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## Unique CPA approach avoids April tax pile-up

BY LAURIE SCHREIBER

**C**hasse & Co., an accounting and consulting firm in Auburn, has found what it says is a niche in the field that's designed to avoid the April tax pile-up.

For most accountants, this is the busiest time of year, with a rush to finalize financial statements and taxes for clients, according to a news release.

Chasse & Co. takes a proactive approach, by evaluating, planning and preparing throughout the year, Managing Partner Dan Chasse told Mainebiz.

"That way, before the end of the year, issues are resolved and it's just a matter of pushing through the paperwork," he said. "It makes for a less hectic crunch time. That's been the catalyst behind our success."

The strategy has resulted in 10% annual growth since the company was established in 2004, he said. The firm has 1,200 clients, mostly business, with 80% of that number in Maine and the rest as far as Florida and the West Coast. The firm employs just over a dozen accountants and three support staff.

Its growth rate has been sustained without formal marketing.

"The marketing we do is really by word-of-mouth," he said.

By the time tax season arrives, "value-added" advisory services throughout the year result in less work and fewer issues that need to be addressed, he said.

"Businesses get caught up with their day-to-day activities and focus on their accounting

and financial situation typically after the end of the year, when they meet with their accountant," Chasse said. "We sort of place ourselves on them and require meetings outside of tax season. Because of that, we end up discussing not just taxes but operations, finance, equipment, bringing all the varying aspects of their business together."

A wholesale change of the CPA industry model is hampered by academic training that focuses on after-the-fact certification and compliance rather than value-added service, he said.

"A lot of CPAs say, 'Do your thing and we'll just process the taxes and certify the numbers,'" he said. "That's a dichotomy that's very hard to overcome." 