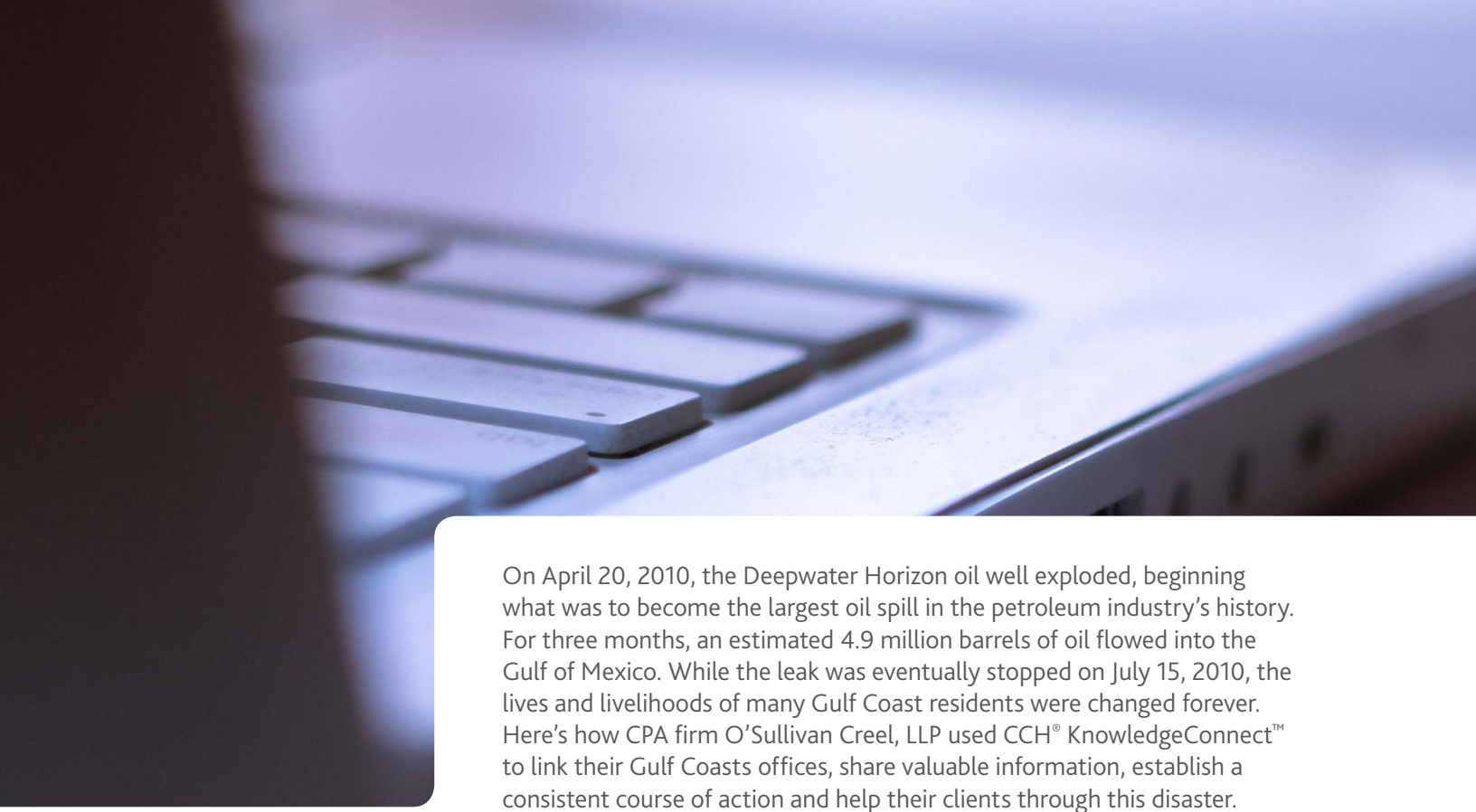




How O'Sullivan Creel, LLP
Used CCH[®] KnowledgeConnect[™]
to Help Clients Cope with the
BP Oil Spill





On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil well exploded, beginning what was to become the largest oil spill in the petroleum industry’s history. For three months, an estimated 4.9 million barrels of oil flowed into the Gulf of Mexico. While the leak was eventually stopped on July 15, 2010, the lives and livelihoods of many Gulf Coast residents were changed forever. Here’s how CPA firm O’Sullivan Creel, LLP used CCH® KnowledgeConnect™ to link their Gulf Coasts offices, share valuable information, establish a consistent course of action and help their clients through this disaster.

An Ecological Disaster With Deep Economic Impact

Like most people, the 175 tax professionals at O’Sullivan Creel learned about the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill when news coverage began after the initial explosion. While no one knew how serious the oil spill was at the time, the firm, which has six offices across the panhandle of Florida and Southern Alabama, knew that the disaster was bound to directly affect their clients.

Initially, everyone held out hope that the spill would be stopped quickly and that everything would return to normal. As time went on and as more oil continued to flood into the Gulf, early optimism turned to panic and people began to realize the seriousness of the situation. Since many Gulf Coast residents made the majority of their income between April and September, the oil spill could not have happened at a worse time.

It didn’t take long for local Gulf Coast businesses to feel the impact of the spill —particularly those associated with tourism, such as condominiums, hotels and charter boat fishermen.

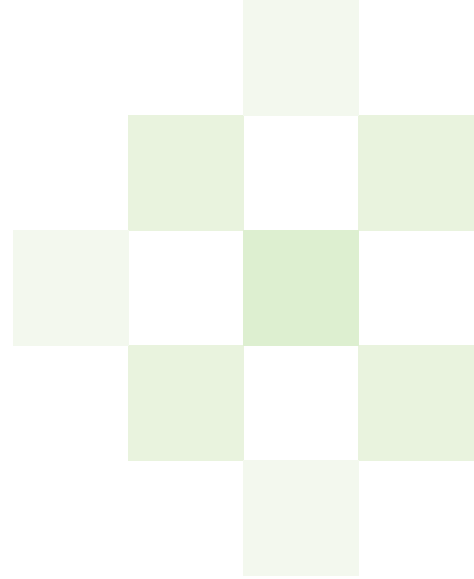
Condo association and hotel bookings dried up. Fishermen were not allowed to fish in 300 square miles of the Gulf, due to water safety concerns. Having just recovered from the devastation of Hurricane Ivan in 2004, what was supposed to have been peak season for the Gulf Coast tourism industry quickly turned into an ecological and economic nightmare.

“Almost overnight, our clients had lost their revenue and didn’t know how long they could last without some relief,” explained Mike Johnson, IT and Consulting Partner in charge of O’Sullivan Creel’s Pensacola office. “As a firm, we knew that we had to find a way to help these innocent victims of this disaster.”

The firm, which has been a longtime CCH customer, uses ProSystem fx® Tax, ProSystem fx® Document, IntelliConnect® and CCH® KnowledgeConnect™. They quickly formed a British Petroleum (BP) taskforce with representatives from each of O’Sullivan Creel’s six offices so that everyone had the same information and the same resources available to them.

O’Sullivan Creel, LLP Key Data:

- Six Gulf Coast offices, with Florida offices in Crestview, Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Pensacola, and Alabama offices in Fairhope and Foley
- 175 staff members



KnowledgeConnect Enables Firmwide Collaboration

As the first knowledge management system designed specifically for accountants, KnowledgeConnect, in particular, played a central role in crisis communications for the firm throughout the evolving crisis. First, the O'Sullivan Creel BP taskforce created an internal blog within KnowledgeConnect that enabled firm members to post critical information in a single central location. The task force put out a call for ideas through the KnowledgeConnect "Ask a Question" feature, asking staff what information they needed, what information

clients needed and how O'Sullivan Creel could best help clients cope.

The team then created a BP oil spill site to house all BP-related information. BP Taskforce members attended all of the public hearings in which BP and government officials shared information. Staff posted the latest news on the KnowledgeConnect BP site so that everyone in the firm could stay up-to-date on recent developments. As the crisis evolved, KnowledgeConnect became the firm's real-time, up-to-the-minute, internal news source. All

O'Sullivan Creel staff members could quickly search through the latest updates, BP claims and supporting financial documents, easily locating the most recent and relevant information.

“We knew that we needed a uniform message across the firm, and KnowledgeConnect provided a platform from which to gather and share valuable information that was constantly changing as the disaster grew in magnitude,” explained Johnson. “As people began asking us for advice, KnowledgeConnect helped us make sure that our staff was reading from the same playbook.”

Creating a Centralized Knowledge Source

Ultimately, BP set up the Gulf Coast Claims Facility, placed \$20 billion into the BP Deepwater Horizon Disaster Victim Compensation Fund and named Kenneth Feinberg the fund's administrator. BP then came out with a claim form process that those affected by the spill could file to gain reimbursement for loss of business. O'Sullivan Creel quickly became an expert on the form, the specific financial information BP was looking for and the inner workings of claims process. The BP taskforce put a BP oil spill package together that all O'Sullivan Creel offices used to gather information and file client claims for

reimbursement. KnowledgeConnect helped them distribute that package firmwide, ensuring that every office used the same materials and followed the same consistent process.

“Our process captured the information and made it accessible from a centralized source instead of being stuck on someone's computer,” said Johnson. “Everything on KnowledgeConnect is searchable by keyword, which made it easy for our staff to find what they were looking for and help our clients.”

Initially, it was thought that only people with businesses on the water were going to have valid claims, but as time went on, the impact of the spill on the

broader Gulf Coast community became clear. By the time the leak was stopped, the oil spill had affected all of O'Sullivan Creel's clients in one way or another.

“Without revenue, many of our clients were going to be out of business unless we helped them get relief,” explained Johnson. “We used KnowledgeConnect to get a jump start on the crisis and put a process in place. It helped get us out of the one-to-one communication model and enabled us to reach the entire firm with a single posting, facilitating collaboration across our firm like never before.”

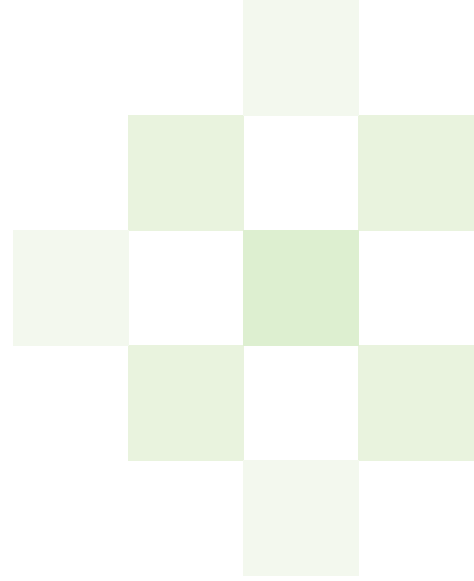
An Ongoing Challenge

In addition to KnowledgeConnect, tax professionals at O'Sullivan Creel found IntelliConnect a valuable resource when it came to verifying the tax treatment of specific items. In addition, new clients approached the firm, seeking help recreating lost or misplaced previous tax returns, which were required for reimbursement. O'Sullivan Creel was able to use ProSystem fx Tax to help them recreate prior returns so that they could file a valid claim and get reimbursed.

Over one year after the spill, O'Sullivan Creel is still helping people file claims. Companies have until 2013 to file their initial claims, and the firm expects to be dealing with the aftermath

of the spill for the foreseeable future, helping businesses as well as city and county agencies receive compensation from the BP fund.

“During the spill, information was constantly changing and there was a lot of misinformation out there,” explained Johnson. “Our investment in CCH solutions prior to the disaster enabled us to rally a quick response, verify correct information, and speak with confidence and authority. As a result, our reputation within the community has been enhanced. Knowledge truly is power, and KnowledgeConnect enabled us to empower each of our staff members to serve our clients in their time of need.”



Using CCH KnowledgeConnect, O'Sullivan Creel was able to:

- Create a centralized knowledge source for all issues relating to the BP oil spill
- Collaborate across multiple offices to develop a uniform response to the crisis
- Communicate the latest developments firm-wide to ensure all staff had accurate and up-to-date information
- Find the right information, forms and data quickly and easily
- Help clients get financial relief and survive in the wake of a serious ecological and economic disaster

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