



March 1, 2010

It's not all fun and games for CPAs, except in the break room

Monday, March 1, 2010 05:00 AM

By [Martin C. Daks](#)
[COMMENT](#) [EMAIL](#) [PRINT](#)

When it comes to tax season, simply making it to April 16 is half the challenge, according to some certified public accountants. The long hours and six-day workweeks are enough to stress out even the most laid-back CPA, so firms aim to defuse the pressure with anything from video game galleries to growing a beard.

“You’ve got to do something when you’re looking down the barrel of 55- to 60-hour workweeks,” said **Thomas Roche**, a partner in the Cranford CPA firm **Fazio, Mannuzza, Roche, Tankel, LaPilusa LLC**. “To help ease the stress, we offer flex hours as appropriate, and bring in a masseuse once a week.”



To help ease stress during tax season, some CPA firms offer work-relief programs, such as hiring a masseuse for the office, allowing partners to play video games, or dressing in country and western attire for the fun of it. [ThinkStock Photos]

The firm also stages a “baseball opening day celebration” where employees don their favorite team jerseys, and the managers bring in hot dogs and popcorn.

At Oradell-based **Traphagen Financial Group**, relaxation means scuttling the daily shave. “Years ago, we started a tradition of growing beards during tax season,” said **Robert Traphagen**, managing partner of the firm’s CPA division and president of the New Jersey Society of CPAs. “After the last return is filed on April 15, we go to the Presidents Room at the Meadowlands and shave them off as a group.”

There may not have been many female accountants when the stubbly tradition started, but Traphagen said even today, women in the office get a kick out of their bewhiskered coworkers.

At **Bederson & Co. LLP**, a West Orange CPA firm, “we create a tax season arcade in the first floor of our West Orange headquarters,” said **Mark A. Mazza**, the firm’s managing partner. The arcade features a Wii, air hockey and “dart boards featuring photos of various staff in the bull’s-eye, humorously placed there by other staff.”

Over in East Brunswick, **Wilkin & Guttenplan P.C.** turns down the stress with pep rallies and theme lunches, said shareholder **Ed Guttenplan**.

“One day we’ll have a country and western theme, with everyone dressing the part. And on Valentine’s Day, we’ll do the office up like a Las Vegas wedding chapel,” he said. “But one of the biggest stress reducers is walking around the office and helping individuals solve any bottlenecks they may be facing.”

E-mail to mdaks@njbiz.com