



# 2025 CPA Firm Tech Report

*Expert Guidance on Where to Invest Next*



# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3	<b>2025 Deep Dive:</b>	
<b>Meet the Experts</b> .....	4	<b>Realizing the Potential of Artificial Intelligence</b> .....	26
<b>All Paths Start Here:</b>		How Firms Should Be Evaluating AI .....	26
<b>CPA Firm Digital Maturity Model</b> .....	5	How to Build Trust for the Accuracy and Reliability of AI .....	29
<b>Five Key Challenges of Successful Firm Tech Adoption and Implementation</b> .....	7	Impression of AI's Development Over the Last 12 Months .....	29
Challenge 1: Overwhelming Choices and Change Management Overload Leads to Decision Paralysis ....	7	The Next Impact AI Will Have on the Accounting Profession .....	30
Not Prepared to Change .....	8	Framework: Where Do AI Agents Fit in Your Workforce Transformation Strategy? .....	32
Challenge Considerations Based on Firm Size .....	9	<b>Takeaways and Next Steps</b> .....	34
Overcoming Challenges Begins with Process Goals .....	11	<b>Appendix A</b> .....	35
Challenge 2: Leadership Hesitation and Resistance to Change .....	12	The CPA Firm Tech Ecosystem .....	35
Be Intentional about Leadership Alignment, Communication, and Process Improvement .....	15	The Accounting Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem .....	39
Challenge 3: Justifying Costs and Proving Return on Investment .....	16	<b>Appendix B: Case Studies</b> .....	50
Measurement .....	16	Overcoming Leadership Hesitation to Modernizing Billing .....	50
Attribution .....	16	Enhancing Staff Productivity, Attracting Top Talent, and Creating a High-Performance Culture Through Generative AI .....	52
Timelines .....	16	A Framework for Successful Cybersecurity .....	54
Alignment .....	17	Addressing the Technology Skills Gap with Generative AI .....	55
Consider Keeping Score with a Balanced Scorecard .....	18	<b>About INCPAS</b> .....	56
Challenge 4: Growing Security Risks .....	19	<b>About CPA Crossings</b> .....	56
Cybersecurity Considerations for New Technology .....	20		
Challenge 5: Gaps in Resources, Skills, and Expertise .....	22		
Technology Skills Gap Metrics and Indicators .....	25		

# Executive Summary

## *Where Is Firm Tech Heading?*

Accounting technologies (firm tech) have exploded over the past 12 months. With artificial intelligence (AI) alone, the industry saw a host of new applications and benefits. Some of the more popular applications and benefits are as follows:

- **Predictive Financial Forecasting:** AI can provide predictive insights for financial forecasting using huge volumes of data effortlessly. Firms can offer more timely and accurate advice to clients.
- **Audit Automation:** AI can reduce audit risks and enhance audit integrity by detecting anomalies with precision.
- **Proactive Recommendations:** Financial recommendations based on client data, industry benchmarks, and macroeconomic indicators can now be proactive and include personalized insights and strategic planning.
- **Data Protection:** Through encryption, anomaly detection, and real-time monitoring, AI can reduce the risks of data breaches and their associated costs.
- **Scalable Solutions:** Firm workloads can increase with AI without major infrastructure changes because of the tech's scalability.

This report details how to take advantage of these and other benefits. Within, we include several models and charts (CPA Firm Digital Maturity Model, a Firm Tech Ecosystem chart, and an Accounting Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem chart), address five critical technology challenges that are keeping firms from embracing AI applications and benefits, and take a deep dive into AI trends and considerations. Accounting firms have the ability to respond and adapt quickly, and that is good news. But there are barriers. The five challenges we've identified in this report are:

- Overwhelming Choices and Change Management Overload Lead to Decision Paralysis
- Leadership Hesitation and Resistance to Change
- Justifying Costs and Proving Return on Investment
- Growing Security Risks
- Gaps in Revenue, Skills, and Expertise

# Meet the Experts

This Insights report on CPA Firm Tech brings together the expertise of a distinguished panel of professionals who consult with CPA firms daily on technology adoption and implementation. We are proud to present their latest thoughts on where firms should invest in technology next.

## Arianna Campbell



Arianna Campbell is a shareholder and chief operating officer at Boomer Consultings Inc., where she helps accounting firms focus on the people part of change by leading process improvement initiatives that increase capacity to create more value internally

and externally. Arianna is adept at blending concepts from process improvement and change leadership to drive innovation and continuous improvement. Arianna facilitates the development and cultivation of process managers, project managers, and change leaders in the Boomer Process Circle. She also enjoys the opportunity to share knowledge through regular contributions to the *Boomer Bulletin*, *CPA Practice Advisor*, and other industrywide publications, as well as public speaking at industry conferences. She's been honored several times as one of *CPA Practice Advisor's* Top 25 Most Powerful Women in Accounting and *Inside Public Accounting's* Most Recommended Consultants.

## Jody Padar, CPA



Jody Padar, CPA, is a leading voice of transformation in the accounting profession. Known as *The Radical CPA*, she pioneered the cloud firm model and has been recognized on *Accounting Today's* Top 100 Most Influential People list for over a decade. A three-time

author and sought-after adviser, Jody has helped firms modernize through digital transformation, with leadership roles spanning traditional firms, cloud-based practices, and high-growth startups, including Botkeeper and April. Today, Jody is driving the next evolution of the profession through AI-X, an AI-powered firm model that integrates real-time leadership coaching, advisory innovation, and scalable growth strategies. Through AI-X, she is equipping CPA firms to lead confidently in the age of artificial intelligence, transforming how they operate, deliver value, and evolve. To connect with Jody and explore the future of accounting, follow her on LinkedIn, X, Instagram, and Facebook, or visit [www.Radical.CPA](http://www.Radical.CPA).

## Ellen Choi



Ellen Choi is the CEO/founder of Edgefield Group, a consultancy that helps CPA firms with AI and innovation to drive growth and improve efficiency. She is part of CalCPA's generative AI task force and speaks on AI regularly (i.e., *Accounting Today's* AI Summit).

Her past includes co-founding Aiwyn, a technology company that helps accounting firms digitize their practice management. Aiwyn works with more than 130 of the Top 500 CPA firms and has raised \$113 million, led by KKR and Bessemer Venture Partners. At Aiwyn, she held roles of chief product officer and COO over a four-plus year period.

## Garrett Wasny, MA, CMC, CITP/FIBR



Garrett Wasny, MA, CMC, CITP/FITP, is a certified management consultant and widely recognized AI evangelist, digital navigator, and innovation amplifier. Honored in 2025 with the prestigious MYCPE Award for groundbreaking contributions to AI

and technology education, Garrett has trained tens of thousands of CPAs and accountants in over 60 countries. Garrett's dynamic training unlocks new dimensions of AI synergy that inspire experimentation, drive collaborative intelligence, and transform CPAs into chief future officers.



# All Paths Start Here: CPA Firm Digital Maturity Model

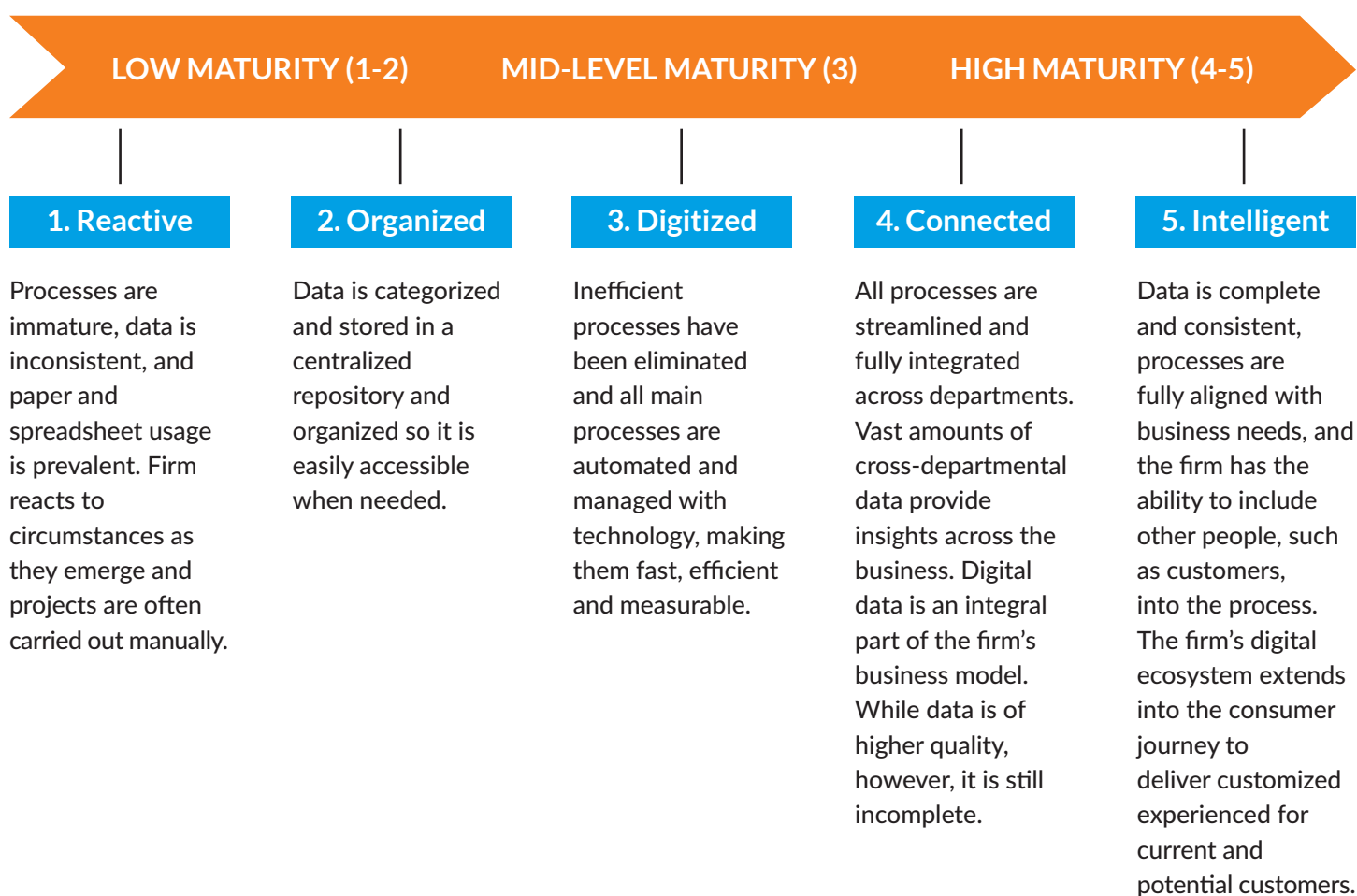
Digital maturity is your firm's ability to adapt to the trends and developments of new technologies. How well does your firm create value through new technology-based capabilities? Do you have consistent and repeatable processes that tie to business needs? How well are tools and staff integrated with the technology? Is the technology delivering new value to your clients? A candid digital maturity assessment will help you and your firm understand how quickly you are progressing, how far you have gotten, and if you should make adjustments. As two-thirds of technology executives responded in a recent KPMG survey, "Agility is the new currency of business. If we're too slow, we'll be bankrupt."

Most accounting firm technology initiatives fail for one of two reasons:

- The initiatives do not start with a focus on clients.
- The initiatives start without knowing where firms were on the digital maturity spectrum.

Research from organizations such as McKinsey shows that accounting firms that focus on meeting client expectations, buying behavior, and preferences earn as much as 80% of digital revenues in their industry. A digital maturity model, such as the one below, helps accounting firms determine how prepared they are to understand, respond to, and meet client demands through technology.

## CPA Firm Digital Maturity Model



Source: The State of Pennsylvania Accounting Firms in 2023 and the Hinge Research Institute

Many accounting firms use a digital maturity model as the foundation to begin conversations and assessments. They then build upon the model and apply assessments with regard to clients, strategy, technology, operations, skills/training, and organization and culture. Progress on their digital maturity journey can be gleaned by asking questions such as:

- Do we have buy-in across the organization and leadership sponsorship?
- How consistent is our technology adoption across various departments or functions?
- Do we have clear objectives?
- What is driving the initiative? (competition, client demands, efficiency improvement)
- How are we defining success or completion?
- Do we have skills/expertise gaps?
- Why are we not further along?
- How are we handling communication and training for the firm?

The answers to these and other questions are then assessed against a scale of maturity. That scale will probably include one of the following:

- High, medium, low
- Expert, advanced, intermediate, beginner
- Mature, competitive, engaged, emerging, traditional

A digital maturity can help you make a business case to prioritize an initiative within the overall journey, but it does not drive investment or strategy. Those are separate processes that must take place independent of the digital maturity model assessment.

Further on in the report, Challenge 3, we introduce the concept of a Balanced Scorecard (BSC), a model that you may want to consider as you start going deeper into reviewing performance metrics.

# Five Key Challenges of Successful Firm Tech Adoption and Implementation

## CHALLENGE 1:

### *Overwhelming Choices and Change Management Overload Leads to Decision Paralysis*

Jody Padar, *The Radical CPA*, believes the accounting profession is in a “renaissance period—a time of amazing rebirth for CPAs and the profession.” The accounting technology market is expanding at lightning speed with automation, artificial intelligence (AI), cloud accounting, blockchain technology, and data analytics.

Unfortunately, many CPAs want a clear path before they move forward, and even then they are at risk by not moving quickly enough. Padar notes, “To make matters worse, most firms don’t know who should be evaluating and leading new technology evaluations and rollouts. Is it the IT team? Is it a partner? With AI now involved, it is no longer just a technical decision, it is a business decision. They need to declare: ‘We are an AI-first firm and align tech decisions around that. Instead, they think about AI as just another tool rather than a complete shift in how they operate. They’re stuck in ‘Is this actually better?’ mode

instead of just experimenting or moving ahead. They are also being bombarded with messaging from so many competing vendors that firms struggle to identify which solutions best align with their strategy. With most firms drowning in work, still trying to figure out their pricing, and feeling the impact of not enough CPAs, they are buried in deadlines and put transformation on the back burner.”

The result is decision paralysis and technology adoption delays.

This is a mistake. According to Ellen Choi, “Not making a decision is the worst decision—the accounting technology market is expanding too rapidly. Firms that hesitate to invest in AI, automation, and integrated solutions now will fall behind permanently. By the time a lagging firm decides, it will be too late. Firms that wait too long will struggle to catch up because competitors that adopted

### Two Change Management Mistakes Virtually Every Firm Makes

All of our subject matter experts agree that there are two change management mistakes that they see every week.

- Most firms attempt too many technology rollouts simultaneously—overwhelming staff who are already balancing billable work, client service, and regulatory compliance.
- Leadership underestimates the time and effort required for technology adoption—failing to provide adequate training, change management, or workload adjustments.

“

Firms that wait too long will struggle to catch up because competitors that adopted technology early will be operating at a completely different level of efficiency and profitability.

— Ellen Choi

”

technology early will be operating at a completely different level of efficiency and profitability.”

Arianna Campbell sums it up this way: “What we do know is that firms can’t afford to sit back and wait—the pace of change requires intentional strategy, adaptability, and strong leadership in technology adoption. The biggest differentiator won’t be the technology itself, but how well firms integrate people, process, and change to maximize its impact. Success will come to those who are proactive, adaptable, and committed to continuous improvement.

## Ways to Measure Change Management Progress and Success

Ellen Choi recommends starting with four key performance indicators to measure your firm’s change management progress and success:

- **Employee Adoption Rate:** Measure the percentage of staff actively using new technology in their workflows. A low adoption rate is a red flag that the technology might not be properly integrated into workflows or that employees don’t understand the value.
- **Training Completion Rate:** Track the number of employees completing structured training programs on new systems.
- **Technology Sentiment Score:** Conduct staff surveys before, during, and after implementation to gauge engagement, ease of use, and satisfaction. Qualitative input from team leaders can also help firms adjust their approach to better support technology adoption.
- **Employee Turnover Rate:** Monitor changes in staff retention, especially among roles heavily impacted by technology adoption.

Rather than just focusing on specific tools, firms need to prioritize building the right processes and leadership structures to navigate continuous change.”

Garrett Wasny MA, CMC, CITP/FITP, couldn’t agree more and can’t overemphasize the pace of change. “We have never seen technology like this ever in the history of the world. We are all experimenting and there is no clear road map. There is no right or wrong way. We are used to a service model where we take traditional software and integrate new applications into the enterprise. It is consistent and predictable. Now add AI. We’ve never seen anything like it—the intelligence is continually evolving. The capabilities and processing speeds are doubling every three to six months. These are the greatest challenges and opportunities of our times. There is a lot going on, but firms need to embrace it, not avoid it.”

## Not Prepared to Change

For many firms, the challenge is not just with technology decisions, it is also having the right people to manage change. Firms need leaders who understand and can implement both technology and change management. Many firms lack internal process champions, and without the right people in place, initiatives stall, adoption is inconsistent, and firms fail to see the impact.

Notes Campbell, “Firms often expect IT teams to drive technology adoption, but IT alone can’t manage process change, training, and adoption challenges. Successful firms develop process managers, change champions, and AI stewards who will ensure that technology integrates into workflows and enhances productivity rather than adding complexity.”

Personnel capacity is already one of the biggest issues facing the accounting profession with firms struggling with talent shortages, burnout, and increasing client demands. Choi warns of the impact of change management overload. “If firms mismanage technology rollouts and push too much change at once, it accelerates



employee churn—making it even harder to commit to long-term initiatives. Furthermore, if employees are too stretched to adopt new workflows, firms risk failed implementations—wasting time and resources.”

We have also seen from research into employee retention, such as *CPA Talent Retention 2024: Keeping Your Best Performers*, published by CPA Crossings and various state CPA societies, that adopting tech too slowly also can contribute to employee churn. It’s truly a balancing act.

## Challenge Considerations Based on Firm Size

**Small Firm Considerations:** Limited resources and expertise. Staff is already stretched thin, and any additional technology implementation adds strain, making it harder to allocate time for training and adoption without disrupting service. Furthermore, without dedicated IT or process leadership, technology decisions often fall on firm owners or a small leadership team juggling multiple priorities. This can lead to disconnected tools, underutilized technology, and inefficiencies. The firms that navigate this best focus on scalable, cloud-based solutions, such as Intuit QuickBooks, Karbon, and Xero that don’t require heavy IT management.

**Midsize Firm Considerations:** Change management is a balancing act. Firms of this size need structured rollout plans to avoid overwhelming teams while ensuring that multiple departments can adopt new workflows simultaneously. These firms must balance growth with consistency. As these firms scale, different teams and service lines often adopt their own tools independently—leading to software bloat, inefficiencies, and data silos. The firms that get this right focus on firmwide technology alignment early on, making sure IT, operations, and leadership are working in tandem. They are investing in process managers and technology champions that will help ensure adoption, integration, and smoother transitions as the firm grows.

**Large Firm Considerations:** Change management at scale. Widespread adoption and engagement is often a struggle. With multiple offices, service lines, and long-tenured employees who are comfortable with the way things have always been done, resistance to change is a real issue. The firms that succeed don’t just implement technology, they embed it into how the firm operates. They invest in change leadership, firmwide training, and governance frameworks that ensure adoption sticks.

## Effective Methods to Create a Supportive Technology Adoption Culture

Building a technology-friendly culture requires clear communication, leadership support, and continuous learning. A people-first approach fosters a willingness and enthusiasm for new technology. Best practices include:

- **Change Leadership Integration:** Implement structured change leadership models to support adoption and reduce resistance.
- **Training and Upskilling:** Provide hands-on training and peer-led workshops to help ensure that employees feel confident using new technology.
- **AI and Technology Guidelines:** Establish AI governance frameworks to ensure responsible technology use and to mitigate security risks.
- **Recognition and Incentives:** Reward employees who embrace new technologies to encourage firmwide adoption.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Promote collaboration among IT, leadership, and service teams to ensure a holistic approach to adoption.

Source: Arianna Campbell

## Five Steps to Prioritizing Technological Initiative Goals

### 1 Align Technology Goals with Business Strategy

Firms should first determine which business objectives are most critical to their long-term success. Technology should support and accelerate those goals, rather than being adopted reactively.

- If the firm is capacity-constrained, prioritize efficiency and automation to free up resources.
- If the firm is losing clients to competitors, prioritize client experience and engagement tools.
- If the firm is transitioning from compliance to advisory, prioritize AI-driven analytics and forecasting solutions.

### 2 Identify Immediate vs Long-Term Needs

Firms should classify initiatives as urgent, mid-term, or long-term based on their potential impact and feasibility.

- **Urgent (6-12 months):** Solve immediate pain points (e.g., automation to reduce workload).
- **Mid-Term (12-24 months):** Build foundational improvements (e.g., client-facing portals or workflow integration).
- **Long-Term (24+ months):** Position the firm for future innovation (e.g., AI-driven business advisory tools).

### 3 Prioritize Initiatives with the Highest ROI and Least Disruption

Not all technological initiatives require massive investments or disruptive change. Firms should prioritize quick wins that have a high return on investment while balancing major transformative projects.

- **High-ROI, Low-Disruption:** Automated document management, workflow automation, AI-driven tax prep.
- **High-ROI, Medium-Disruption:** Client portals, business intelligence dashboards, machine learning for advisory.
- **High-ROI, High-Disruption:** Full-scale, AI-driven advisory platforms, blockchain for audit verification.

### 4 Consider Internal Readiness and Staff Capacity

Even the best initiatives fail if the firm does not have the staff bandwidth or training programs in place.

- Conduct an internal readiness assessment to gauge whether employees have the capacity to adopt and implement a new system.
- If capacity is a concern, start with process automation to reduce workload before introducing new advisory technology.

### 5 Adopt a Phased Implementation Approach

Rather than tackling multiple initiatives at once, firms should prioritize phased rollouts to minimize disruption.

- **Phase 1:** Automate low-value, repetitive tasks to free up internal capacity.
- **Phase 2:** Enhance client engagement and service delivery through technology.
- **Phase 3:** Implement higher-value, innovation-driven solutions such as AI-powered analytics.

## Overcoming Challenges Begins with Process Goals

Technology decisions should always start with what a firm is trying to accomplish, not with what is new or popular. The right technology depends on whether the goal is to expand the firm and manage a growing workforce, enhance the client experience, improve efficiency, or something else. When firms lead with strategy rather than chasing the latest trends, they make smarter, more impactful technology choices.

Campbell gives some examples: “If the goal is to support hybrid and remote work, firms need cloud-based collaboration tools, secure access solutions, and workflow automation to keep teams connected and productive from anywhere. Solutions like Microsoft 365, virtual desktops, and AI-powered document management ensure people have what they need without sacrificing security

or efficiency. If the goal is to enhance client experience and a shift to more advisory work, firms should look for AI-driven analytics, customer relationship management platforms such as HubSpot, and client portals that improve communication and provide real-time financial insights. Just keep in mind that there is no single best technology—only the best technology for the firm’s specific goal.”

All four of our subject matter experts believe that accounting firms need to stop thinking about technology as a quick fix and start treating it as a business transformation initiative. Success will come from rethinking processes, equipping teams with the right skills, and making technology an enabler of change—not just another tool. Firms that are leading the way aren’t just implementing new technology—they are integrating it into their people, processes, and overall business strategy for a larger vision of firm growth and transformation.

## CHALLENGE 2:

### *Leadership Hesitation and Resistance to Change*

While new technology brings a host of opportunities, some firm leaders are hesitant, even resistant. New technology is often seen as a threat to time-tested practices that ensure quality. But that is only one reason for leadership resistance to change.

Other drivers of this second challenge include:

- **Expense:** Costs for licensing software, hardware, infrastructure, implementation and integration, maintenance and support, staffing and training, service agreements, and energy must all be considered.
- **Data security and ethical considerations:** With new technologies that will affect every aspect of the firm and engage with a variety of client data, cybersecurity and ethical impact considerations now come into play.
- **Lack of skills or expertise:** When evaluating new technology, firms must recognize that required technical expertise may be missing, causing a disruption to the firm's productivity in the short term.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Keeping up and complying with evolving regulations adds a layer of complexity that will often slow down decision-making.

Let's not overlook the fear of the unknown. There is a fear that jobs will be displaced or that leadership does not have enough information or experience to make the right decision. All of this contributes to leadership hesitancy and avoidance.

"Unfortunately, the partnership structure for most firms means that if a few partners are resistant to change, they can hold back the entire firm from moving forward," notes Ellen Choi. "If the partnership resistance to stall progress continues, I normally see one of two outcomes. The firm will fail to grow due to an inability to compete with more tech-enabled competitors, or the firm will be forced to merge into another entity that has already embraced technology."

"Technology adoption in accounting is intimidating right now," Jody Padar observes, "CPAs don't traditionally move fast, and they have a busy season that runs about eight months. With the remaining four months they are supposed to make strategic decisions and implement technology. They often think, 'Who's going to do all of this?'"

#### Four Tips to Help Leadership Move Forward

- **Start with a Mindset.** The firms that succeed don't just adopt technology and AI—they shift their entire approach to problem-solving. Every time they look at a new business problem, they ask: "What's the AI-first way to solve this?"
- **Evaluate Technology with an AI-First Lens.** Firms making real progress aren't just bolting AI onto their existing processes. They're looking at tools that are AI-native, assessing how AI changes workflows, and structuring firms around insights—not transactions.
- **Stop Waiting for a Perfect Plan—Just Start.** The firms that are moving forward aren't waiting until they have all the answers. They experiment and test to find clarity.
- **Make AI Adoption a Habit, Not a One-Time Project.** AI adoption isn't a single implementation—it's an ongoing evolution. Firms that succeed integrate AI into every decision, rather than seeing it as a "one-off" project.

Source: Jody Padar

## Seven Ways to Create a Culture Supportive of Technology Adoption

Ellen Choi recommends starting with four key performance indicators to measure your firm's change management progress and success:

### 1 Start by Securing Leadership Buy-in and Set the Tone From the Top

- To get broad, firmwide acceptance and engagement, it is important that managing partners and senior leaders embrace the change.
- Partners need to demonstrate their own use of new tools, reinforcing that technology adoption applies at all levels. This is vital to build trust and respect.
- Creating a technology advisory committee composed of leadership and tech-forward employees will help guide strategy and implementation.

### 2 Identify and Empower Technology Champions

- Identify team members who naturally embrace technology, and empower them as internal ambassadors.
- Have champions test new tools first, provide feedback, and serve as a resource for colleagues.
- Encourage champions to share success stories and best practices, showing how new tools improve workflow.

### 3 Provide Hands-on Training and Ongoing Support

- Use interactive, hands-on training sessions rather than passive webinars.
- Provide step-by-step guides, video tutorials, and internal FAQs for on-demand learning.
- Offer small group or one-on-one coaching to ensure employees feel supported.
- Implement a helpdesk or dedicated internal resource for ongoing questions and troubleshooting.

### 4 Create a Culture of Experimentation and Psychological Safety

- Encourage a mindset of continuous learning by reinforcing that it's okay to make mistakes while adapting to new tools.
- Recognize and reward employees who take the initiative in learning and applying new technology.
- Normalize open discussions about what's working and what's challenging without judgment.

### 5 Start with Small Wins to Build Confidence

- Begin with low-risk, high-impact automations (e.g., automating data entry, scheduling, or workflow approvals).
- Measure and publicize quick wins, such as time saved, reduced errors, or improved client responsiveness.
- Use these successes to build momentum for larger tech rollouts.

*(continued on page 14)*



and they freak out. They don't know where to go so they don't do anything. They are overwhelmed and don't feel they have the skill set to figure out. I think that is where a lot of firm leadership is."

Padar continues, "I also think that there are a lot of old-school partners out there who have built their firms and don't want to admit that there is a better way to grow (to run a firm, i.e. business model). They don't want to think that they did something wrong. It's not that they did something wrong, they just didn't know better. It was a different time. They need to embrace and foster this opportunity for change."

Adds Campbell, "From the leadership perspective, technology can feel risky—and firm leaders are often naturally risk-averse. Right now, many can't clearly define the end goal with emerging tech, and that uncertainty is driving hesitation. I think what we're seeing is a bit of an identity crisis at the leadership level. It's forcing a shift away from the skills and approaches that have made them successful throughout their careers. These are challenging

times for firm leaders. I was recently with a group of 50 operations leaders from The Boomer Operations Circle, and several shared that they don't always know which technologies are actively being used. Even with approved tools like Microsoft Copilot, some staff are hesitant to share how they're using it to work more efficiently because they fear being reprimanded or simply rewarded with more work."

Campbell continues, "When you combine that leadership uncertainty with the natural resistance to change, risk aversion, and the challenge of knowing how to effectively lead people through innovation, it's easy to understand why some firms default to doing nothing. But that hesitation can hold the firm back from realizing the full potential of technology."

So how can you help leadership embrace technology decision making and implementation?

According to Campbell, "Find out what is driving leadership's hesitation and then start with executive-level

## Seven Ways to Create a Culture Supportive of Technology Adoption

*(continued from page 13)*

### 6 Foster Collaboration and Peer Learning

- Implement peer-led training sessions where early adopters share practical applications with colleagues.
- Encourage departmental collaboration to ensure best practices spread firmwide.
- Use internal chat groups, discussion boards, or monthly check-ins for employees to share tips and experiences.

### 7 Align Technology with Employee and Client Benefits

- Clearly communicate how new tools reduce workload, streamline processes, and enhance job satisfaction.
- Emphasize how technology adoption improves client service and leads to higher engagement and retention.
- Involve employees in solution selection by gathering feedback on which tools would be most useful in their daily work.

education to reframe technology as an opportunity, not a threat. Show leadership how technology and AI can elevate advisory services, expand capacity, and enhance profitability, rather than just cutting costs. Convince them that technology and AI are not replacing accounting professionals; they are redefining roles. Firms must have strong leadership to guide teams through the change—focusing on upskilling, process improvement, and new service opportunities instead of avoiding innovation altogether.”

### Be Intentional about Leadership Alignment, Communication, and Process Improvement

The firms that get technology adoption right get ahead of potential problems. Here are three strategies from Campbell that make the biggest difference:

- **Get leadership on the same page early.** One of the biggest reasons technology initiatives fail is because different parts of the firm are operating with different priorities. IT might be pushing for innovation, while leadership is focused on cost, and end-users just want to avoid disruption. The firms that succeed bring together key decision-makers from the start to define success, identify risks, and create a plan that works for everyone. Without this alignment, tech adoption becomes a game of tug-of-war, and the initiative stalls before it ever gains traction.
- **Communicate.** Technology adoption isn’t just about getting the right tools in place; it’s about getting people on board. Too many firms assume employees will naturally understand why a change is happening or how it benefits them. They won’t. The most successful firms roll out a structured communication plan that clearly lays out the “why” behind the change, what’s expected, and how it will make their work easier. More importantly, they make communication two-way by giving employees a chance to ask questions, raise concerns, and feel involved in the process. When

“

I think that the new technology is creating an identity crisis at the leadership level. It’s forcing a shift away from the skills and approaches that have made them successful throughout their careers. These are challenging times for leadership.

— Arianna Campbell

”

people feel like change is happening with them instead of to them, they’re far more likely to embrace it.

- **Fix the process before adding technology.** When firms take a broken or inefficient process and try to automate it, things go wrong. Automation doesn’t fix a bad process; it just makes a bad process happen faster. The firms that avoid this trap map out workflows before implementing new tools. They take a hard look at whether the current way of doing things still makes sense in an AI-driven world, and they remove unnecessary steps before they even think about automation. This approach ensures that technology simplifies work instead of adding complexity.

Successful technology adoption is about leadership alignment, clear communication, and process improvement. When firms take the time to do these things right, technology can then transform the way the firm operates.

## CHALLENGE 3:

### *Justifying Costs and Proving Return on Investment*

The ability to demonstrate a clear technology return on investment (ROI) is a challenge for accounting firms. Part of the frustration lies in the fact that the benefits of technology are often integrated into operational changes rather than in immediate, hard-dollar returns. There are four key aspects of technology investment that accounting firms need to address to overcome this challenge: Measurement, Attribution, Timelines, and Alignment.

#### Measurement

Many of the cost-justifying benefits of technology do not appear in the traditional metrics used to calculate ROI. The benefits tend to show up as error rate reductions, compliance improvements, process efficiency enhancements, or quality increases. These are more difficult to quantify, but they definitely improve a firm's competitive advantage and risk management. These "softer" benefits take shape as incremental gains that

“

Firms frequently struggle to quantify the full financial benefits of technology investments because they often don't adequately consider soft benefits such as productivity gains, client satisfaction improvements, and risk reduction.

— Garrett Wasny

”

only emerge over time. These softer benefits need to be recognized as part of any technology investment.

"I think accounting firms need to start looking at measurement differently. They need to measure change, not just completion," says Jody Padar. "Instead of asking, 'Did we implement AI?', firms should track progress with questions such as, 'How many processes have been enhanced by AI?' or 'How has AI improved client interactions and insights?' Firms need to adopt a 'Pathway to Change' mindset. Instead of just measuring whether something is done, measure whether it is evolving. Progress itself should be the goal."

#### Attribution

With new technology being implemented firmwide, integrated with legacy systems, and reliant on AI, it is often difficult to associate specific benefits with an investment. Any resistance to, or slow adoption of, a new process can delay the operational or financial benefits. Any number of operational variables and can be difficult to identify in ROI metrics.

Garrett Wasny explains, "Firms frequently struggle to quantify the full financial benefits of technology investments because they often don't adequately consider soft benefits such as productivity gains, client satisfaction improvements, and risk reduction. According to a KPMG survey, 51% of technology executives observed no increase in performance or profitability from digital transformation investments over two years, highlighting the challenges of clearly demonstrating ROI."

#### Timelines

There will be a lag period before employees are fully comfortable with a new technology and using it effectively.

This period could cover several fiscal cycles, making it difficult for a new technology investment to record an impact. Unfortunately, most accounting firms have tight performance and budgeting cycles, so accounting firms need to consider any lag periods when accessing ROI.

“If firms only adopt technology where they can calculate short-term ROI, they will miss out on transformational opportunities that redefine the way the profession operates,” warns Choi. “Competing firms move forward without hesitation. The firms that internalize this mindset and invest strategically will gain a significant market advantage—while those that hesitate will find it harder to compete in the long term.”

## Alignment

Technology’s real value in an accounting firm is its power to generate quality improvements and anticipate future needs—transforming the practice. This substantial value is rarely captured in benefits such as revenue savings or short-term cost savings. To address this misalignment, accounting firms need to broaden their view and definition of technology ROI. Include both the traditional financial metrics as well as more qualitative, long-term metrics that focus on client experience, internal process enhancements, employee learning and growth, and future-readiness. Also, consider using scenario planning and risk adjustment models to project possible gains beyond current performance and budgeting cycles that may alter operational and strategic direction. Working with these models both prepares accounting firms for possible technology disruptions and establishes a culture of continuous improvement.

Notes Campbell, “Measuring the impact of new technology isn’t just about cutting costs—it’s about improving

efficiency, creating capacity, and unlocking new revenue opportunities. The firms that struggle most with ROI fail to track both key performance indicators (KPIs) and key behavioral indicators (KBIs), meaning they focus on outcomes but overlook the behaviors needed to drive those results.”

## Consider Keeping Score with a Balanced Scorecard

A balanced scorecard (BSC) is a strategic management performance metric that helps accounting firms identify and improve their operations to help influence external outcomes. It was first introduced in 1992 by David Norton and Robert Kaplan, who took previous metric performance measures and adapted them to include nonfinancial information. The BSC measures past performance data and gives evaluators feedback on how to make better future decisions. The BSC also helps firms track their performance in service and quality in addition to financial data.

The seven main elements of the BSC are:

- Internal processes
- Learning and growth
- Strategy and vision alignment (ensuring that scorecard activities support the organization’s goals)
- Governance and accountability, which create transparency and trust
- Communication and feedback mechanisms, including regular performance reviews to keep improvements on track

By consolidating all of this information in one report, accounting firms can save time, money, and resources to better train staff, communicate with clients, and improve their competitive positions in the market.

## KPIs and KBIs for Accounting Firms

### Financial KPIs

- **Revenue Growth:** Percentage increase in revenue over a period
- **Net Profit Margin:** Percentage of revenue remaining after all expenses
- **Gross Profit Margin:** Revenue minus cost of services, as a percentage of revenue
- **Revenue per Employee:** Total revenue divided by the number of employees
- **Average Revenue per Client:** Total revenue divided by the number of clients

### Client Satisfaction KPIs

- **Client Retention Rate:** Percentage of clients retained over a period of time
- **Net Promoter Score:** Likelihood of clients to recommend the firm
- **Number of Client Referrals:** Count of new clients acquired through referrals

### Operational KPIs

- **Employee Utilization Rate:** Percentage of billable hours compared to total hours
- **Turnaround Time:** Time taken to complete client work
- **Accounts Receivable Turnover:** How quickly the firm collects payments

### Teamwork KBIs

- **Cooperative Attitude:** Willingness to work together with colleagues
- **Active Contribution:** Participating actively in team tasks and discussions
- **Supportive Behavior:** Offering assistance and help to team members

### Communication KBIs

- **Written and Verbal Clarity:** Expressing ideas and information in a clear and understandable manner
- **Active Listening:** Paying full attention and understanding the messages of others
- **Professional Demeanor:** Maintaining a respectful and appropriate communication style

### Problem-Solving KBIs

- **Analytical Thinking:** Examining information, identifying patterns, and drawing logical conclusions
- **Innovative Thinking:** Generating new and creative solutions to challenges
- **Decisiveness:** Making timely and well-informed decisions

### Ethical Conduct KBIs

- **Adherence to Standards and Regulations:** Following all relevant professional guidelines, laws, and firm policies
- **Confidentiality:** Protecting sensitive client and firm information
- **Honesty and Integrity:** Acting truthfully and with strong moral principles



## CHALLENGE 4:

### *Growing Security Risks*

As accounting firms become more cloud-based and global, cybersecurity risks increase. Firms often integrate new technology with legacy systems before considering security and governance—leaving gaps in data protection, compliance, and access control. Shadow IT (employees using unapproved applications) and AI-driven automation introduce vulnerabilities if not governed properly. Ransomware is another real threat that can cause serious disruption—especially as more accounting firms turn to cloud solutions. Even weak passwords and inadequate access controls can leave staff unknowingly exposed.

Notes Arianna Campbell, “The firms getting security right aren’t treating it as an afterthought—they are embedding zero-trust security models, AI frameworks, and compliance policies into their technology adoption strategy. Firms in our Technology and CIO Circles are leading by creating structured security policies upfront and ensuring that security is a firmwide priority, not just an IT issue.”

As important as it is, firms can get deep into security very quickly and get overwhelmed. Jody Padar strongly recommends that firms consult with outside IT experts to ensure complete data protection. “Mitigation is key,” she says. “Roll it out in phases. Firms should implement technology and security in low-risk areas first before expanding to client-facing workflows.”

All of our subject matter experts agree that it takes a lot of effort to balance cybersecurity measures with technology usability. Ellen Choi believes that “The key is to integrate user-friendly authentication, automation, and role-based access so that security becomes seamless rather than an obstacle. For example, firms can use adaptive multifactor authentication (MFA), which requires additional verification only when logging in from unrecognized devices—rather than disrupting every login attempt. Choosing cloud-based tools with built-in compliance

(SOC 2, GDPR, IRS 1075) also reduces the burden of manual security configurations—allowing firms to focus on efficiency while maintaining strong data protection.”

Choi goes on to say, “To prevent security policies from interfering with day-to-day workflows, firms should automate threat detection, backups, and compliance reporting—minimizing manual oversight. Role-based access controls (RBAC) ensure that employees have the necessary permissions without exposing sensitive data firmwide. Finally, ongoing cybersecurity training should focus on practical, real-world risks like phishing and secure client communication rather than just theoretical compliance rules. By prioritizing automation, secure-by-design tools, and practical security education, firms can maintain a strong cybersecurity posture without sacrificing usability or operational efficiency.”

“

The firms getting security right aren’t treating it as an afterthought—they are embedding zero-trust security models, AI frameworks, and compliance policies into their technology adoption strategy.

— Arianna Campbell

”

## Cybersecurity Considerations for New Technology

We asked Garrett Wasny which cybersecurity considerations should firms prioritize when adopting new technology. Below is his list organized into 14 categories.

### Data Privacy and Protection

- Encryption: Ensure data is encrypted both at rest and in transit to protect against unauthorized access.
- Data Masking: Implement data masking techniques to anonymize sensitive information during development or testing.
- Access Controls: Use role-based access controls to limit access to sensitive data based on job roles.

### Identity and Access Management

- Multifactor Authentication (MFA): Implement MFA to add an additional layer of security for user authentication.
- Single Sign-On (SSO): Use SSO to manage user identities across multiple applications securely.
- Privileged Access Management (PAM): Control and monitor access to privileged accounts to prevent insider threats.

### Network Security

- Firewalls: Deploy firewalls to control incoming and outgoing network traffic.
- Intrusion Detection and Prevention Systems (IDPS): Use IDPS to detect and respond to potential security breaches.
- Virtual Private Networks (VPNs): Secure remote access through VPNs to protect data transmission.

### Endpoint Security

- Antivirus and Anti-Malware: Ensure all endpoints (computers, mobile devices) have up-to-date antivirus and anti-malware protection.
- Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR): Implement EDR solutions to detect and respond to threats at the endpoint level.
- Patch Management: Regularly update software and systems to address known vulnerabilities.

### Cloud Security

- Cloud Access Security Broker (CASB): Use CASBs to enforce security policies and monitor cloud usage.
- Data Loss Prevention (DLP): Implement DLP solutions to prevent unauthorized data exfiltration.
- Cloud Security Posture Management (CSPM): Monitor and manage the security posture of cloud environments.

### AI-Powered Threat Hunting

- Autonomous SOCs: Deploy machine-learning-powered security operations centers (SOCs) to analyze large volumes of data for threats.
- Behavioral Analytics: Use AI to analyze user behavior and detect anomalies that might indicate a security breach.
- Zero-Day Exploit Detection: AI models trained on historical attack patterns can detect zero-day exploits faster than human teams.

### Compliance and Regulatory Requirements

- Regulatory Compliance: Ensure tools follow data protection regulations like General Data Protection Regulation, California Consumer Privacy Act, or industry-specific standards like SOC 2.
- Audit Trails: Maintain immutable audit trails through blockchain or similar technologies to ensure compliance and traceability.
- Data Governance: Establish a robust data governance framework to manage data lifecycle and compliance.

### Vendor Security

- Vendor Risk Assessment: Evaluate the security practices of technology vendors before integration.
- Vendor Compliance: Ensure vendors follow cybersecurity standards and have robust security measures in place.
- Vendor Support: Assess the level of cybersecurity support provided by the vendor, including updates and patches.

### User Training and Awareness

- Security Training: Regularly train staff on cybersecurity best practices, phishing awareness, and secure data handling.

- **Phishing Simulations:** Conduct phishing simulations to test staff awareness and improve security culture.
- **Incident Response Training:** Train staff on incident response procedures to minimize damage in case of a breach.

## Incident Response and Recovery

- **Incident Response Plan:** Develop and maintain an incident response plan to quickly address security breaches.
- **Disaster Recovery:** Ensure tools support disaster recovery plans to restore operations after a security incident.
- **Forensic Capabilities:** Tools should provide forensic capabilities to investigate breaches and understand attack vectors.

## Continuous Monitoring and Threat Intelligence

- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Implement real-time monitoring of systems and networks to detect and respond to threats promptly.
- **Threat Intelligence:** Integrate threat intelligence feeds to stay updated on emerging threats and vulnerabilities.
- **Security Information and Event Management (SIEM):** Use SIEM systems to aggregate and analyze log data for security events.

## Zero-Trust Architecture

- **Zero-Trust Principles:** Adopt zero-trust security models, where trust is never assumed and verification is required from everyone trying to gain access.
- **Micro-Segmentation:** Segment networks limit lateral movement in case of a breach.
- **Least Privilege:** Enforce the principle of least privilege to minimize the attack surface.

## Quantum-Resistant Cryptography

- **Post-Quantum Cryptography:** Implement lattice-based encryption or other quantum-resistant algorithms to protect against future quantum computing threats.
- **Key Management:** Ensure robust key management practices to secure cryptographic keys.

## Third-Party Risk Management

- **Third-Party Assessments:** Regularly assess third-party vendors and partners for cybersecurity risks.
- **Supply Chain Security:** Ensure the security of the entire supply chain, including software supply chain attacks.

### Four Cybersecurity Tips to Stay Ahead

Cybersecurity is a firmwide responsibility that ties directly into process consistency, clear expectations, and change management. Here are four key takeaways from Boomer Consulting and the Boomer Technology and CIO Circles to ensure a successful cybersecurity implementation:

- **Limit Data Access and Permissions:** Not everyone needs access to everything. Firms that implement role-based access controls reduce risk while keeping workflows efficient.
- **Provide Clear AI and Data Governance:** As AI-powered tools become more common, firms need clear guidelines on what data can be used, how AI should be applied, and how to prevent unintended risks like exposing sensitive client information.
- **Establish Vendor Security and Compliance Standards:** The firms that stay ahead of security risks are evaluating vendor encryption, compliance with regulations (like SOC 2 or GDPR), and ongoing security updates before committing to new technology.
- **Promote Internal Training and Awareness:** Even the best security features won't help if employees don't use them properly. Firms in the Boomer Technology and CIO Circles emphasize ongoing training on best practices, common risks (like phishing), and secure data handling to minimize human error.

Source: Arianna Campbell

## CHALLENGE 5:

### *Gaps in Resources, Skills, and Expertise*

The technology skills gap in most accounting firms has become a top issue. Accounting firms realize that this gap will impede future growth and success. This gap is growing as firms continue to grapple with the following difficulties:

- **Firms Are Primarily Built with Traditional Staff:** The pace of innovation is leaving many accounting professionals unable to catch up.
- **Resistance to Change:** There are still many firms that hesitate to adopt technology and AI due to a fear of the unknown regarding costs, complexity, regulatory compliance, cybersecurity, and operational disruption.
- **A Lack of Proper Training and Knowledge Transfer:** Most accountants are well trained in traditional accounting techniques but they do not receive adequate training for AI, cloud-based solutions, and blockchain processes.
- **Hard Time Finding the Right Talent:** Accounting firms need professionals who have strong skills and experience in business, accounting, and technology.

The technology skills gap is having a dramatic impact across firms. As shown in the research report, *Transforming Your Firm's Business Model: Workforce Transformation and Talent Management Strategies*, produced by CPA Crossings and various CPA state societies, some accounting firms are changing their business model from the traditional pyramid organization structure to new models, such as the inverted pentagon organization structure, to leverage technology and provide higher value to clients faster. These changes to the business model are driven significantly by the need to address the technology skills gap.

It can be difficult. Accounting firms are asking their staff to juggle billable work, client service, regulatory changes, and firm growth initiatives—all while adapting to new technology. “Ramping up current and new accounting firm employees with technology knowledge is vital, but

it has to be done purposefully,” advises Ellen Choi. “The sheer volume of change can be overwhelming—leading to burnout, resistance, or resignation. If too many new processes and tools are introduced at once, firmwide adoption suffers and initiatives can fail due to lack of engagement rather than lack of value. This is also a waste of precious time and resources. I frequently recommend that my clients conduct an internal readiness assessment to gauge whether employees have the capacity to adopt and implement a new system. If capacity is a concern, a client should start with process automation to reduce workload before introducing new advisory technology.”

Arianna Campbell explains that lack of capacity is a skills mistake common to many. “The lack of technology skills in an accounting firm can also lead to failure in other ways. It’s not enough to have the luxury of a tech-savvy IT team. Firms often make the mistake of expecting those IT teams to drive technology adoption, but IT alone can’t manage process change, training, and adoption challenges. Successful firms develop process managers, change champions, and AI stewards who ensure that new technology integrates into workflows and enhances productivity rather than adding complexity.”

Jody Padar looks at the technology skills gap a little differently. “There is an unbelievably large opportunity right now for accounting firms. They have to realize that they are not just accounting firms anymore—they are tech-enabled advisory businesses. A ton of money is coming into the accounting market, fueling firms to redefine what they can be. AI-driven automation, better workflow solutions, new business models—firms aren’t just making existing processes faster, they are finally rethinking how work gets done.”

She continues. “Firms should be moving faster—but they are dragging their feet. The shift that needs to happen isn’t about adding new tools; it’s about becoming a

## Ways Your Firm Can Address Its Technology Skills Gap

Over the next few years, your firm will need to improve how it recruits or leverages technology talent and trains and upskills staff firmwide. Here are a few suggestions your firm may want to try:

### Go Back to School

- Team with colleges and universities to recruit students who studied accounting and technology—*prior to their graduation*.
- Collaborate with universities to integrate technology-driven accounting courses into degree programs.

### Talk with Industry Experts

- Proactively target accounting technology conferences. Identify experts you may want to partner with on training, consulting, etc.
- Attend webinars on accounting technology. Identify experts who you may want to partner with on training, consulting, etc.
- Begin conversations with accounting and technology experts through LinkedIn.

### Provide Tech Immersion Programs

- Get your training and upskilling up and running by bringing in an outside expert to ramp up staff on a new technology.
- Develop technology mentorship programs, where accounting professionals collaborate with IT experts at local technology companies to exchange knowledge.

- Encourage younger, tech-savvy employees to mentor senior accountants and management—bridging the gap between traditional expertise and digital knowledge.

### Create an Innovation Lab at Your Firm

- Establish internal technology incubators where accountants can explore new technologies and test automation solutions—facilitated by an outside industry expert if necessary.
- Organize hackathons to encourage experimentation with AI-powered financial modeling—facilitated by an outside industry expert if necessary.

### Offer Gamified Learning and AI-Powered Training

- Hire an outside education or training company to provide or create interactive training modules that use AI-driven simulations to teach technology concepts.
- Purchase or contract gamification techniques to make cybersecurity and automation training engaging and effective.

### Stay Focused with a Digital Transformation Strategy

- Implement and refer back to a structured framework such as the CPA Firm Digital Maturity Model or the balanced scorecard to help you find your way through technology adoption.



data-first firm—and that requires a fundamental change in how they operate and who they hire. The cloud transition is still unfinished for many firms, and now AI is here forcing another massive shift. Technology adoption isn't a checkbox—it needs to be part of a firm's culture. If you don't bake innovation into your DNA, adapting to AI and other emerging technology will always feel like an uphill battle."

Garrett Wasny also believes accounting firms should be looking at the opportunities more than the challenges when it comes to the technology skills gap. "AI is exponentially increasing its capabilities and processing power every few months. In accounting, the possibilities are now nearly limitless—driven by creative vision combined with technology. The challenge: many accounting firms currently lack internal 'AI Sherpas' or specialists to guide the vision—often still prioritizing traditional accounting roles over emerging technology-hybrid roles."

“

There is an unbelievably large opportunity right now for accounting firms.

They have to realize that are not just accounting firms anymore—they are tech-enabled advisory businesses. Firms should be moving faster—but they are dragging their feet. The shift that needs to happen isn't about adding new tools; it's about becoming a data-first firm.

— Jody Padar

”

He goes deeper. "With every day that goes by these accounting firms are set back months, even years, when it comes to productivity and efficiency. They are not upskilling fast enough. Most firms fail to invest in AI and blockchain certifications for staff—so staff productivity is dramatically less than those firms where automation is handling repetitive tasks. They are also not moving fast enough with cybersecurity skills. Most breaches target M&A data, yet less than half of firms are using AI-powered threat hunting capabilities—exposing them to significantly more breach risks. Firms must address the technology skills gap today and throw everything they have at it—hiring talent, using off-shore resources, and teaming up with technology consulting firms."

Whether your firm acquires technology talent through recruiting, leverages near- and off-shore resources, or partners with technology consulting firms, the benefits are worth the uphill battle:

- **Successful Digital Transformation:** The entire profession is embracing technology such as AI, cloud computing, and blockchain to improve efficiency and accuracy with client services and internal operations. You need technical expertise to integrate your platforms and tools, train your staff, and offer enhanced services to your clients.
- **Strengthened Cybersecurity:** Your firm works with a lot of sensitive client data. You must do everything you can to ensure compliance and safeguard against breaches.
- **Insightful Data Analysis:** As advisory services become a larger part of your firm's business, so does the need for data science and analytics talent who can process large amounts of data and provide insights for client strategies.
- **Applied Innovation:** Technology professionals think through problems differently than traditional accountants and bring fresh perspectives. This can put accounting firms in better positions to leverage technology processes and stay ahead of industry trends.

## Technology Skills Gap Metrics and Indicators

When addressing a technology skills gap, it will be important to monitor various indicators to measure progress and success. Some of the metrics that our subject matter experts recommend include the following:

- **Employee Adoption Rate:** Measure the percentage of staff actively using new technology in their workflows.
- **Training Completion Rate:** Track the number of employees completing structured training programs on new systems.
- **Staff AI Upskilling:** Monitor the percentage of staff with AI, blockchain, and cybersecurity certifications.
- **Technology Sentiment Score:** Conduct staff surveys before, during, and after implementation to gauge engagement, ease of use, and satisfaction.
- **Employee Turnover Rate:** Monitor changes in staff retention—especially among roles heavily impacted by technology adoption.
- **Productivity Gains:** Measure productivity improvements post-upskilling.
- **Cybersecurity Incidents:** Track the number and severity of cybersecurity incidents.
- **AI Validation Accuracy:** Assess the accuracy of AI-generated financial statements validated by staff.

## Recruit Champions, Not Just Teammates

Make sure that someone in leadership is ensuring that the right internal structures, reporting, and accountability are in place to drive adoption across departments. Also, identify two or three internal champions—from both the operations and service teams—and empower them to lead pilot programs. These champions should focus on how technology integrates into everyday work, not just learning the technical features.

*Source: Boomer Process Circle and Boomer Operations Circle*

# 2025 Deep Dive: Realizing the Potential of Artificial Intelligence

While AI capabilities, applications, and processing are moving at the speed of light, the adoption of AI by accounting firms is not. Our panel of subject matter experts has had discussions with hundreds of clients and others in the profession, and here are many of the reasons why accounting firms are not further ahead with AI adoption:

- Fear and Hesitation of the Unknown
- Lacking a Culture of Innovation
- Not Enough Time
- No Clear Ownership
- AI Is Just Fancy Automation
- Difficult Integration with Existing Systems
- Uncertain ROI, Licensing Costs, and Implementation Expenses
- Inadequate Skills and Expertise to Evaluate, Implement, and Optimize AI Tools
- Leadership and Staff Resistance—We Don't Know What We Don't Know
- Regulatory Compliance and Ethical Issues
- Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Concerns
- Scalability and Performance
- Client Trust and Engagement
- Lack of Strategy and Business Alignment

According to Jody Padar, none of these reasons compare with the vast benefits that AI actually can offer accounting firms now and in the future. “The time to ignore AI was yesterday. Firms need to be working with AI tools like Copilot, ChatGPT, or Gemini now—not just reading about them. AI isn’t something you get trained on once and then you are good. It is a shift in thinking.”

She continues. “Firms need to stop waiting for AI to be built into their software. They need to be asking, ‘How can AI help me to think differently about solving problems today?’ Think of it this way: AI is like Google. Would you say, ‘I’m not using Google until my software provider integrates it?’ No. You use it because it is a tool that helps you think and work faster. AI isn’t just automation—it is augmentation. That’s the mindset shift firms need to make.”

## How Firms Should Be Evaluating AI

Ellen Choi believes “The first evaluation factor is alignment with business objectives. AI should solve a specific firm problem, such as automating manual processes, enhancing client interactions, or improving financial forecasting. Firms should assess whether AI addresses pain points that directly affect profitability, client service, or capacity constraints. Data security and compliance are also critical. Firms should ensure AI tools comply with industry regulations, have strong encryption measures, and allow for role-based access controls. Evaluating AI vendors based on their security certifications and history of regulatory compliance is essential to mitigating risk.”

Going further, she adds, “Ease of integration with existing systems is another major consideration. AI should work within a firm’s existing technology stack rather than requiring a full system overhaul. Firms should assess whether AI solutions offer open APIs, seamless data syncing, and compatibility with practice management, tax, or audit software. The return on investment (ROI) and adoption feasibility should be clearly defined. Firms should measure AI’s effectiveness by tracking time savings, accuracy improvements, or revenue growth in advisory services. AI should reduce inefficiencies without requiring excessive staff retraining or major workflow disruptions.

Ultimately, firms should evaluate AI based on its ability to solve firm-specific challenges, integrate seamlessly, enhance security, and provide measurable returns. The approach will differ by firm size, but successful adoption comes down to selecting practical, scalable AI that aligns with long-term business goals.”

Notes Padar, “Most firms aren’t using AI as much as they should be. Some don’t even realize how much AI is already embedded in their existing tools. What I see out there is that the small firms have more freedom to experiment—try new tools and build workflows that integrate AI in advisory. At the midsize firms, some partners are using AI personally, but there is no firmwide

## Ways Accounting Firms Are Using AI Today

Those embracing AI are beginning to use it in practical, high-impact ways that improve efficiency, enhance decision-making, and elevate client service. Many are not just using AI to automate tasks, but also using it to transform how their firm gets work done. Here are a dozen of the more popular ways accounting firms are using AI today:

### Automation of Repetitive Tasks

- **Data Entry:** AI automates document extraction, improves accuracy, and reduces manual data entry.
- **Reconciliation:** AI automates bank reconciliation, matches transactions, and identifies discrepancies.
- **Tax Compliance:** AI can handle most tax filings.

### Enhanced Decision-Making

- **Predictive Analytics:** AI analyzes volumes of historical data to provide insights for forecasting.
- **Real-Time Insights:** AI delivers real-time analytics so firms can offer timely advice.

### Client Engagement

- **Client Portals:** AI portals offer a higher level of client engagement with real-time data analysis.
- **Proactive Recommendations:** AI can generate recommendations based on industry benchmarks, client data, and more.
- **Personalized Planning:** AI insights help drive tailored client financial planning and tax strategies.
- **Content Creation:** AI enables firms to create email, presentation, and video summaries—enhancing the client experience. AI data visualization tools are also enabling firms to convert complex financial data into visual formats quickly and easily.

### Compliance and Risk Management

- **Regulatory Compliance:** AI automates compliance checks through real-time API integrations.

- **Risk Detection:** AI can identify potential compliance and fraud risks.

### Audit Automation

- **Anomaly Detection:** AI detects anomalies in financial data with great precision.
- **Blockchain Integration:** AI uses blockchain for higher quality audit trails.

### Ideation and Planning

- **Brainstorming Partner:** AI can team with accountants to provide ideas on business models, client strategies, and value creation plans.
- **Strategic Planning:** AI can analyze volumes of data to help develop strategies.

### Cybersecurity

- **Threat Hunting:** AI can search through and analyze volumes of data to minimize threats and reduce breach risks.
- **Data Protection:** AI strengthens data security through real-time monitoring, encryption, and anomaly detection.

### Cost Savings and ROI

- **Operational Efficiency:** AI reduces error rates and manual labor costs.
- **ROI:** AI performance can be tracked and measured for revenue growth, cost savings, and risk reduction.

*(continued on page 28)*

AI strategy yet. The large firms have AI initiatives, but compliance, security, and bureaucracy slow down adoption. Bottom line to AI evaluation: dive in and use AI daily to figure out how it works best. Hire or partner with an “AI Sherpa” to make sure everyone gets their questions answered. If you wait for the perfect roadmap before you start evaluating AI, you will be left behind. Things are moving that fast.”

Based on insights from the Boomer Circles (client focus groups), Arianna Campbell believes that accounting firms should start with four AI evaluation criteria:

- **Strategic Fit:** AI should align with firm goals and client service strategies—not just automate tasks. Firms should ask, “Will this AI solution improve workflows, free up capacity, or create new opportunities for advisory services?”
- **Integration with Existing Technology:** AI is most effective when it works within the firm’s current tech stack. Standalone AI tools often create inefficiencies, whereas AI in tools like Microsoft Copilot and tax software enhances existing workflows.
- **Governance and Risk Management:** Firms need clear policies on how AI interacts with sensitive client data to ensure compliance and ethical use. Creating AI guidelines early helps prevent future risks.
- **Scalability and Long-Term Value:** AI solutions should grow with the firm and provide ongoing improvements—rather than being short-term fixes. Firms should evaluate vendor roadmaps to ensure continuous development.

Garrett Wasny agrees with the above list but adds a few more criteria. He suggests looking at the following:

- **Strong Data Privacy and Cybersecurity:** The data should be encrypted both at rest and in transit. Make sure that any AI cybersecurity solution can detect and respond to threats.
- **Thorough Vendor Evaluation:** Assess the financial stability and market position of any vendor. Assess any vendor’s expertise in the accounting industry as well as in AI.
- **Pilot Programs and Phased Rollout:** Start with pilot

## Ways Accounting Firms Are Using AI Today

*(continued from page 27)*

### Talent Development

- **Upskilling:** AI adoption requires upskilling, increasing opportunities for staff to acquire new skills and move into hybrid positions.
- **Employee Engagement:** As employees engage and become comfortable with AI, their job satisfaction scores and retention rates will improve.

### Process Optimization

- **Workflow Analysis:** AI can analyze workflows and identify inefficiencies. It can also uncover bottlenecks and suggest process improvements.

### Governance and GAAP Integration

- **Compliance-by-Design:** AI tools can reduce the risk of data breaches and promote regulatory compliance.
- **Audit Trails:** AI creates thorough audit trails, ensuring compliance and traceability.

### Ethics

- **Bias Mitigation:** AI can create models to ensure accuracy and fairness in reporting.
- **Transparency:** AI increases transparency in many processes, creating a high level of trust with clients.



programs to test AI in a controlled environment. Also, establish a feedback mechanism to refine the overall AI implementation.

- **Cost and Budget:** Be sure to factor in licensing fees, maintenance costs, training charges, and scalability considerations into the overall budget.

## How to Build Trust for the Accuracy and Reliability of AI

AI is a powerful tool, but it is not always correct. Firms cannot blindly trust AI outputs, nor can they afford to ignore AI altogether. “The key is to use AI strategically,” Campbell observes, “with validation and oversight built in.” Here are a few considerations developed by our panel of experts when it comes to trusting AI:

- **Learn to Know When to Trust:** AI is highly accurate when used for transactional work, such as bank reconciliations and transaction coding. It is less reliable for research-based tasks (e.g., tax law interpretations).
- **Trust But Verify:** AI should be a first pass, not a final answer. CPAs still need to apply professional judgment.
- **Separate Perception from Reality:** Many accountants assume AI is inaccurate, but in structured cases AI is often more accurate than humans—people just don’t trust it yet.
- **Human Oversight Is Essential:** AI should support decision-making, not replace human judgment. Firms need a structured review process for AI-generated reports, financial models, and client recommendations before relying on them.
- **Regular Auditing and Bias Checks:** Firms should regularly audit AI outputs, test for inconsistencies, and ensure models are trained on diverse and up-to-date datasets.
- **Transparency:** Avoid black-box AI models that provide answers without transparency into the reasoning.
- **Clear AI Usage Guidelines:** Firms need defined policies on AI use, data input standards, and compliance

measures to prevent AI from being misused or producing unreliable results.

- **GAAP Integration:** Integrate GAAP with AI governance principles to ensure financial reporting remains compliant and reliable.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Implement real-time monitoring to detect and respond to AI performance issues promptly. Establish feedback loops to refine AI models based on real-world performance.

## Impression of AI’s Development Over the Last 12 Months

We asked our panel of subject matter experts to tell us what has impressed them the most with the potential of AI in the accounting industry during the last 12 months. Of all the questions we asked of our panel, this is the one where the answers were the most diverse. Some answered from a business perspective. Others answered from a technology perspective. All of the answers should get those in the accounting profession excited about where AI is heading and what it is providing. Here are their responses:

### Jody Padar

“AI evolved at a staggering pace. The number of technological advancements should make your head spin. Just a short while ago, AI was clunky. Now we have voice-activated AI models that are shockingly good. What really impresses me the most about the last 12 months is that technology and business have come together to create a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine the profession. Take the Boomer generation retirements and add AI and you get massive transformation.”

### Ellen Choi

“The rapid progress in AI agents and multimodal applications is both fascinating and slightly daunting. Companies like OpenAI, Microsoft, and Google are driving agentic

AI capabilities forward with tools. I'm equally inspired by multimodal innovations like text-to-voice tools and generative AI-powered video platforms—technologies that are still early but clearly demonstrate potential to deliver significant value to accounting firms. Success lies in identifying meaningful use cases, adopting these technologies carefully, and establishing responsible-use guardrails. Firms that strategically and boldly integrate AI stand to gain a strong competitive advantage.”

### Arianna Campbell

“Here are the biggest AI shifts I’ve seen over the past year:

- **AI as a Driver of Continuous Improvement** – AI isn’t just about efficiency; it’s helping firms analyze processes, identify inefficiencies, and optimize workflows in real time. Instead of just automating what’s already there, firms that embrace AI with a continuous improvement mindset are using it to refine how work gets done.
- **Seamless AI Integration into Core Tools** – AI is no longer a separate platform. It’s being embedded directly into tax software, Microsoft 365, and workflow automation tools, making it easier for teams to use AI without disrupting their existing processes.
- **Shift from Task Automation to Strategic Insights** – AI is moving beyond just automating manual work. Firms are using it to pinpoint financial trends, enhance forecasting, and provide deeper client insights—helping them transition from compliance-driven services to more proactive advisory work.
- **AI’s Role in Learning & Development** – AI-powered training platforms are changing how firms develop talent, onboard new employees, and provide personalized learning paths. Firms that invest in AI-driven upskilling will close the skills gap faster and create more adaptable teams.

What excites me most is that firms are starting to recognize AI isn’t just another tech rollout—it’s a shift in how work gets done. The firms succeeding with AI aren’t just adopting new tools; they’re adapting their people and processes to make AI a seamless part of how they work.”

### Garrett Wasny

“There were so many AI developments in the accounting industry that impressed me—not only with the rapid capabilities but with the rapid benefits. Here are five of them:

- **Cognitive Automation:** AI-driven Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) have automated document extraction—reducing manual data entry and improving accuracy. Accounting firms are seeing large time savings and cost reductions.
- **Predictive Analytics:** AI is analyzing large volumes of data and providing predictive forecasting insights. Firms are providing more timely and accurate advice to their clients.
- **AI-Driven Advisory Services:** AI is going through client data, benchmarks, and macroeconomic indicators and generating proactive financial recommendations. I have heard of several firms doubling their advisory revenue over the last year.
- **Audit Automation:** AI is accurately and quickly detecting anomalies, leading to faster audit cycles and lower compliance costs.
- **Scalability:** AI is helping firms handle increased workloads without major infrastructure changes, providing cost-effective growth.”

### The Next Impact AI Will Have on the Accounting Profession

No one can predict with certainty what features and capabilities AI will reveal over the next few years—or how quickly they will appear. But our panel of subject matter experts do speak with their clients as well as industry vendors, analysts, consultants, media, and other stakeholders frequently to ensure that they are in sync with current trends. They each shared a trend or capability of AI that they think is going to have a major impact on the accounting profession over the next few years.

## Jody Padar

“AI will finally help CPAs become better advisers—at scale. For years, the profession has been told to be better advisers, but no one explained how. AI will change that by turning unstructured data into structured insights. AI will make advisory measurable. It will analyze client interactions, engagement trends, and communication patterns to make advisers more effective and responsive. The future of accounting isn’t less human—it is more human. AI will handle the transactions and free CPAs to focus on relationships, strategy, and decision-making in ways we have never been able to before. AI isn’t just changing what CPAs do, it’s changing how they think, advise, and create value. The firms that embrace AI-powered advisory will own the next decade.”

## Ellen Choi

“The acceleration of AI in accounting is opening doors to capabilities that were once unimaginable. The shift from compliance-heavy work to AI-assisted advisory is particularly exciting. Firms will be able to move beyond historical reporting and offer real-time financial forecasting, scenario modeling, and data-driven strategic planning. AI-powered automation is also reaching a point where it will meaningfully alleviate capacity challenges, allowing firms to scale without the traditional constraints of hiring and training. AI’s ability to enhance client engagement—through personalized insights, automated communication, and predictive recommendations—will redefine how firms deliver value. The firms that embrace AI as a strategic partner rather than just an efficiency tool will lead the way, transforming the profession into one that is more innovative, proactive, and forward-looking than ever before.”

## Arianna Campbell

“What excites me most about AI isn’t just the technology—it is how it is elevating people and redefining the profession. AI is automating routine tasks, allowing professionals to focus on strategy, client relationships, and high-value work. Instead of replacing accountants,

AI is enhancing their ability to deliver insights and drive business impact.

“AI is also making accounting careers more attractive and engaging, helping firms solve talent challenges and retain top professionals. By integrating AI-driven insights, firms can offer deeper forecasting, risk analysis, and strategic advisory services, reinforcing the value of human expertise in a technology-driven world.

“Beyond internal transformation, AI is creating new opportunities for partnerships, business growth, and innovation. Firms embracing AI will collaborate with tech providers, fintech companies, and advisory specialists, expanding their services beyond compliance.

“Yes, AI is going to change the profession—but in a way that allows people to focus on what matters most, use technology to their advantage, and create real impact for clients. The firms that recognize AI as an enabler, not a replacement, will be the ones leading the profession forward. The future of accounting isn’t about choosing between people and technology—it’s about leveraging both to create the best outcomes possible.”

## Garrett Wasny

“The accounting profession is on the cusp of a transformative era. This transformative period is being driven by AI’s potential to redefine how firms operate, engage with clients, and deliver value. I see this era having three phases to it. We are currently in Phase 1 where AI works beside us—acting as a co-pilot. AI is integrated into existing workflow, helping users work more efficiently *without replacing human interaction*. In Phase 2, AI transitions from co-pilot to an autonomous operator. This operator is an AI agent that can *fully operate existing software on behalf of accountants*. It is a big change. Finally, in Phase 3, AI will be able to bypass human interfaces and directly access APIs. For accounting firms, this *will eliminate user interfaces*. The more successful firms will use more robust API ecosystems that will have seamless integration with AI agents.”

## Framework: Where Do AI Agents Fit in Your Workforce Transformation Strategy?

AI agents are digital assistants that can independently perform tasks, make decisions, and adapt without continuous human oversight. Their use by accounting firms could greatly improve efficiency and scale.

The nine-phased strategic approach below was designed to help accounting firms prepare for the use of AI agents. Rather than replacing individual jobs one-to-one, firms can leverage not just one agent but potentially 10, 100, 1,000, or even an unlimited number of specialized agents.

Imagine how work could fundamentally transform if tasks traditionally handled by a single person, a particular department, or even an entire enterprise are managed by thousands of AI agents collaborating seamlessly. Do AI agents make sense in your firm? What are the drawbacks? What preparation is required? So many questions to answer. Begin your journey with the following outline.

### PHASE 1: Readiness Audit – Evaluating AI Agent Integration

This initial phase helps accounting firms evaluate their readiness to integrate AI agents. It involves checking which tasks can be automated, ensuring the necessary technology infrastructure is in place, and defining specific roles AI agents could fulfill within the firm.

- **Capability Mapping:** Identifying tasks suitable for AI automation.
- **Agent Infrastructure:** Evaluating technology and resources needed for AI.
- **Agent Skill Assessment:** Determining specific jobs and roles for AI agents.

### PHASE 2: Opportunity Exploration – Scaling AI Agents

In this phase, firms explore the potential impact of using multiple AI agents simultaneously. Scenarios involving hundreds or thousands of agents are examined, along with strategies for coordinating these agents effectively across various business functions.

- **Hyperscale Scenarios:** Imagining large numbers of agents operating simultaneously.
- **Agent Orchestration Platforms:** Tools to manage many agents at once.
- **Multiagent Coordination Models:** Ensure effective collaboration among agents.

### PHASE 3: Multiagent Systems – Realizing Transformational Potential

Firms start implementing multiagent systems that could run entire departments or business units, providing continuous and highly accurate services. Intelligence becomes abundant and cost-effective, enabling unprecedented experimentation and innovation.

- **Agentic Departments:** Entire departments operated by autonomous AI agents.
- **Unlimited Agent Scenario:** Imagining nearly unlimited AI agents for extensive experimentation.

### PHASE 4: Advanced Analytical Agents – Optimizing Agent Performance

In this advanced phase, analytical agents monitor, evaluate, and enhance the performance of other AI agents. Competitive tests and systematic ranking methods ensure continuous improvement.

- **Analyzer Agents:** AI monitoring and optimizing other AI agents.

- **War-Gaming Simulations:** Competitive tests to enhance agent performance.
- **Stack Ranking Results:** Automatically ranking and refining agent effectiveness.

## PHASE 5: Implications for Business Functions – Strategic Integration

This phase integrates AI agents deeply into various business activities, significantly enhancing financial planning, compliance, client advisory, and risk management through highly precise, proactive services.

- **Financial and Strategic Planning:** Real-time predictive insights.
- **Audit and Compliance:** Continuous monitoring and proactive compliance.
- **Client Advisory:** Personalized advice at scale.
- **Cybersecurity and Risk Management:** Advanced threat detection and response.

## PHASE 6: Cost and Efficiency Dynamics – Leveraging AI Economies

Firms take advantage of greatly reduced intelligence costs through AI agents, allowing continuous, inexpensive experimentation and optimization, transforming overall business economics.

- **Intelligence at Zero Cost:** Implications of abundant, low-cost AI intelligence.
- **Experimentation Economy:** Ongoing, inexpensive experimentation to optimize operations.

## PHASE 7: Human-AI Collaboration – The New Paradigm

This phase emphasizes human roles in overseeing and guiding vast networks of AI agents. Specialized tools and

methods are introduced to ensure effective human-agent collaboration.

- **Human-in-the-Loop Protocols:** Clear roles for human oversight in AI-driven processes.
- **Purpose-Built Platforms:** Software designed specifically for large-scale AI operations.

## PHASE 8: Visionary Outlook – Strategic Preparation for the Future

In this forward-looking phase, firms proactively anticipate and adapt to significant changes in work and organizational culture driven by widespread AI agent use.

- **Work Reimagined:** Future scenarios of AI-human operational integration.
- **Future-Proofing:** Preparing firms strategically for future transformations.
- **Cultural and Organizational Change:** Developing a culture that embraces AI integration.

## PHASE 9: Immediate Action Plan – Practical Next Steps

Firms initiate concrete actions immediately, including pilot projects, infrastructure upgrades, staff training, and establishing clear success metrics to ensure smooth integration of AI agents.

- **Pilot Projects:** Initial small-scale trials.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Upgrading technology to support AI.
- **Training and Culture:** Preparing employees for AI.
- **Metrics and Monitoring:** Establishing clear measures of success for AI integration.

*Source: Garrett Wasny*



# Takeaways and Next Steps

With the convergence of rapid technology advancements and unprecedented money flowing into the accounting industry, many industry observers are calling this era a renaissance or transformative time for accounting firms and professionals.

Our panel of accounting and technology subject matter experts believes that several steps need to be followed to make the most of this time.

- **Act Today, Not Tomorrow.** The vast and ever-evolving benefits of technology and AI adoption outweigh the impact of any excuse. No accounting firm should let leadership hesitation or ignorance, employee resistance to change, or integration with existing systems stand in the way. There is a ramp up period for training and knowledge transfer, so the longer you wait the further behind the competition you will be.
- **Prioritize Change Management.** Change management is a concept and process that does not come easily for most firms. It requires time, preparation, leadership, and expertise to successfully integrate it into your culture and other processes.
- **Change the Way You Measure Performance.** Don't just track traditional direct benefits. Start measuring progress, benefits occur over a longer period of time

than what you normally track. Also measure soft benefits such as client satisfaction.

- **Stop Treating Cybersecurity as an Afterthought.** Cybersecurity is a consideration that should be built into your planning from day one. Your firm works with volumes of sensitive client data, so it is very important that you have frameworks and compliance policies in place.
- **Realize That Firms Need Both Accounting and Technology Expertise.** There needs to be a focus on hiring hybrid personnel with both accounting and technology skills and expertise. These hybrid resources can be full-time employees, consultants, offshore resources, etc. You may want to experiment with nontraditional recruiting and training processes to find and engage these people.

The future looks bright for those accounting firms that can respond and adapt quickly. Technology is going to continue to improve efficiency, productivity, and client services. Technology is not going to replace accountants, but it will redefine accountants. Technology is going to move firms away from compliance work and toward advisory services with predictive analytics, insights, and more. AI is reaching the point that if you can dream it, AI can deliver it.

# Appendix A

## The CPA Firm Tech Ecosystem

Innovation in the CPA firm tech ecosystem is growing every month. Accounting firms have hundreds of choices for blockchain technology, advanced data analytics, cybersecurity, automation, and regulatory compliance in addition to traditional practice management and tax solutions. There has been so much growth that this report includes separate Firm Tech Ecosystem and Accounting Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem reference charts to document it.

These charts do not represent every available vendor or product, but rather are snapshots at best. They do not make specific recommendations and only serve as a touchstone to help accounting firms become aware of the emerging technology and begin planning, analysis, vendor conversations, and investment.

Accounting firms must embrace technology to be more efficient, relevant, and competitive. Through a tight integration of people, process, and technology, accounting firms will reach new levels of:

- Client service and satisfaction
- Regulatory compliance
- Efficiency
- Cost reduction
- Scalability
- Global connectivity

We hope that these ecosystem charts, as well as the CPA Firm Digital Maturity Model and other report components, will help you navigate your firm's investigation of and investment in future technology platforms and tools.

### ASSURANCE



### TAX



## TAX PREP



## TAX PREP — ADD ON



## SALES & LOCAL TAX



## PRACTICE MANAGEMENT & EFFICIENCY



## BUSINESS OPERATIONS & CLIENT FACING



## CAS



## CREDITS & INCENTIVES



## CRM



## RESEARCH





# The Accounting Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem

The potential and capabilities of AI are growing. AI is often first embraced as a tool for efficiency—streamlining and automating repetitive processes such as invoice processing, data entry, and reconciliation. But, with all the AI vendors and tools entering the accounting space, firms are beginning to leverage AI for advanced analytics, fraud detection, compliance and auditing,

generative AI, as well as advisory services.

The Big 4 are integrating AI into a majority of their workflows—from document review to client engagement. The Accounting Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem chart below provides a sample of the AI vendors and tools available.

## TAX

Accordance

lo black ore

blueJ



CPA Pilot  
AI Tax Assistant

 **Materia**  
Part of Thomson Reuters

 **Numiro**

 **Sage Copilot**



**TaxGPT**

## CAS/ADVISORY

 **bookkeeping.ai**  
BETA

 **botkeeper**  
The Future of Bookkeeping



**SysCloud**



**ReInvestWealth**



**zeni**

## AUDIT



**Materia**  
Part of Thomson Reuters



**MindBridge®**



**Validis**

## PRACTICE MANAGEMENT



## FINANCIAL PLANNING & ANALYSIS



## TREASURY & INVESTOR RELATIONS



## CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT & M&A



## CORE ACCOUNTING



## ACCOUNTING AUTOMATION SPECIALISTS



## TASK-SPECIFIC AI APPLICATIONS

### ACCOUNTING PRACTICE MANAGER



### ACCOUNTING ANALYST



### ACCOUNTING CONTROLLER



### ACCOUNTING PAYROLL SPECIALIST



### ACCOUNTS PAYABLE SPECIALIST



### ACCOUNTING R&D TAX CREDIT ANALYST



### ACCOUNTS PAYABLE MANAGER



### ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE MANAGER



## AUDITOR



## BLOCKCHAIN ACCOUNTANT



## BLOCKCHAIN FRAUD ANALYST



## BOOKKEEPER



## BUDGET ANALYST



## CFO





## COMPLIANCE OFFICER



## COMPTROLLER



## COST ACCOUNTANT



## COST ANALYST



## CREDIT ANALYST



## CREDIT MANAGER



## DARK WEB THREAT INTELLIGENCE ANALYST

**Blueliv.**

 **cybereason®**

 **INTSIGHTS**  
A RAPID7 COMPANY

**KELA** 



**MATCHLIGHT**



**Recorded Future®**

**RELIAQUEST** 



**SILVERSKY™**



**SpyCloud**



**ZEROFOX®**

## EMBEDDED ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST



**ember**

**Layer**



**teal**

## ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTANT

**cority**



**sphera**

**INTELEX**

## EXCEL ADVANCED USER



**AI Excel Bot**



**Bricks**



**formula bot**



**Numerous.ai**



**Tomat AI**

## FINANCIAL ANALYST

**Expensify**



**Fathom**

**planguru®**

## FINANCIAL CONTROLLER



## FINANCIAL FRAUD INVESTIGATOR

Kenneth Rijock's  
Financial Crime Blog



**LSEG** RISK  
INTELLIGENCE

## FINANCIAL AUDITOR



## FINANCIAL PLANNER



## FORENSIC ACCOUNTANT



## INTERNAL AUDITOR



## INVESTMENT ACCOUNTANT



PAYROLL ACCOUNTANT



PAYROLL MANAGER



PERSONAL LOAN MANAGER



PROJECT ACCOUNTANT



REVENUE ACCOUNTANT



RISK ANALYST



SENIOR ACCOUNTANT



## STAFF ACCOUNTANT



## STARTUP ADVISOR



## TAX ANALYST



## TAX EXAMINER





## TREASURY ANALYST



GTreasury



Kyriba



MERCURY



Reval

## TRUST OFFICER



Broadridge®



## BUSINESS PROCESS AUTOMATION

FATHOM



Fireflies



Otter.ai



Read

@rev.ai



sonix



SPEECHMATICS

trint

## DATA VISUALIZATION



Canva

\*Flourish

// Graphy

infogram



Looker Studio



Napkin



PIKTOCHART

WORDART

# Appendix B: Case Studies

## 1

### Overcoming Leadership Hesitation to Modernizing Billing

#### Firm Overview

**Boscia & Boscia PC, Matawan, NJ**

*Primarily tax services with some bookkeeping*

Boscia & Boscia faced a serious and common billing and cash flow problem:

- **Manual billing** via check, Zelle, Venmo, or cash.
- **Billing after work was completed** that leads to delayed or missed payments.
- **No centralized system** to track payments, causing revenue leakage.
- **Seasonal cash flow crunches** that make it hard to pay expenses such as software licensing fees during tax season.
- **Client confusion and frustration** over billing discrepancies, especially when fees increased.

#### Strategy

Boscia & Boscia had used the same processes for years. Nick Boscia had to convince his partner and brother, Joe, that new technology offered benefits that would:

- Eliminate administrative overhead and **increase payment transparency** for clients.
- Streamline and **automate collections** to avoid summer follow-ups and unpaid invoices.
- Create incentives for **early payment** and disincentives for delays (late fees and fee increases).

Nick pitched the implementation, and Joe agreed to the implementation if, after two years, the firm could

transition from reactive (post-service) billing to proactive (preseason) billing.

#### Implemented Technology

The tool implemented was Anchor. Its key features leveraged:

- Mass distribution of engagement agreements (1,800 sent with one click).
- Automated payment collection and reconciliation.
- Real-time visibility into failed or missing payments.
- ACH and credit card options with client-paid processing fees.

#### Results

Here are some of the results flowing from the technology addition:

- **Revenue increase even with fewer clients:** Despite a focus on servicing a smaller client base, the firm surpassed its previous year's revenue before tax season even ended.
- **More than 90% of clients pay through Anchor**, with most paying upfront.
- **Cash flow was stabilized**, enabling timely payments.
- **Summer collections were eliminated**, which freed up leadership and staff capacity.
- **A better client experience was realized** due to billing clarity and transparent expectations.
- **Staff morale improved** due to reduced administrative tasks, fewer client complaints, and smoother workflows.

---

Implementing Anchor within two years didn't just solve a billing issue, it sparked a cultural shift across the firm. Once the team saw the tangible benefits of automation, it became easier to follow up with these steps:

- Roll out **SmartVault** for digital document management.
- Adopt **Financial Cents** for workflow tracking.
- Experiment with **ChatGPT** and Zapier to automate administrative tasks.
- Encourage staff to shift away from paper processes and embrace new digital tools.

This tech transformation has helped Boscia & Boscia become a modern firm that is more efficient, more scalable, and more attractive to both clients and future team members. The firm now attracts a tech-savvy client base and has a team culture that embraces innovation.

## Key Insights

- **Upfront Billing** is not just a pricing change; it's a business model transformation.
- **Automation Unlocks Confidence and Control.** With payment visibility and pre-tax-season set up, the firm operated from a place of strength.
- **Change Will Be Client-Accepted When Positioned Well.** Most clients appreciate convenience, even if a small number initially resist.
- **Tech Wins Build Momentum.** Each successful implementation opens the door to more forward-thinking decisions.
- **Leadership Matters.** Nick championed the change and took ownership of its success, setting a clear vision for his team.

*Source: Jody Padar*

## Enhancing Staff Productivity, Attracting Top Talent, and Creating a High-Performance Culture Through Generative AI

### Firm Overview

Graham & Jones PLLC (G+J), Fort Worth, Texas

Graham & Jones provides business advisory and tax services. Comprised of a staff of traditional accountants, G+J saw an opportunity through generative AI to raise everyone's AI knowledge and skill level to enhance staff productivity, attract and retain top talent, and create a high-performing culture.

Recognizing that AI could streamline workflows, eliminate inefficiencies, and improve client service, G+J's leadership set out to integrate AI into their firm's operations.

The leadership team's enthusiasm was tempered, however, by the challenge of pinpointing high-value opportunities and aligning their team's skills and processes to fully capitalize on them. They were seeking a clear, efficient strategy that would enable the firm to adopt AI effectively without wasting valuable time on trial-and-error or disrupting client service.

### Strategy

G+J took a proactive and strategic approach to AI adoption. The firm focused on the following:

- **Increasing organizational AI literacy and practical AI tooling skills** to improve productivity and client service.
- **Identifying and executing "quick-win" AI projects** that also built a foundation for longer-term AI integration.
- **Developing a holistic technology strategy** that incorporated automation, generative AI, and tech vendors.

- **Strengthening an innovation-driven culture** by aligning people, processes, and technology under a structured AI adoption plan.

To accelerate this transformation, G+J engaged Edgefield Group, an AI enablement consultancy, to provide guidance, training, and a structured rollout plan that fit the firm's needs and pace of work.

### Implementation

G+J implemented a structured program that prioritized practical application, hands-on learning, and cultural alignment to ensure AI became an integrated part of the firm's workflow:

- **Edgefield Group's expert-led training sessions** built AI literacy and hands-on skills with generative AI tools, ensuring employees felt confident using AI in their daily work.
- **Formation of an AI Innovation Team** tasked with experimenting with AI use cases, refining best practices, and sharing insights across the firm.
- **"Starter project" onboarding of Microsoft Copilot**, allowing employees to integrate AI assistance into their core workflows.
- **Best-practice sharing forums**, where employees could improve their collective skills by highlighting successes, troubleshooting challenges, and sharing best practices.

This approach ensured a smooth, nondisruptive AI rollout while giving G+J the tools and knowledge for continuous AI adoption and long-term efficiency gains.

---

## Results

Within a month of launching its program, G+J saw measurable improvements:

- **A 15% increase in AI literacy and familiarity** among employees, based on self-reported feedback.
- **Significant time savings on routine tasks:**
  - ▶ One partner reported that an email that previously took 10–15 minutes now took just 10–15 seconds with AI-assisted drafting.
  - ▶ Employees generated PowerPoint presentations from an outline in minutes, leveraging AI-powered design enhancements.
  - ▶ AI-assisted scheduling and Outlook search significantly reduced time spent coordinating meetings and retrieving information.
- ▶ Teams Copilot and AI transcription automated note-taking and tasks collection, improving meeting efficiency.
- **Successful onboarding of their first AI assistant tool (Copilot)** provided a blueprint for future AI-driven innovation.
- **Discovery of unexpected new use cases**, such as a junior staff member who had never been taught cursive in school using Copilot to decipher unreadable handwriting from clients and colleagues, reducing bottlenecks in document processing.

G+J's structured AI enablement approach not only delivered productivity gains but also positioned the firm for continuous innovation and a competitive advantage in an AI-driven future.

*Source: Ellen Choi*

## A Framework for Successful Cybersecurity

### Firm Overview

A \$25 million global outsourced accounting firm with 300 employees

With cyber breaches in the industry rising by 277% year over year, the firm recognized the potential financial and reputational risks of a cyber incident. They also understood the personal liability risks for their leadership team, including the CEO, CFO, CTO, and CIO.

### Strategy

The firm partnered with a cybersecurity service provider to implement a robust governance framework based on the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) cybersecurity framework (CSF).

### Implemented Technology

The firm leveraged the following technology:

- **AI for Threat Detection:** AI-powered systems helped identify and mitigate cyberthreats in real time, reducing the risk of data breaches.
- **Blockchain for Data Integrity:** Blockchain technology was used to enhance data security and prevent unauthorized modifications.
- **Encryption Protocols:** The firm implemented AES-256

encryption to protect sensitive financial data, both in transit and at rest.

- **Multifactor Authentication (MFA):** MFA was enforced across all systems to prevent unauthorized access.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Compliance Tools:** Automated monitoring solutions ensured compliance with industry regulations such as SOC 2 and NIST CSF.

### Results

The firm achieved compliance with NIST CSF and later expanded to SOC 2 compliance. This included continuous monitoring, risk mitigation strategies, and expert guidance.

The results were impressive:

- **Enhanced Cybersecurity Posture:** The firm demonstrated its ability to respond effectively to threats and protect sensitive client data.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Adherence to evolving regulations helped secure new contracts and preserve existing ones.
- **Cost and Time Savings:** By outsourcing cyber risk governance, the firm saved \$700,000 annually and gained over 1,500 hours through automation and streamlined processes.
- **Leadership Protection:** The governance framework mitigated personal liability risks for the leadership team.



## Addressing the Technology Skills Gap with Generative AI

### Firm Overview

#### JLK Rosenberger, Irvine, California

JLK Rosenberger, a Top 400 leading multi-office CPA firm providing audit, tax, and advisory services, recognized the growing importance of getting more leverage out of AI technology to position the firm to compete effectively in the future and accelerate its growth.

While the firm embraced innovation overall, uneven AI knowledge and lack of a coordinated firmwide approach limited the full realization of AI's potential. The situation risked fragmenting firmwide practices, impacting efficiency, and reducing the competitive advantage necessary for talent engagement, recruiting, and retention.

### Strategy

JLK Rosenberger took a proactive and strategic approach to generative AI enablement, initially focusing on:

- **AI Education:** Delivering structured foundational training to establish a baseline, shared AI literacy across all offices and departments.
- **Innovators Group Formation:** Taking an onboarding approach of generating enthusiasm from interested team members first, who could serve as evangelists for the entire team.
- **Hands-On Tools Training:** Piloting ChatGPT Teams and Microsoft Copilot for practical use, ensuring immediate, tangible benefits from generative AI

To drive this transformation effectively, JLK Rosenberger partnered with Edgefield Group, an AI enablement consultancy, to deliver targeted guidance, comprehensive training, and a customized implementation strategy tailored to the firm's operational goals and pace.

### Implementation

JLK Rosenberger adopted a structured program emphasizing practical application, hands-on learning, and cultural alignment:

- **AI Education:** Delivered structured foundational training to establish a baseline, shared AI literacy across all offices and departments, promoting a cohesive firmwide understanding and utilization of AI.
- **AI Task Force:** Created a more formalized cross-functional task force led by Daniel Gregory to pilot AI tools, encourage best-practice sharing, and foster a firmwide innovative culture.
- **Hands-On Discovery Sessions and Prototyping:** Conducted interactive sessions and prototyped solutions to address key operational pain points.

### Results

Within two months of kickstarting this AI enablement work, JLK Rosenberger achieved:

- **Increased firm-wide AI literacy,** creating an organizational dialogue and a shared understanding of the vast opportunities for generative AI to transform their work.
- **Accelerated adoption and reduced resistance** to generative AI tools, fostering a culture of continuous innovation.
- **Enhanced productivity** and efficiency in routine tasks, streamlining processes and workflows.
- **Strengthened talent efforts** by demonstrating innovative technology adoption to current and prospective team members.

Source: Ellen Choi

## About INCPAS

The Indiana CPA Society (INCPAS) is a statewide professional association representing nearly 6,000 current and aspiring CPAs and related professionals who are transforming business in Indiana. We are dedicated to serving the public interest as



well as our members, advocating for the profession through education, public awareness, government relations, and the promotion of high ethical standards. Our programs and services are designed to meet the diverse needs of our membership.

## About CPA Crossings

The CPA Crossings Research Program provides comprehensive research with data and analysis on the hottest topics trending in the accounting profession. We create the research instruments, conduct the data collection, analyze the results, and produce reports or presentations of findings. Some research is based on national data; other research includes specific state data. We can also help with the launch of your research by providing webinar presenters and support, infographics, blogs, social media videos, and more.

To learn more about our Research Program topics, pricing, and production schedule, please reach out to Kelly Waffle, our Director of Research, at [kwaffle@cpacrossings.com](mailto:kwaffle@cpacrossings.com) to set up a personal meeting.

