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Paper presenter
Being in-Demand:

How to future-proof your skills as a Professional Accountant
Content

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1 Overview and context
Evolution of the Accounting Profession

- **Emergent Stage (Primitive Age to 1490 AD)** - This was the gradual evolution of accounting during the stone age, Primitive stage, Barter stage and the currency stage of human civilization.

- **Pre-analytic Stage (1490s-1799)** - During this period notable publications led to the establishment of basis for accounting and the introduction of certain accounting principles like double entry system written in 1494 by Luca Pacioli and Leonardo da Vinci, going concern etc.

- **Development i.e. Analytic Stage (1800-1950)** - During this period many European writers published books to give guidance and logic to accounting in the emergence of the industrial revolution, joint stock company, large-scale production, multi-scale production, wider competition and the desire to maximise profit.

- **Modern Age (1951- onward)** - This is the technologically advanced era in which we are currently experiencing leading to the 4th Industrial Revolution.
Technology, as well as accounting, are as old as man. There has always been innovation even in the stone age e.g. Hunting and farming tools, Money, Knitting of clothes, etc.

The first electro-mechanical binary programmable computer was invented in 1936.

In 1973, Motorola produced the first handheld mobile phone.

The world wide web was invented in 1989 by British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee.

It led to the emergence and later on exponential growth of e-commerce.

The mobile phone started becoming smart in 1992 with Simon Personal Communicator by IBM.

The economic advancement triggered more demand for accounting services.
The accounting profession has grown but still falls short of demand

• A recent PwC survey found that 83% of CEOs said that they were concerned about their ability to find the right talent.
• This is an effect of technology and automated process creating a shift or shortage in certain professions.
• It is highly evident in accounting and finance roles where accountants have to adapt as certain roles have become obsolete due to automation.
• Furthermore business are seeking professionals who can change and adapt alongside the increasing technological advancements. Which causes organizations to hunt for people whose skills and career match their own intentions of growth.
• Therefore accountants are forced to stay five steps ahead of rapid and unpredictable changes to stay relevant.
Current Expectations, Emerging Trends and the Future of Accounting
# Accountancy yesterday, today and tomorrow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yesterday</th>
<th>Today</th>
<th>Tomorrow</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Bean counters</td>
<td>• Managers</td>
<td>• Strategic leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bookkeepers</td>
<td>• Planning / forecasting</td>
<td>• Business partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Historical / post-mortem</td>
<td>• Risk and controls</td>
<td>• Communicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Back office function</td>
<td>• Technical analysis</td>
<td>• Stakeholder management</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Detail oriented</td>
<td>• Technology and tools</td>
<td>• Big data / AI</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Manual, boring and rigid</td>
<td>• Works well within finance team</td>
<td>• Critical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Works alone</td>
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<td>• Global perspective</td>
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<td>• Works cross functions / culture</td>
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Technology and economic complexity shaping the future of accounting

- Technology has radically altered economies, businesses and operating models.
- Businesses are continuously looking to adopt newer technologies such as robotic process automation (RPA), blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI).
- These new ways of doing business are also resulting in changing demand for the accounting profession.
- Greater transparency required by regulators, capital markets and the general public is a key factor driving the accountancy profession.
- Professional accountant must be ready to deal with this business transformation, digital disruption wave, which requires them to be closer to their business stakeholders and data like never before.
- The professional accountant needs to be ready for the future, identify opportunities and leverage technology solutions in the changing business landscape.
The future will see many more automation applications that will have an effect on traditional accounting jobs. Some of the technologies expected to disrupt accounting include the following:

- **Robotic process automation (RPA)** — If you’ve ever written a macro in Excel, then you understand the basis of RPA, which focuses on automating repetitive tasks. Modern RPA tools like Kofax and Blue Prism are extremely powerful and can be used to automate even the most complex processes.

- **Natural language processing (NLP)** — NLP focuses on bridging the communication gap between humans and machines. It turns documents and speech into structured data and enables computers to speak or write in a way that sounds natural.

- **Artificial intelligence (AI)** — Work in the field of AI focuses on copying human decision-making processes and executing jobs in human ways. For example, some financial firms use AI to assess risk or detect fraud.

- **Machine learning (ML)** — ML, a close relative to AI, allows software to edit itself so it keeps improving without human intervention. The software does this by analysing vast quantities of data, identifying patterns and using these insights to improve future performance. ML is a potent way for machines to learn and adapt over time.
There are close to 4.2 billion social media users in the world - representing two-thirds of the eligible global population.

Fifteen new social media users are added every second. And with users spending 2.5 hours a day using social media - roughly 15% of waking time - it's fair to say that this borderless, instantaneous and engaging tool is ubiquitous in everyday life.

Social media continues to shift the balance and power to influence away from organisations and towards individuals. This creates a competitive advantage to leaders who are able to skillfully use the platforms to expand their leadership presence virtually and close the gaps between themselves and their audiences - and do so with greater humanity.

Social media requires that business leaders start thinking like small-town shop owners. This means taking the long view and avoiding short-term benchmarks to gauge progress. It means allowing the personality, heart and soul of the people who run all levels of the business to show.

Social media can be an accelerant to your strategy as a leader increasing your influence and generating positive outcomes. It must however be treated with care.

Data source: Data Reportal, https://datareportal.com/social-media-users
Skills to future-proof your career
**Quotient for success – The seven skills required of the future accountant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Technical skills &amp; ethics (TEQ)</strong></th>
<th>The skills to perform activities consistently to a defined standard while maintaining the highest standards of integrity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intelligence (IQ)</strong></td>
<td>The ability to acquire and use knowledge, thinking, reasoning and solving problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative (CQ)</strong></td>
<td>The ability to use existing knowledge in a new situation, to make connections, explore potential outcomes, and generate new ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Digital (DQ)</strong></td>
<td>The awareness and application of existing &amp; emerging digital technologies, capabilities, practices, strategies &amp; culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional intelligence (EQ)</strong></td>
<td>The ability to identify your own emotions and those of others, harness and apply them to tasks, and regulate and manage them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vision (VQ)</strong></td>
<td>Ability to anticipate future trends accurately by extrapolating existing trends &amp; facts, &amp; filling the gaps by thinking innovatively.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Experience (XQ)</strong></td>
<td>The ability and skills to understand customer expectations, meet desired outcomes and create value.</td>
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*Source: [Global survey of accountants by ACCA]*
The top 10 most in-demand hard skills

Data surfaced by LinkedIn from its network of over 660 million+ professionals and 20 million+ jobs revealed the 10 most in-demand hard skills. The study looked at the skills that are in highest demand (based on hiring rate) relative to the supply of people who have those skills.

1. **Blockchain** - Blockchain is typically used to support cryptocurrency. But blockchain’s novel way to store, validate, authorize, and move data across the internet has evolved to securely store and send any digital asset. As companies explore how to take advantage of this technology, they have a huge need to build this skillset, as it is extremely difficult to hire for.

2. **Cloud Computing** - Today, companies are built and run on the cloud. They need talent who have the skills to help them drive technical architecture, design, and delivery of cloud systems like Microsoft Azure.

3. **Analytical Reasoning** - Today, data is the foundation of every single business. Organizations want talent who can make sense of it and uncover insights that drive the best decisions for the business.

4. **Artificial Intelligence** - Artificial intelligence (AI) augments the capabilities of the human workforce. The people who can harness the power of AI, machine learning, and natural language processing, are the ones who can help your organization deliver more relevant, personalized, and innovative products and services.

5. **UX Design** - It seems like the average attention span of consumers decreases every year and they have no patience for products that aren’t intuitive. Organizations need more expertise to help them build more human-centric products and experiences.
The top 10 most in-demand hard skills

6. **Business Analysis** - Business analysis made the most significant jump of any skill on the list and it's one of the few hard skills every professional should have, as most roles require some level of business analysis to make decisions.

7. **Affiliate Marketing** - With the decline of traditional advertising and the rise of social media, affiliate marketing is rapidly rising as a must-have hard skill. Affiliate marketing leverages influencers on social media to tie their brand to personal experiences and stories of an influencer in their target audience.

8. **Sales** - You’d be hard pressed to find a company that doesn’t need great sales people—those who can effectively manage a sales team, the ability to understand the sales funnel, work with cross-functional partners, and sell into the highest levels of the business. That's why it maintains its spot on the top hard skills companies need.

9. **Scientific Computing** - Scientific computing skills are held by data science professionals, engineers, and software architects. Companies need more professionals that can develop machine learning models and apply statistical and analytical approaches to large data sets using programs like Python, MATLAB, and others.

10. **Video Production / social media skills** - Video continues to be top-of-mind for companies because the consumers have an insatiable appetite for watching videos. Cisco estimates that video will account for 82% of global internet traffic in 2022.
Views from the global labour market

The top 5 most in-demand soft skills

#1 Creativity - Connecting dots—that are seemingly unrelated—to generate original, useful solutions is an incredibly valuable skill in every employee, regardless of what industry or country you’re doing business in.

#2 Persuasion - Persuasion is convincing others to buy into your idea or a different way of doing things to build consensus or make a decision. It’s one of the most powerful communication skills for all employees to have in their skillset.

#3 Collaboration - People who can work effectively and efficiently to achieve a common goal—or influence others to the right end game.

#4 Adaptability - The only constant in life—and in business—is change. Employees who thrive in a dynamic environment and bounce back quickly in the face of challenges are the ones who can handle anything that comes their way.

#5 Emotional Intelligence - Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, evaluate, and respond to your own emotions and the emotions of others. It underscores the importance of how employees interact with each other.
Next steps and final thoughts
Next steps and final thoughts

Keep learning

- Your professional qualification is only a start, not the end of learning
- Learn to build a knowledge base not fire fighting
- Not just more qualifications
- Don’t limit yourself to accounting

Become strategic

- Develop yourself to become a business adviser and a strategic leader who drives long-term business growth
- Don’t just provide data, give information, analysis and insights

Adapt and evolve

- Be prepared to adapt whatever the future holds.
- Accountants today have the ability to define the future of the accounting profession.

Stay relevant

- You must be fluid and keep on top of relevant trends
- Technology may not replace accountants but tech savvy accountants will replace analog accountants

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

Abraham Lincoln
“The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.” - Malcolm X