

2026 EDUCATORS CONFERENCE

Indiana's Workforce

Trends, changes & challenges: What it means for your classroom.

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President & CEO, Indiana CPA Society

Friday, May 1, 2026
Indianapolis, IN

Where did we leave off last year?

Three quick slides. Then we pivot.

2022 → 2026

Did we clear the legislative barrier?

2022

CPA Evolution rulemaking

IN becomes 47th jurisdiction to allow students to sit at 120 hours.

2023

HEA 1327 passes

Experience requirement: 2 years → 1 year. Exam credit window extended.

2024

NPAG final report

National pipeline recommendations. Additional pathways gain momentum.

2025

HEA 1143 signed

Indiana becomes the 8th state to pass additional-pathway legislation.

2026

HEA 1147 signed

Adds to 2022 law: candidates may sit at 120 hours OR with a bachelor's degree, future-proofing for a possible 90-credit bachelor's.

Yes. The pathway is cleared. Indiana is ready.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Jan 1
2027

The day three pathways to Indiana
CPA licensure go live.

Three legitimate routes in.

01 Master's + 1 year experience

02 Bachelor's + 30 credit hours + 1 year

03 Bachelor's + 2 years experience

BUT...

So, what changed since we last talked?

A cleared barrier isn't a solved problem. Since we last met, the profession itself has started moving, faster than the legislation did.

01

The firms are restructuring

Partner cuts, RTO mandates, benefit trims.

02

Private equity arrived

Changing who owns your students' first employer.

03

AI is rewriting the job

The entry-level role looks different than 2020.

THE THESIS FOR TODAY

Last year we cleared the legislative barrier. This year the profession itself is changing under your students' feet.

PART I

The Firms

**Partner cuts. RTO. Benefit
trims.
All in one month.**

10%

of U.S. audit partners, out the door.

"The size of the partnership was bloated relative to business." KPMG tried early-retirement packages for years. This time, they're forcing the door.

Source: Financial Times / Bloomberg Tax / Going Concern, April 2026

LAST WEEK

The image shows two overlapping screenshots of news articles. The background is a screenshot of The Wall Street Journal website with the headline "KPMG Cutting 10% of U.S. Audit Partners After Voluntary-Retirement Push Falls Short". The foreground is a laptop displaying a similar article with the headline "KPMG lays off 10% of US audit partners". Both articles feature a photograph of the KPMG logo on a building facade.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

World Business U.S. Politics Economy Tech Markets & Finance Opinion Free Expression Arts Lifestyle Real Estate Personal Finance Health Style Sports

CFO JOURNAL

KPMG Cutting 10% of U.S. Audit Partners After Voluntary-Retirement Push Falls Short

Roughly 100 partners are exiting the Big Four accounting firm, some of whom volunteered to retire early, people familiar said

By **Mark Maurer** [Follow](#)

Updated April 23, 2026 3:32 pm ET

[Listen](#) (3 min)

KPMG lays off 10% of US audit partners

By **Michael Cohn**

Published April 24, 2026, 4:06 p.m. EDT | Updated April 24, 2026, 9:54 p.m. EDT

1 Min Read

TRENDING

- 1 Tech News: Canopy announces Canopy Coworker
- 2 House passes bevy of tax-related bills
- 3 Pillar Two filing deadline is looming. Are you ready?
- 4 The 2026 Best Firms for Technology
- 5 Streamlining practice workflows with accurate, accountable and actionable AI

TODAY

The image shows a tablet displaying an article from accountingTODAY. The headline is "KPMG closes U.S. federal audit practice, trims advisory staff". The article includes a photograph of the KPMG logo on a building facade and a short introductory paragraph.

accountingTODAY

Accounting Tax Audit Practice Management Technology AT Think Events

M&A Tax Regulations IRS Artificial Intelligence Firm Growth Forum

AUDIT


KPMG closes U.S. federal audit practice, trims advisory staff

By **Michael Cohn**

Published April 30, 2026, 11:57 a.m. EDT | Updated April 30, 2026, 1:53 p.m. EDT

2 Min Read

[f](#) [x](#) [in](#) [en](#)



The offices of KPMG in Chicago *Tanner Maury/Bloomberg*

KPMG is shutting down its audit practice for the federal government after losing a lucrative Pentagon contract, as well as laying off 4% of its advisory practice in the U.S., the latest in a series of cutbacks at the Big Four firm.

What does "bloated partnership" actually tell us?

For decades, "partner" was the North Star of the career story we tell in accounting classrooms.

Partner is still real. It's just narrower than it was.

CLASSROOM TRANSLATION

The partner track exists. It is not the only success story. Managing director, advisory principal, specialist director, client service leader, all are legitimate endpoints now, often with better work-life outcomes.

PWC · APRIL 22, 2026

Why did PwC just end "remote forever"?

GOING CONCERN APRIL 22, 2026

PwC Tells Remote Tax Staff to Get Their Butts Into the Office

FROM THE INTERNAL EMAIL

"Effective July 1, 2026, Tax will move to a consistent hybrid model. Professionals will be expected to work from a PwC office or client site at least three days per week, and the virtual Way of Working profile will be sunset."

What does a 3-days-in-office mandate signal?

What it says out loud

"Our apprenticeship model needs in-person time. Coaching, observation, feedback work better in the room."

What it says underneath

A quiet way to trim headcount. If the commute isn't worth it, staff self-select out, no layoff headline required.

Why is Deloitte trimming benefits, but only for some people?

PARENTAL LEAVE

~~16 weeks~~

8 weeks

PAID TIME OFF

~~Unlimited~~

18 to 25 days

IVF / ADOPTION / SURROGACY

~~\$50,000~~

Eliminated

RETIREMENT BENEFIT

~~Pension plan~~

Cut

Applies to "Center" staff, internal IT, admin, finance. Non-client-facing only.

Effective January 1, 2027.

ONE MONTH · THREE FIRMS

What story do these three headlines tell together?

KPMG

pushed out
partners

PwC

called back
remote workers

Deloitte

pared back
support staff benefits

The firms are optimizing. Every seat has to justify itself. That's the environment your 2027 graduates are walking into.

LinkedIn: Winning at What Cost?

Leading Forward
1,973 subscribers

✓ Subscribed



Winning at What Cost?



Guylaine Saint Juste ✓
President & CEO, NABA, Inc. | Speaker | Activist at heart | Writer | Provocateur | Change Maker | Innovator

April 30, 2026

Since the beginning of the year, I've written about what it means to lead through growing instability — geopolitical tension, workforce transformation, and the ongoing impact AI has in reshaping entire industries. So many of these forces we are witnessing are being underpinned by the idea of gaining an edge, achieving a goal, besting competitors, or simply winning.

Comments

👍❤️👍 31 · 4 comments · 1 repost



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Leopoldo Coronado ✓ · 2nd
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23h ...

win-win or no deal my friend!

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President & CEO, NABA, Inc. | Speake...

21h ...

Leopoldo Coronado so good to hear from you, friend!

Like · 🍷 1 | Reply



Reuben Saint Juste ✓ · 2nd
Disciple of Jesus | Investor by Trade | Leade...

23h ...

"I call on our industry leaders to demonstrate courage.

We need a different kind of leadership: one that thinks in decades, and one that understands sustainable success requires investment in ...more

Like · 🍷 1 | Reply



For the first time in eight years, the S&P 500 is down 400,000 jobs. According to research by Bank of America, total headcount at S&P 500 firms fell to 28.1 million in 2025, as billions shifted toward automation. Moreover, we see that trend continuing into 2026 with thousands more roles being eliminated ... we know that AI is boosting productivity at the expense of jobs. The gap between those who participate in the economy and those who don't is growing deeper and wider.

What are firm leaders actually worried about?

01 Talent acquisition & retention

02 AI strategy & investment

03 Pricing pressure

04 Succession planning

05 Private equity entering the market

06 Cybersecurity risk

07 Regulatory & standards overload

08 Offshoring & staffing models

09 Advisory-service differentiation

10 Culture & engagement at scale

11 Technology spend & ROI

12 Partner compensation structures

13 The shrinking pipeline

Notice what's not here: technical accounting. Every issue is people, technology, or business model.

Executive turnover is slowing.

AI strategy is not.

Firm leaders are staying put. Good.

But most of them haven't figured out yet what AI actually means for how the firm makes money, and that uncertainty lands on the people joining in 2027.

Your students.

The firms are accelerating. And consolidating.

8.58%

TOP 100 REVENUE GROWTH

Up sharply from 4.89% the year before. Growth is accelerating at the top.

225

MERGERS IN ONE YEAR

Nearly double the 122 reported in 2024. Only 36 involved non-CPA firms.

5 of 5

NEW T100 ENTRANTS USE PE

Every new firm on this year's Top 100 rose there with outside capital.

41%

BIG FOUR REVENUE FROM CONSULTING

Versus 28% audit and 24% tax. Advisory is now the largest line at the top.

The Money

Who actually owns your students' first employer?

The quietest big shift in accounting history.

When a student accepts an offer at a mid-sized or even top-100 CPA firm today, there is a real chance the firm is partially or wholly owned by a private equity sponsor.

**Most students don't realize it.
Many will not be told.**

IN COURTNEY'S OWN WORDS

"We continue to see significant private equity investment, which is driving substantive changes to the Code of Professional Conduct."

EBITDA, and why "the multiple" is the whole conversation.

EBITDA is earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization — a rough proxy for the cash a firm produces from its core operations. PE firms buy a stake at a *multiple* of EBITDA. Higher multiple, higher price, higher growth expectations baked in.

BLACKSTONE → CITRIN COOPERMAN

15× EBITDA

World's largest PE firm by AUM, paying top of the market for an advisory-heavy CPA platform.

NEW MOUNTAIN → CITRIN COOPERMAN (prior round)

11× EBITDA

Same firm, earlier round. The multiple climbed roughly **36%** between deals.

Translation: an extra **4 turns of EBITDA** means buyers expect faster advisory growth, more AI-driven margin expansion, and a bigger exit. That expectation lands on day-one work for your students.

The PE playbook in accounting is consistent across sponsors.

1. BUY A PLATFORM

Take a majority or significant minority stake in a top-50 firm at **10–15× EBITDA**. Structure as an **Alternative Practice Structure (APS)**: split into a CPA-licensed attest entity (EisnerAmper LLP) and a PE-owned advisory entity (Eisner Advisory Group LLC) to comply with state CPA-ownership rules.

2. ROLL UP AGGRESSIVELY

EisnerAmper: ~14 acquisitions in three years post-deal. **Citrin Cooperman**: 13+ in the same window. **Cherry Bekaert**: more than doubled with 11+ acquisitions after its 2022 Parthenon Capital deal.

3. SHIFT THE REVENUE MIX

Compliance is recession-resistant but margin-constrained. **Advisory and CAS** command higher multiples and margins. PE-backed firms expand these lines hard.

4. INVEST AT SCALE

AI, automation, cloud platforms, India-based delivery centers. Investments traditional partnerships couldn't fund out of distributed earnings.

5. MEGA-MERGERS

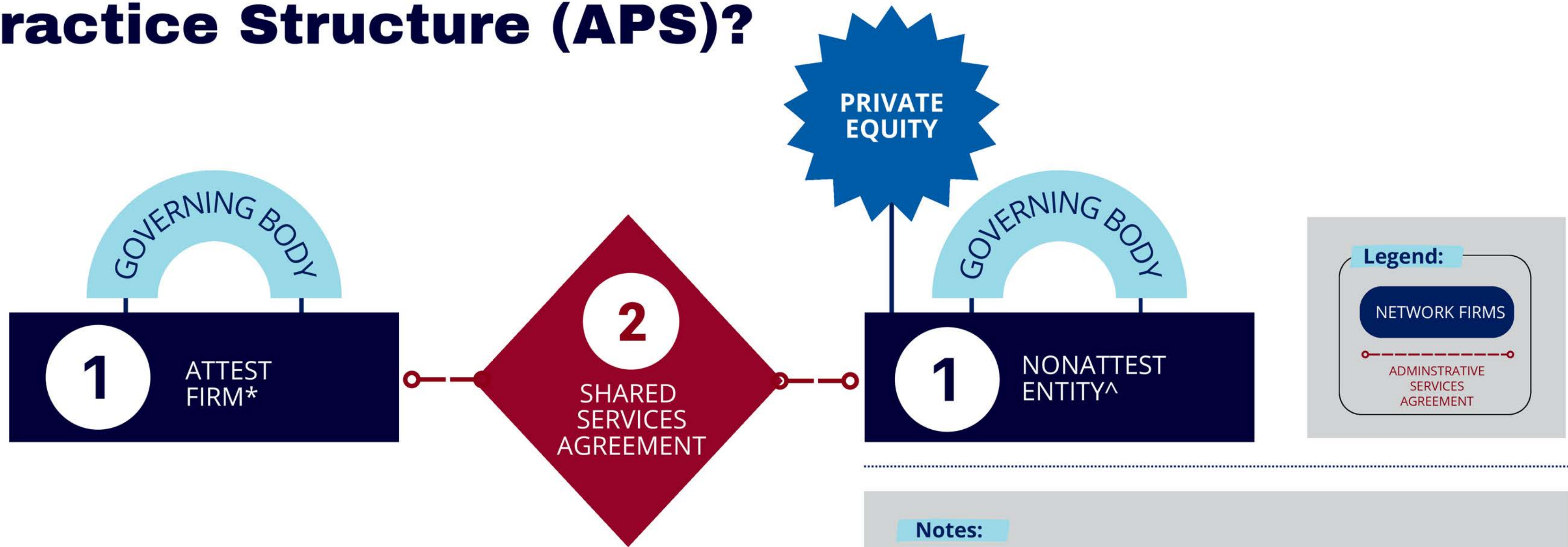
Baker Tilly + Moss Adams (~\$7B, March 2025): 6th-largest U.S. firm, largest PE-backed accounting firm to date. **CBIZ + Marcum** (\$2.3B, 2024) vaulted CBIZ into the top 10.

6. EXIT AT MULTIPLE EXPANSION

Sell to a larger sponsor, IPO (**Andersen** reportedly evaluating one), or consolidate further. **Citrin Cooperman** went **11× → 15× in three years**. Classic multiple arbitrage.

Same six steps, different sponsor. If your students join a PE-backed firm, this is the operating plan running in the background.

What is an Alternative Practice Structure (APS)?



Notes:

***Attest Firm:** Owners are attest firm partners. Partners and employees are leased from the nonattest entity

^**Nonattest Entity** Owners include investor(s), attest firm partners, nonattest entity principals, limited partners

PE has fished progressively further downstream.

SWEET SPOT TODAY

\$20M–\$75M revenue

Mid-sized regional firms, especially in **Sun Belt** states — Georgia, Florida, Texas, the Carolinas.

ADD-ONS & ROLL-UPS

\$1M–\$20M revenue

Routinely scooped by platforms: **Ascend** (Alpine, 14+), **Crete**, **Platform Accounting Group**, **DFW Capital**, **Thrive/Bessemer** (~16 each).

RUNWAY

~45,000 CPA firms

Most generate \$1M–\$50M. Fragmented enough to keep rolling up for years.

WHAT BUYERS LOOK FOR

- High recurring revenue (CAS, retainers, monthly advisory)
- Low key-person risk
- Niche expertise (ESG, forensics, vCFO, verticals)
- Strong client retention
- Mid-career partners willing to roll equity, stay 3–7 years
- Growth above 20%

INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE

Succession cliffs. Boomer partners retiring with no internal buyer able to fund a partner buyout. PE solves the liquidity problem the partnership can't.

Translation: a regional firm your students apply to in 2027 may already be on a buyer's list, even if no deal has closed yet.

The gap between firms is widening.

Firms with advisory growth and PE capital are pulling ahead. Firms without are flat or shrinking. Your students' first-job experience will depend on which tier they land in.

Source: Inside Public Accounting, April 8, 2026

Three things shift when capital enters.

01

Governance

Partners are no longer the only voice. A financial sponsor with a 5 to 7 year horizon sits at the table.

02

Economics

Partner capital accounts convert to equity rollover. Compensation, promotion, and profit-sharing rules are rewritten.

03

Strategy

Growth pressure lands on advisory lines. Audit, which doesn't scale well under PE return models, gets rationalized.

The Code of Professional Conduct is being rewritten, right now, to accommodate PE-backed firms.

Independence. Integrity. Alternative practice structures.

CLASSROOM IMPLICATION

Independence won't be the Intermediate story anymore.

The old story

CPA firm + client. Independence in fact and appearance.

The new story

Alternative practice structure. CPA-owned attest entity. Non-CPA-owned services entity. PE sponsor. Rules about who can influence what.

The Widening Gap

Not every firm is having the same 2026.

Are all firms experiencing the same 2026?

TOP TIER

Double digits

Heavy in advisory. PE capital or preparing for it. Real AI budgets.

MIDDLE TIER

Flat

Mixed practice. Cautious on technology investment. Trying to decide.

BOTTOM TIER

Contracting

Compliance-heavy. Limited advisory. Pricing pressure biting hard.

WHERE THE GROWTH IS

Advisory is the story.

Growing at top-tier firms

Transaction advisory

Risk & cybersecurity

ESG & sustainability assurance

Outsourced CFO services

Data analytics & AI implementation

Modest or flat

Traditional compliance tax

Traditional financial-statement audit

Bookkeeping & write-up

Standard attest engagements

WHAT OUR ADVISING SHOULD REFLECT

A student doing advisory at a top-tier firm and a student doing compliance at a mid-tier firm will have very different professional identities. **Both lead to the CPA. They are not the same career.**

Where are the top opportunities for firms?

01 **Advisory-service expansion**

Move beyond compliance. Build repeatable advisory offerings.

02 **AI & automation deployment**

Automate the routine. Re-price the judgment.

03 **Specialization & niche practices**

Cannabis, SaaS, healthcare, construction, nonprofit, depth beats breadth.

04 **Outsourced / fractional leadership**

Fractional CFO, fractional controller, fractional internal audit.

05 **Talent models & work design**

Rethink the apprenticeship. Redesign the first five years.

Where the work is coming from in 2026.

The Top 100 told Accounting Today which service lines grew this year. The top of the list is where your students will land.

"CAS is not just a staffing solution, it's an opportunity."

Peter Motsch, Sax Advisory Group, in the 2026 Top 100 Report

85% **Client accounting services (CAS)**

78% **Attest**

77% **Estate / trust / gift tax planning**

70% **Nonprofit & SALT (tied)**

69% **Mergers & acquisitions**

Percent of responding T100 firms reporting growth in that niche (88 responders).

AI & the Job Itself

The entry-level role your students are training for doesn't exist anymore.

CFO BREW · APRIL 10, 2026

"AI pushes accountants into a different role."

Not eliminating the role. Changing it. The question for us: are we preparing graduates for the role as it was, or as it's becoming?

IN PRODUCTION, TODAY

What work is actually being automated?

Routine reconciliations

Bank, intercompany, subledger, picked up by GenAI pipelines.

Document extraction from PDFs

Invoices, K-1s, bank statements, parsed and tagged automatically.

First-pass audit testing

KPMG confirmed last month they're handing routine testing to AI.

Preliminary research memos

Tax and accounting research drafts, starting point, not ending.

Standard client communications

Status updates, PBC requests, follow-up emails.

Data entry & classification

Coding transactions, categorizing expenses, mapping chart of accounts.

Much of this was the first-year associate job.

THE JOB DIDN'T GO AWAY

What new work is taking its place?

Review & judgment

Evaluating whether an AI output is right, and defending why.

Anomaly investigation

Machines flag it; humans explain it, document it, talk to the client.

Client advisory & communication

Moved up two rungs, associates doing what seniors used to do.

Prompt design & AI tool supervision

Writing the instructions. Catching when the tool drifts.

Controls over AI-generated work

New audit and compliance frameworks. Brand-new work.

Cross-functional data literacy

SQL, Power BI, Python basics. Not expertise, fluency.

The center of gravity moved up a rung.

CURRICULUM IMPLICATION

If the job moved up, what skills matter more?

Less of

~~Memorizing procedures AI will do~~

~~Rote journal-entry drills~~

~~Long-form manual computation~~

More of

Judgment & pattern recognition

Evaluating whether an output is right

Writing, memos, emails, recommendations

Client-facing communication

Learning new tools without a syllabus

That last one, comfort learning new tools, is the durable skill.

“Investing in the next generation now looks like structured coaching, rotational exposure to advisory lines early, and putting new staff in front of clients years earlier than we used to.

GRANT THORNTON CEO · CFO BREW, APRIL 8, 2026

ACCOUNTING TODAY, APRIL 22, 2026

It is not a pipeline shortage. It is a talent gap.

The argument: we have petroleum in the pipeline. What we do not have is a high enough octane to do the new work. AI absorbed the tedious grunt work that used to teach junior staff judgment. The five-plus-year professionals are golden. The refinery underneath them is not keeping up.

So the question shifts: how do we train judgment on purpose, now that AI has eaten the reps that used to train it by accident?

AI adoption isn't slowing. It's accelerating.

88%

of organizations regularly use AI
(up from 78% last year)

53%

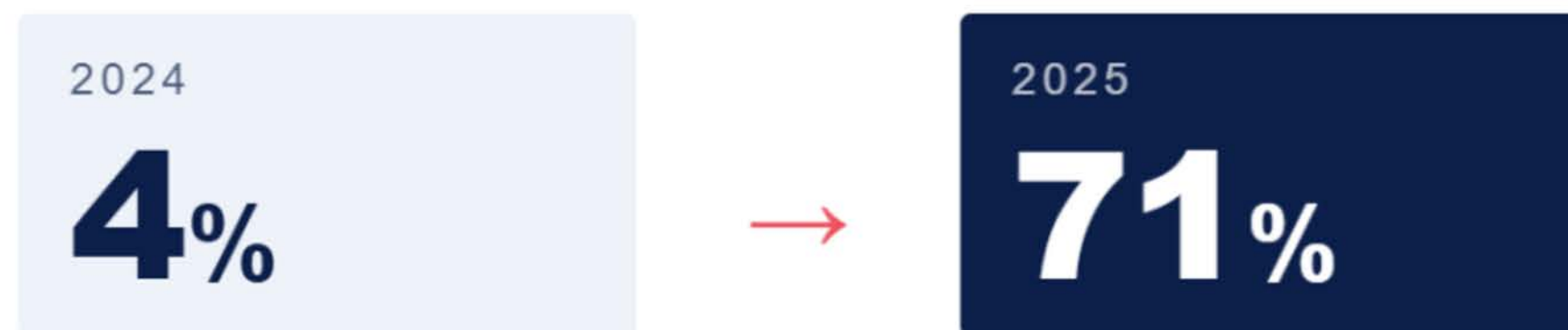
of U.S. workers have used AI at
work (doubled in two years)

4 in 5

college students use AI in
coursework, regardless of
syllabus policy

Capability isn't plateauing.

On a benchmark designed to be hard for AI — multi-step reasoning of the kind a first-year associate does every day:



+67 points in 12 months. Whatever your prior was 18 months ago, the curve has gotten steeper, not flatter.

THE FRONTIER IS JAGGED

Brilliant at some things. Surprisingly poor at others.

STRONG — TODAY

Drafting workpaper memos from data

Tying schedules and reconciliations

Summarizing 200-page agreements in minutes

Generating analytical-procedure narratives

WEAK — TODAY

Going-concern judgment under stress

Fraud-risk scoping in a new industry

Holding two conflicting facts and weighing them

Knowing when to escalate

Teach students to recognize that line in real time. Don't assume the model gets it right.

More output per seat. Fewer entry-level seats.

-13%

entry-level employment in AI-exposed occupations since 2022



productivity in those same occupations is *up*

This is not a forecast. It already happened.

When firms measured readiness directly, the gap had a number.

EMPLOYEES RATED THEMSELVES

MANAGERS RATED THOSE SAME EMPLOYEES

7.39_{/10}

4.95_{/10}

Almost 2.5 points apart on a 10-point scale. Two different stories about the same workforce.

Skill by skill, the gap goes the same direction.

SKILL	EMPLOYEES	MANAGERS	GAP
Critical thinking	7.95	5.41	-2.54
Communication	7.78	5.32	-2.46
Adaptability	7.62	5.18	-2.44
Tech & data fluency	7.20	4.65	-2.55
Strategic acumen	7.05	4.40	-2.65
Leadership	6.92	4.28	-2.64

The biggest gaps are exactly where firms are now hiring.

The feedback loop that should close this gap isn't running.

EMPLOYEES SAY

Managers rarely give real performance feedback

What they get is vague and formulaic

Often confined to the annual review

MANAGERS SAY

We don't have time

We're not sure how to give it

Hard conversations get postponed

Employees believe they're doing well. Managers privately disagree. The truth never lands in a useful conversation.

FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

If managers think they're at 4.95 on day one, the gap closes in your classroom.

THREE MOVES

Treat critical thinking & communication as primary outcomes, not byproducts of the technical curriculum.

Make tech & data fluency assessable. Spreadsheet under time pressure. Real dataset queries. AI-assisted work students must defend.

Practice receiving feedback. They won't get good feedback in year one on the job. Build the muscle now.

THE PRINCIPLE

The biggest skill gaps managers identified are **exactly** the ones AI doesn't replace: judgment, communication, adaptability, strategic thinking. Lean into them.

An apprenticeship model, borrowed from medicine and maritime.

Doctors do residency. Harbor pilots train under captains. Contract lawyers spent years reading contracts and got paid well to learn to read them.

What is the accounting-profession equivalent, now that the tedious reps AI has eaten are the same reps that used to produce the next generation of partners?

Structured coaching

Named coach, weekly cadence, explicit judgment-development goals.

Early client exposure

Year one in front of clients. Years two to three leading small engagements with oversight.

Rotations across service lines

Audit, tax, advisory, CAS. Judgment is portable. Compliance muscle memory is not.

AI as instrument, not crutch

Students use AI to produce output, then learn to audit and defend that output in front of a human.

PART V

The Pipeline, Here at Home

**Now let's bring this back to
Indiana.**

How is January 1, 2027 tracking?

- ✓ **Administrative rulemaking** Complete. Rules filed and effective.
- ✓ **Indiana Board of Accountancy** Ready to process applications under new pathway.
- ✓ **INCPAS staff & member resources** Training, advising tools, FAQ assets published.
- ✓ **NASBA & Prometric coordination** Systems updated. Candidate experience validated.

January 1, 2027 is a real date. Your students can plan against it today.

What does the initiative ask of us?

One specific question:

What are the skills an entry-level CPA will need in 2030?

YOUR ROUNDTABLE FEEDBACK

Goes directly into the teaching resources AICPA and the profession are building. Stay engaged with this work. Your voice matters in it.

THE STORY

What story are we telling students about this profession?

THE OLD STORY

Take these classes. Pass this exam. The path is linear. Partner is the goal.

THE HONEST STORY

Three pathways, not one. Advisory is where the growth is. AI is rewriting entry-level. Your first employer may be PE-backed. Partner is narrower than it was, and that's okay.

None of that is a reason to avoid the CPA. All of it is a reason to be clear-eyed about it.

THREE ASKS

What can you take back to the classroom Monday?

01 Talk about advisory and compliance as separate career tracks.

Not one path. Two legitimate professional identities. Both lead to the CPA.

02 Work AI into at least one assignment per course this year.

Even just: have students critique an AI-generated answer. Low friction, high signal.

03 Tell students about all three pathways, don't assume they've heard it.

Master's+1. Bachelor's+30+1. Bachelor's+2. Effective January 1, 2027.

What should we watch together?

Code of Conduct changes

Exposure drafts on independence & alternative practice structures, expected this summer.

Additional pathway legislation

Only three states left (ND, WY, ME); all others have either passed or are actively pursuing broadening pathways

AI and the CPA Exam itself

Where the testing model lands as AI becomes a standard workplace tool.

Mid-tier firm moves

What does it look like to be a Top 100 firm?
Where do we see bright lines of delineation?

YOUR TURN

Questions?

What are you seeing in your classrooms? What are your students asking you?