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The Family Journal

Working to improve your future … not just account for the past

UPCOMING EVENTS

7/4 Independence Day
7/5-6 Ashura
7/14 Macaroni and Cheese Day
7/29 NASA Founded

DRDA, LLC and Our Culture

Paraphrasing is important in communication at DRDA for several key reasons:

1. Demonstrates Understanding
Paraphrasing shows that you have listened carefully and understood the speaker's message. By restating their ideas in your own words, you confirm that you are accurately interpreting what they said.

2. Clarifies Meaning
Sometimes a message may be vague or complex. Paraphrasing helps simplify or clarify the message, making it easier for both parties to reach mutual understanding.

3. Builds Rapport
When you paraphrase, the other person feels heard and validated. This helps build trust, empathy, and a stronger connection, especially in personal or professional relationships.

4. Reduces Miscommunication
By restating what someone said, you give them a chance to correct any misunderstanding right away. This reduces the risk of confusion or conflict later.

5. Encourages Active Listening
Paraphrasing forces the listener to pay close attention and process what is being said, which leads to more thoughtful, engaged conversations.

6. Supports Effective Feedback
In workplaces or academic settings, paraphrasing can help give constructive feedback by showing that you understand the other person's perspective before offering your input.

Paraphrasing is a skill we use at DRDA to improve clarity, foster mutual respect, and strengthen communication across all types of conversations.

DOUG'S CORNER

As we enter July, it is hard to believe that half of 2025 is already behind us. The first six months of the year have brought significant growth, meaningful improvements, and measurable success to DRDA and the entire DRDA Family. As we look ahead, the second half of the year promises even greater momentum.

A defining moment in this journey is the formal launch of our Business Advisory Services—a major milestone that reflects the ongoing evolution and maturity of our firm. This initiative is deeply aligned with our mission: "To empower businesses and ourselves to achieve a sustainable future."

At our core, we are here to serve—to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our clients, our communities, and our country. We believe in helping create a sustainable economic foundation—where families can thrive, put roofs over their heads, put food on their tables, and invest in the education of both children and adults.

You will see and hear more about this mission in the months ahead as it continues to guide everything we do. Thank you for being part of the DRDA Family—or one of the families we are honored to serve.

Department News

MARKETING

How HubSpot Will Strengthen Our Client Service

We are excited to announce that HubSpot will be introduced as a valuable upgrade to support how we serve our clients. This all-in-one customer relationship management and marketing automation platform will transform how we communicate and collaborate with those we serve.

With HubSpot, we will centralize client communications, making it easier to track interactions, share updates, and respond promptly. By automating routine tasks and segmenting our contacts more effectively, we can ensure clients receive timely and relevant information that is tailored to their needs.

HubSpot's powerful reporting tools will provide clearer insight into how well we are meeting client expectations, allowing us to continuously improve our outreach and service delivery. By better aligning marketing and sales workflows, we will be able to provide more seamless client experience, with faster responses and smoother handoffs across departments.

Overall, adopting HubSpot represents a strong commitment to enhancing our client service — helping us stay consistent, proactive, and relationship-focused in every interaction. Training and support will be available during the rollout, so please feel free to reach out with any questions as we move forward.

LEARNING

Have you ever wondered ow long it takes someone to learn something new? It depends on several key factors:

1. The Complexity of the Topic
Simple skills or facts (e.g., learning a new word, basic keyboard shortcut): minutes to an hour. Moderate skills (e.g., driving a car, learning Excel, basic cooking): days to weeks. Complex subjects (e.g., programming, foreign languages, playing piano): months to years.

2. Prior Knowledge
If you are building on existing knowledge, you will learn faster. For example, if you know Spanish, learning Italian is quicker than learning Japanese.

3. Learning Methods
Active practice (e.g., doing exercises, teaching others) is faster than passive consumption (e.g., just reading or watching videos). Spaced repetition and deliberate practice can drastically cut down learning time.

4. Time Invested
Malcom Gladwell's "10,000-hour rule" (for mastery) is popular, but:
- Basic proficiency often takes around 20–100 hours.
- With focused effort, you can get decently good at most things in 20–50 hours.

5. Individual Differences
Motivation, natural aptitude, focus, and even sleep or health can impact how fast someone learns.

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Rockleigh (Rock) Dawson has joined DRDA as a Senior Business Advisor. He is an avid fly fisher who ties his own flies, speaks fluent Italian, and enjoys family time, hunting, cooking on the grill, and outdoor adventures. His favorite snack is peanuts or other nuts. We are excited to have him on board!

Mack Miller, MBA, has joined DRDA as a Senior Business Advisor in Strategic Advisory. He was once a software programmer skilled in multiple languages and has completed 13 marathons and 3 ultramarathons. Mack enjoys reading and running, and his favorite snack is Dot's Homestyle Honey Mustard Pretzels.

BORSA DEPARTMENT

Why BORSA Plans Work So Well with Franchises

For aspiring entrepreneurs, franchises offer a proven business model, brand recognition, and built-in support systems. But even with these advantages, securing the necessary funding can be a challenge. That's where Business Owners Retirement Savings Account (BORSA) [more often referred to as Rollovers as Business Startups (ROBS)] plans shine. BORSA plans are particularly well-suited for franchises, offering a unique financing solution that aligns perfectly with the needs of franchisees.

1. A Well-Capitalized Start: Flexible Funding with the BORSA Plan
One of the most significant advantages of utilizing a BORSA plan for franchise funding is the ability to access your retirement savings to invest in your business, providing a strong capital foundation from the outset. Franchises typically require substantial upfront investment—including franchise fees, equipment, and initial operating costs—and the BORSA plan enables you to use your retirement funds to cover these expenses without incurring early withdrawal penalties or taxes.

For some clients, the BORSA plan can provide 100% of the required capital, allowing them to launch their franchise without the need for traditional debt financing. This approach offers the benefit of starting your business on solid financial footing, free from the immediate burden of loan repayments.

However, many clients find that a combination of capital from a BORSA plan and additional financing—such as SBA loans or other lending solutions—offers the greatest flexibility and financial strength. By leveraging both personal retirement assets and traditional financing, you can maximize your available resources, preserve liquidity, and potentially access more favorable loan terms. This hybrid approach is widely recognized in the franchise industry as a strategic way to ensure your business is well-capitalized from day one, while also maintaining positive relationships with lenders and financial partners.

2. Perfect Fit for Franchise Models
Franchises are an ideal match for BORSA plans due to their established systems and support, which can significantly reduce the risk of business failure. This makes them a safer bet for entrepreneurs who are leveraging their retirement savings to fund their venture.

3. Long-Term Growth Potential
Franchises often have a higher success rate compared to independent startups, thanks to their proven business models and brand recognition. By using a BORSA plan to invest in a franchise, you're not only funding your business but also positioning yourself for long-term growth and profitability.

4. Retaining Full Ownership
Unlike seeking outside investors, a BORSA plan allows you to retain full ownership of your franchise. This means you have complete control over your business decisions while still benefiting from the franchisor's guidance and support.

Final Thoughts
BORSA plans and franchises are a natural pairing, offering entrepreneurs a way to fund their business dreams with or without debt while leveraging the stability and support of a franchise system. However, it's important to remember that BORSA plans come with strict compliance requirements and fiduciary responsibilities. Before diving in, consult with a BORSA provider or financial advisor to ensure this strategy aligns with your goals and financial situation. With the right planning, a BORSA-funded franchise can be the perfect path to entrepreneurial success.

COB DEPARTMENT

"Perseverance is not a long race. It is many short races one after the other." — Walter Elliot

DRDA Team - thank you for pushing through the summer months so that the Fall deadline will be easy to maintain! We appreciate you and all you do for DRDA, your teammates and our clients!

May 1 to 31, 2025:
Approximately 22 Engagement letters were sent out.

We are pleased to announce that DRDA welcomed 11 new entities (business and individuals). The estimated annual fees are expected to be at a minimum $69,500.00.

Please continue to send all COB requests to Rene' Lewis.

If you have ideas of how to improve the DRDA Client's On-Boarding experience, please send Rene' Lewis your feedback (rene@drdacpa.com) or scheduling a meeting with her to discuss.

ATTESTATION DEPARTMENT

The summer months are a good time to work on a marketing initiative to grow the audit department. The initiative includes a two-step approach targeting referral networks (bankers, bonding agents) along with direct client outreach. Through various avenues of outreach, we hope to make DRDA become a familiar and trusted name when it comes to providing attestation services to clients.

Farewell Party - Best Wishes on Your New Journeys, and Congratulations on Your Retirement, Michael!

FIRM NEWS

ENGAGE 2025 Conference Recap – Key Takeaways for DRDA

Vince Mata, Lalo Cardenas, and Rene Lewis attended ENGAGE 2025 in Las Vegas on behalf of the DRDA leadership team. AICPA and CIMA's premier event for accounting and finance professionals featured nine focused tracks and powerful keynote sessions exploring emerging topics such as artificial intelligence, data privacy, and strategic risk management.

For DRDA, the insights gained reinforced the importance of continuing to integrate technology into client service, enhancing our advisory role, and staying ahead of industry shifts. The team returned energized with new ideas to strengthen our tax, audit, and advisory practices, ensuring DRDA remains at the forefront of innovation and client success.

TEAM UPDATES

Congratulations to Alexis Sanchez, who has officially joined DRDA full-time as a Production Admin Specialist I. We are proud of her hard work and excited to see her succeed in this new role.

Congratulations to Lisa Baker on her promotion to Supervising Senior in the CAS department. Her dedication and excellent work are greatly appreciated.

FINANCE AND FACILITIES DEPARTMENT

DRDA Wellness Fully Launches!
As of July, DRDA Wellness is officially in full swing! With the Capstone/Wellution app, employees can complete biometric screenings, access virtual healthcare, and even connect with online veterinary services.
You will also notice upgraded breakroom snacks and drinks that support healthier lifestyles, and monthly FIT activities — including trail walks, bike rides, and team runs — are open to anyone who wants to move, connect, and recharge. Join us!

Facilities Update – Transformer & Landscaping
In June, our building underwent a major facilities improvement with the successful replacement of the main transformer. This upgrade helps ensure stable, reliable power to the entire office.
In July, we will continue with some light landscaping around the transformer area and will also be sprucing up our front entrance. Expect a cleaner, more welcoming appearance as we continue enhancing the workplace experience at DRDA.

CPAFMA Engage: AI is Here to Help, Not Replace
This June, DRDA attended the CPAFMA Engage Conference, represented by Vince Mata (COO), Rene' Lewis (Production Director), and Lalo Cárdenas (Controller). One major message was clear: "AI is not here to take our jobs — it is here to elevate them."
Just like calculators and spreadsheets once transformed our work, AI now empowers accountants, CPAs, auditors, and advisors to become more efficient, insightful, and client-focused. While it can streamline tasks, AI cannot replace the judgment, ethics, or human connection we bring to the table.

Cetrom Upgrade – What It Means for Finance & AR
With DRDA now fully transitioned to Cetrom, the Finance and AR departments are seeing the benefits of enhanced speed, security, and remote access. This upgrade reduces downtime, improves system performance during reporting cycles, and offers better protection for sensitive financial data.
For those managing collections, reporting, payroll, and client billing — this shift means less friction and more efficiency.

Advisory Services Are Here
We have officially launched DRDA's Advisory Services — giving clients access to strategic guidance, financial analysis, and business planning. This offering complements our Tax, Audit, and Accounting services, allowing us to become a true partner in our clients' growth.
Advisory Services are a key step in the firm's evolution and will play a major role in expanding both client impact and firm growth.

Finance Riddle of the Month
I am recorded but not received,
A promise made that must be believed.
I sit as income, though no cash has flowed,
What am I, that is on the books but not the road?
Submit your answer by July 25 — first correct answer wins a prize!

Final Word from the Controller
We are halfway through 2025, and already this year has brought meaningful upgrades, new service lines, and exciting opportunities to grow as a team. Whether you are helping streamline operations, supporting clients, or rolling out new tools — your work matters. Let us keep moving forward, together.

HR DEPARTMENT

Happy July, DRDA Team!

As we head into a season filled with holidays and well-deserved vacations, here are a few important housekeeping reminders regarding time away from the office. To ensure a smooth workflow, it is essential that all team members keep their timesheets accurate and their out-of-office communications up to date.

Requesting Time Off

1. Submit a Scheduled Benefit in Practice:

- All time off requests must be submitted as a Scheduled Benefit in Practice.
- Once approved, you will receive a confirmation email.
- Before your time off begins, be sure to enter the corresponding time on your timesheet.
- Important: DRDA does not allow negative PTO balances. If you do not have enough PTO, please enter the time as Unpaid Time Off.

Use the appropriate activity codes on your timesheet:

- 148A – Vacation
- 153 – Unpaid Time Off
- 154A – Banked OT
- 147A – Sick Time (Note: Sick Time may not be used for vacation)

2. Update your Outlook calendar to reflect the days you will be out.
3. Set your Outlook Out of Office reply to inform others of your absence.
4. Update your voicemail greeting to indicate you are out of the office.
5. Discuss your workload and any active projects with your manager to ensure coverage.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to your supervisor or contact Jennifer Lopez directly.

Enjoy the summer and thank you for helping keep everything running smoothly!

EMPLOYEE SHOUTOUTS

Our managers - thank you for managing us through this transition. You dealt with all the chaos, issues, and (let us be honest) a fair amount of complaining from the rest of us with calm and clarity. You kept us informed, reassured, and as sane as possible. Thanks for making it survivable.

Shout out to Patrick Satterfield who reached out to assist with downloading bookmarks and passwords.

Shout out to Ashlynn Colsonfor helping to get returns out during all of this software transition- to make a client happy!

Shout out to the 5500 preparers for their follow ups with clients – and doing great work once the docs are in!

Client Accounting Services

Department Highlights

The CAS team continues to reach new heights! Compared to this time last year, overall team production has increased by an impressive 115%, while adjustments have been reduced by 75%. This remarkable progress is the result of several key factors: the appointment of a dedicated CAS Manager, the strategic hiring of experienced professionals, continuous process and procedure optimization, strong team cohesion, and an ongoing commitment to training and professional development.

Progress on Department Initiatives

While many of the department's initiatives remain in progress, the team shifted focus in advancing FYE 9/30/2024 and 12/31/2024 year-end bookkeeping projects. This proactive focus helps ensure that client records are "Tax Team Ready" for timely and efficient filing.

Key Ongoing Initiatives

Bookkeeping Review

The implementation of the new bookkeeping review procedure is already yielding positive results. Projects are reaching final review and invoicing stages more quickly and efficiently.

1099 Process Evaluation

Following the completion of 2024 1099 projects, the team identified an opportunity to improve preparation efficiency by ensuring Vendor names are accurately entered into the books. A new process has been introduced, which includes a review of client records to better prepare for 1099 reporting needs.

Onboarding Enhancements

The current bookkeeping onboarding process has been documented and outlined. The next phase will involve streamlining redundant content and incorporating updates to reflect the latest team procedures.

Investing in Growth

Weekly team meetings continue to prioritize clear communication, personal and professional development, and collaboration. With the launch of the new Cetrom cloud system, the team anticipates greater efficiency and reduced downtime.

Looking Ahead

Vanessa King is currently partnering with Eva Jiang to develop a Marketing Plan aimed at expanding our portfolio of bookkeeping projects. The team is optimistic about the opportunities this will bring for both department and firm-wide growth. We are also focused on finalizing our summer initiatives, which include revised processes and procedures designed to enhance year-end preparation efficiency.

Meet the CAS Team

Nanci Pirela, Lisa Baker, Tami Baird, Victoria Rodriguez, Jennifer Salisbury and Vanessa King

A Heartfelt Thank You

We extend our deepest appreciation to the Tax and Audit Teams (Levels I and II) for their steadfast support during our ongoing process improvements. Special thanks also go to the DRDA department managers, client managers, IT team, and Production/Admin team. Your collaboration is vital to our success, and we are truly grateful for your continued partnership.

IT DEPARTMENT

Last Monday, we began the transition to Cetrom, our new secure cloud platform designed to improve data security, system stability, and remote accessibility for everyone at DRDA.

We want to sincerely thank all of you for your patience, cooperation, and willingness to learn as we work through this important change. We understand that transitions like this can be challenging, and your support has been invaluable in helping us tackle the technical issues that have come up.

While the core transition is complete, we are continuing to troubleshoot and resolve remaining concerns as quickly as possible. Your timely feedback and communication have helped us prioritize and address issues efficiently.

Please continue to reach out to the IT team if you experience any problems or have questions. We are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible and appreciate your ongoing understanding and teamwork.

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Yunyun (Catherine) Zhang, CPA, has joined DRDA as a Remote Tax and Accounting Senior. Based in Allen, Texas, Catherine enjoys singing, reading the news, and loves all kinds of snacks. As a fun fact, she was not allowed to grow long hair as a child.

Melida (Meli) Ortez has joined us as Production Admin Manager. She has a talent for quickly learning new software and enjoys helping others master systems. Meli is a proud grandmother to four-year-old Naomi, loves volunteering at church and in the community, and also enjoys bowling. Her favorite snacks are anything sweet.

TAX DEPARTMENT

Summer is here, the heat is exhausting, the sunny skies are tempting, there are always events going on, and without a fall deadline looming, we all want to take time to recover. It is okay to take some time to recharge. Make sure you are prepared mentally and physically for the fall deadline, but do not fall into the trap of taking the summer too easy, this will make the fall much more stressful and increase chances of burning out.

We are excited about our newest addition to the Tax Department, Catherine Zhang. Catherine is a remote Tax Senior. Welcome to the team!

As we approach deadlines over the next several months, please make sure you are prioritizing your workload. If you have completed all your projects for an upcoming deadline, please reach out to other team members and see if they need any help with theirs. We are a team and no one is finished until everyone is finished. The July 15th deadline for extended 09/30/24 FYE returns is right around the corner. All returns should be completed and reviewed no later than July 3rd. 5500 returns are due July 31st. Please have all these into review or extended by July 15th.

Overtime is needed. We need to move as much work as we can prior to the fall deadline. Please put in additional time when available. If you are meeting your current utilization numbers, there is no need to get overtime approved. If you are below your set goals, please touch base with your manager and get your overtime approved.

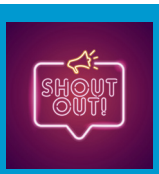
Client follow-up is essential. Please touch base every couple of days, so we can have a steady and consistent workload. Communicate the importance of getting their documents to us early and of our internal deadlines to ensure timely filing.

When things get tough, use your lifelines. As we continue to grow and develop as accountants, we are given more challenging projects. In addition, we work in a profession of ever-changing laws and regulations. None of us know it all, and we all need help at times. Pick up the phone and call a mentor or manager, they are willing and happy to help.

"You can never know everything, and part of what you know is always wrong." -Robert Jordan

Fun Times at Bowling Night Hosted by the Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce!

EMPLOYEE SHOUTOUTS



Shout Out to Mengtong's Dedication During the Platform Transition

Mengtong Zhang has shown exceptional dedication, patience, and grace throughout DRDA's transition to Cetrom. From managing countless IT and software issues to supporting team members with kindness and a positive attitude, she has gone above and beyond. Her ability to remain calm under pressure and helpful through every challenge has made a difficult process smoother for everyone. The entire team is incredibly grateful for her heroic efforts and unwavering support.