* Data



Introduction

Public accounting firms have an opportunity to turn the data they already collect into a growth engine by capturing it once, connecting it across systems, and putting it to work throughout the business. As this paper explores, a trusted view of clients, entities, relationships, engagements, and capabilities can help firms identify whitespace across existing accounts, uncover opportunities within related entities and markets, and focus business development efforts where they are most likely to succeed. It can also help firms respond to prospects faster, streamline onboarding and proposal work, and give partners a fuller view of client needs before the next request arrives.

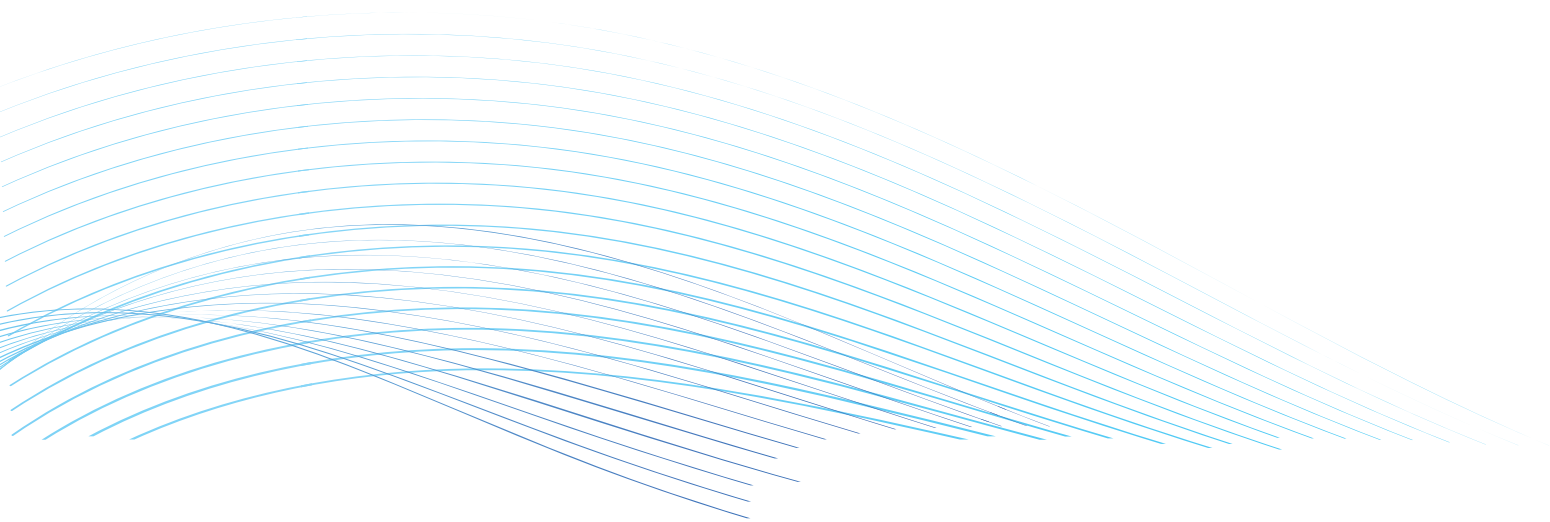
The paper also examines how connected engagement, service, and relationship data can help firms expand client relationships, coordinate across offices and service lines, and deliver more proactive, relevant services that strengthen retention. These capabilities become increasingly important as firms grow through acquisitions, enter new jurisdictions, and add systems and processes that can create duplication, manual handoffs, and inconsistent client experiences. The opportunity is not to collect more data, but to make the data firms already have accessible, actionable, and reliable when decisions are made, turning fragmented information and disconnected processes into faster execution, better service, and scalable revenue growth.

The Impact of Data Fragmentation on Operational Efficiency

Nearly every core process in a public accounting firm depends on the same underlying data. When information about clients and engagements is scattered across systems, teams spend time searching for records, reconciling discrepancies, and re-entering the same information. This situation slows client onboarding, proposal development, staffing, service coordination, and routine decision-making, while making it more difficult for professionals to get a complete view of the client at the moment they need it.

This challenge extends beyond public accounting. Across industries, digital transformation is advancing faster than the data architectures designed to support it. IBM has identified data fragmentation as a common outcome of this imbalance, driven by the increasing use of cloud platforms, legacy systems, and disconnected tools that make information difficult to find, combine, and use across the organization [3].

For public accounting firms, the operational consequences are immediate. Fragmented data creates manual handoffs, duplicated effort, and delays between teams. Partners and business development professionals may lack a complete view of client relationships and service history, while delivery teams spend valuable time assembling information that should already be available. As firms grow across service lines, offices, and jurisdictions, these inefficiencies compound, limiting responsiveness, reducing productivity, and making growth more difficult to scale.



Connecting High-Quality Data Creates Business Value

Firms already maintain the information needed to support their regulatory obligations. Compounding business value is created when that information is connected across the organization, allowing relationships that would otherwise remain hidden to become visible to drive engagement pursuit.

Consider a straightforward example. A partner desires to bring on a promising new consulting client. Somewhere in the firm's systems, a record already exists that the firm audits a company which owns 40% of that prospective client. That fact exists. It was entered correctly, at some point, by someone. But the affiliate ownership record lives in one system; the new engagement request lives in another, and there is no process, manual or automated, to cross-reference thousands of corporate relationships every time a partner wants to onboard someone new. So, the firm misses the conflict entirely, creating a real independence exposure. The data was never a problem. The connection was.

When that same affiliate record and that same engagement request sit in a connected system, the conflict surfaces in seconds. The partner gets a clear answer; the risk team doesn't spend time chasing it down, and the client either gets onboarded confidently and quickly or gets declined before anyone's time is wasted. Same data, but with completely different outcomes. The limitation is connectivity. When information is fragmented, critical relationships are not surfaced at the point of decision. When data is connected, risks and requirements become visible in real time, enabling faster, more confident action. In public accounting, this is the difference between reacting to risk and actively addressing it.

Case Study: Delivering Client Insight That Drives Retention and Expansion

A partner reviewing connected client and engagement data for a non-audit client notices that several related entities in other regions are receiving tax compliance and statutory reporting support from the firm, but a newly formed subsidiary in the United States is not. The subsidiary has recently begun operations and appears to have similar filing and local reporting obligations.

Instead of treating the entity as an isolated relationship, the partner uses that visibility to raise a targeted opportunity with the client, extending an existing service already delivered elsewhere in the group to the new subsidiary. Without connected data, the team would have had to manually compare entity structures, service histories, and jurisdiction-specific obligations across multiple systems. Connected data turns that information into a practical growth opportunity while helping the firm identify needs that fragmented systems could easily leave hidden.

Three Methods Firms Use to Unlock Business Value from Data

Firms unlock business value from data by building capabilities that improve decision-making and support long-term growth. While the outcomes vary across organizations, they are consistently enabled by trusted, connected, and governed data.

1. Connect Information Across Core Business Processes

When affiliate hierarchies, restrictions, and service history are maintained within a single trusted source, engagement teams can evaluate the full context prior to taking action, rather than relying on memory or fragmented spreadsheets. This capability is particularly important as firms increasingly incorporate AI and automation into decision support, because these tools are most effective when they can draw on connected information across core business processes.

2. Reduce Manual Work Through a Connected Data Foundation

Disconnected systems force the same data to be entered and re-validated repeatedly. A connected foundation removes that duplication, and the time saved compounds: faster onboarding, faster conflict checks, and less administrative drag on the people doing the highest-value client work.

Case Study: Identifying Whitespace in the Existing Client Portfolio

A firm's business development team desires to expand revenue within its current audit client pool. A partner pulls engagement history, audit client status, and client-structure data across the firm's top 200 clients. The data surfaces a pattern: many subsidiaries of existing audit clients are receiving their tax services from other providers, creating a significant opportunity to bring those entities onto the firm's books for tax services.

The client and engagement data already existed in the firm's systems, maintained for independence and compliance purposes. No one had ever queried it through a revenue growth lens. The partner uses the analysis to identify where tax teams can be introduced to existing audit clients without creating regulatory conflicts, supported by the strength of the current client relationship. Several cross-service opportunities are opened within one quarter.

The same data that protects the firm from independence and regulatory risk also reveals where the firm can grow revenue per client. The difference is not in the data itself, but in whether the firm has made it accessible and connected enough to ask which existing audit clients can be served in new ways.

3. Enable Continuous Monitoring and Governance

ISQM 1 and QC 1000 are designed around proactive, risk-based monitoring rather than reconstructing evidence after the fact. The standards require each firm in their scope to design, operate, and monitor the effectiveness of their quality control system [2]. Enabling this type of continuous monitoring requires connected data across core functions, including entity management, conflict checking, and engagement acceptance, as well as clear controls over how data is entered, maintained, and changed through approved governance processes. This capability is increasingly important as firm leadership is required to certify the effectiveness of the system annually [1].

Case Study: Winning Business Faster Than Competitors

A prospective client issues a request for proposal for a \$10M technology consulting engagement, with responses due within two weeks. Two firms are in the running.

- Firm A runs its opportunity review, conflict check, and engagement staffing & assessment processes manually across several systems, coordinates approvals by email, and submits what they can at the two-week point.
- Firm B has integrated client, affiliate hierarchy, conflict, staffing, and delivery processes. It clears the opportunity in hours, identifies the right specialists, confirms team availability, and submits the signed proposal in two days, creating an advantage for the prospective client to consider its proposal sooner.

Firm B wins the \$10M engagement.

Speed is not only an efficiency metric. The firm that can mobilize the quickest and come to a decision first is more likely to win the work. A connected data foundation is what makes that speed operationally possible without cutting corners.

While these methods to unlock business value are often discussed independently, they all rely on the same foundation: trusted, connected, and governed data. As regulatory expectations increase and firms continue to grow, building that foundation is becoming a strategic business priority rather than a technology initiative.

Building a Foundation for Business Value

Firms that get this right tend to share the same underlying habits, scaled for their size and structure:

Maintaining Trusted Data: Information is accurate, complete, and consistently maintained. Without trust in the underlying data, firms cannot make confident decisions or rely on automated processes.

Connecting Information: Client, engagement, and affiliate information is integrated across systems rather than isolated by function, allowing relationships and risks to be identified in real time.

Governing Data: Clear ownership, validation standards, and quality controls ensure information remains reliable as the organization grows and regulatory requirements evolve.

Delivering Information: Insights are delivered within the workflow where decisions are made, reducing manual effort and enabling timely action instead of retrospective analysis.

Organizations unlock business value from data by making the right information available at the right time. When trusted data is connected across systems, firms gain the visibility needed to improve decisions, strengthen compliance, and support scalable growth. The organizations that realize the greatest value are not those with the most data, but those that have built the foundation to turn information into action.



Where to Start: The Data that Touches the Most Processes

Firms don't need to connect every system at once to begin realizing value. The more practical path is to identify the data that already sits at the center of the greatest number of business processes, address its quality and governance first, and then connect the systems that create, use, and rely on that data.

For most public accounting firms, that starting point is client and engagement data. Client records, affiliate hierarchies, and engagement information aren't just inputs among many; they are the foundation nearly every example in this paper depends on. The same client, affiliate, and engagement data that determines whether a conflict exists also drives engagement acceptance, independence assessments, and risk scoring. When firms improve the quality and governance of this shared data and connect the systems that depend on it, they create a trusted foundation that improves multiple processes at once rather than treating each workflow as a separate technology problem.

Prioritizing a single critical process is a practical way to begin unlocking the value of data for your business. The data required to transform a critical process is rarely isolated to just that process. In most cases, critical processes leverage data that several processes use elsewhere in the firm. Firms that start by identifying and governing this shared data get a compounding return: the effort spent improving one process pays off across several others that depend on the same underlying records.

Rather than treating data quality as a firm-wide initiative to be solved all at once, firms make the fastest progress by identifying where their highest-leverage data already lives, addressing its quality and governance, and building connectivity outward from there.

Conclusion

Kingland has spent nearly three decades helping public accounting firms turn complex, fragmented data into a governed and connected foundation for decision-making, with many of the largest firms and global networks relying on its solutions. Rather than treating data challenges as separate problems, Kingland provides an integrated approach that connects entity management, independence, and risk processes into a single framework that supports core firm decisions.

Contact us at outreach@kingland.com today to start getting more business value out of your data.



Alex Olson

Partner, Executive Vice President
Alex.Olson@Kingland.com





Colin Ward

Principal Specialist
Colin.Ward@Kingland.com





Rich Huesken

Profession Strategy & Consultation
Rich.Huesken@Kingland.com



Sources

[1] PCAOB, "QC 1000, A Firm's System of Quality Control."

[2] CPAclub, "PCAOB QC 1000 Implementation: Five Points Firms Should Understand in 2026."

[3] IBM, "What Is Data Fragmentation?"