



The Future of Accounting

14 Predictions for 2036, and How to Prepare Today

A KARBON REPORT

Contents

Contributors	3
---------------------	----------

The Future is Just Taking Shape	5
--	----------

AI-Powered Humans	6
Prediction #1: Routine Accounting Tasks Will Be 100% Automated	7
Prediction #2: The Traditional Accounting Firm Will Disappear	8
Prediction #3: The Most Successful Firms Will Be the Most 'Human'	9

Embedded Advisors	11
Prediction #4: Data Quality Will Determine Firm Success	12
Prediction #5: Tech Stacks as You Know Them Will Be a Thing of the Past	14
Prediction #6: Knowledge Will Be Commodified	16
Prediction #7: Compliance Will Become Easier, Amplifying the Value of Advisory	17
Prediction #8: Clients Will Have 24/7 Access to Services	19

Disrupted Innovators	20
Prediction #9: The Cycle of Burnout Will End	21
Prediction #10: Accounting Will Undergo a Complete Rebrand	22
Prediction #11: Junior Roles Will No Longer Exist	24
Prediction #12: Soft Skills Will Matter More Than Technical Expertise	25
Prediction #13: Leading Firms Will Be Purpose-First, Profit-Second	27

Constant Heroes	28
Prediction #14: One Aspect of the Profession Will Never Change	29

The Rest is Up to You	31
------------------------------	-----------

Contributors



Jason Ackerman, CPA, CFP, CGMA
BNA



Antoniya Beyriyska
Ask The Boss



Meghan Blair
Snow & Blair/Ovata Collective



Jason Blumer, CPA
Thriveal/Blumer CPAs



Joe Carufe
Good Measure



Brian Clare, CPA
Blueprint Accounting



Nicole Davis, CPA
Conscious Accounting



Melisa Gaetani, CPA, CA
Tino-Gaetani & Carusi CPAs



Dan Gertrudes
GrowthLab Financial Services



Erica Goode, CPA
The 15-Hour Accountant



Logan Graf, CPA
The Graf Tax Co.



Jennifer Green
Jade Consulting



Lauren Harvey, ACMA, CGMA
Full Stop Accounts



Karla Hourigan
MAD Wealth



Meryl Johnston, CA
Bean Ninjas/TeamUp



Yuri Kapilovich, CPA
The Fun CPA



Sarah Lawrance, FCPA
Hot Toast



Ryan Lazanis, CPA
Future Firm



Ana Lukac
New Wave Accountants
& Business Advisory



Mike Libbey
YBL



Matthew May
Sorren



Isaac Perdomo
Opzer



Tim Petrey, CPA, CGMA
HD Growth Partners



Madeline Reeves
Fearless Foundry



Megan Roberts
HD Growth Partners



Jacob Schroeder, CPA
Ascend Consulting



Mark Shipton
Ignite CPAs



Heather Smith, FCCA, FCA, FICB
ANISE Accounting



Isaac Smith
TeamUp



Thomas Sphabmixay
TMS/Wize Mentoring



Lynda Steffens, FCPA
The Small Business Project



Zane Stevens, CA
Protea Financial



Lauren Thiel, CA
The Real Thiel



Gary Wood
CRC

The Future is Just Taking Shape

In 2016, cloud technology was well and truly taking off, and automation tools and distributed teams were just starting to take hold of the accounting profession. Firms were modernizing, processes were digitizing, and a new generation of professionals was demanding greater flexibility and work-life balance.

If you knew then what you know now, what would you have done differently? What hurdles could you have avoided, or turned into opportunities?

10 years on, the pace of change has accelerated beyond anything the industry has seen before, driven by factors like cloud accounting, hybrid workforces, COVID-19, the Great Resignation, increasing client expectations, inflation, and economic uncertainty. Artificial intelligence, in particular, is redefining how firms operate, how professionals work, and what clients expect.

These transformations bring both promise and uncertainty.

What will accounting look like in another 10 years? How will firms evolve to stay relevant? What skills will matter most? And what steps can you take now to prepare for what's coming next?

To explore these questions, Karbon consulted 34 of the profession's most forward-thinking leaders and innovators. Together, they represent a cross-section of firms, organizations, and Karbon customers of all sizes, services, and regions, but they share a common trait: a deep, informed sense of where the profession is headed.

These leaders will be the first to know what the future holds—because they're actively shaping it today.

These are their insights and predictions for what the accounting profession will look like in 2036 and beyond, and a glimpse into how you can be ready to thrive in it.

How to Read This Report

Each chapter explores a common theme for the future of accounting in 2036, including multiple predictions and quotes from the contributors behind the insights.

There are also resources and recommendations for firm leaders to make the most of the opportunities available to them now.

AI-Powered Humans

“

By 2036, AI won't be something accountants should adapt to—it will be baked into almost every asset of accounting and finance.”

— Antoniya Beyriyska, Ask The Boss



Routine Accounting Tasks Will Be 100% Automated

It's unanimous: each consulted accounting professional agreed that within the next decade, most of what they and their teams do today will be handled entirely by AI. And the reality will be revolutionary.

“

AI and new tools will unleash a productivity explosion like we've never seen before.”

— Isaac Smith, TeamUp

Tasks that once defined the profession like chasing receipts, coding transactions, reconciling accounts, and preparing tax returns will fade into the background. They'll be automated and paperless, moving from client, to firm, to relevant authority with little to no human involvement.

“

With the shift in technology, a push towards automation, and the introduction of AI, there will be less compliance, leaving space for meaningful, forward-looking services.”

— Zane Stevens, Protea Financial

“

AI-native ledgers will do low-value tasks faster, cheaper, and with fewer errors, moving the industry to a continuous close of the general ledger... But the most significant impact AI will have is on revenue expansion and overhead optimization.”

— Dan Gertrudes, GrowthLab Financial Services

As the administrative layer dissolves, firms will have greater capacity to deliver the higher-value services they're uniquely equipped for—those that drive growth, strengthen client trust, and increase profitability.

Every firm will be more [efficient and productive as a result of AI](#). But the real differentiator will be how leaders choose to use that freed-up time to deliver greater insights, elevate the client experience, and solve increasingly complex business problems.

“

The best accountants will command premium fees because they're no longer buried in routine work... We stop competing on who can process returns fastest and start competing on who can provide the wisest counsel when the stakes are at their highest.”

— Megan Roberts, HD Growth Partners

Some experts are predicting an even more dramatic transformation. If AI fulfills its potential, it won't just change how businesses operate; it will redefine entire industries.

“

If AI is all that it cracks up to be... Most accounting and tax tasks will be eliminated by 2036. Shoot, most tasks for all industries that use a computer will be eliminated.”

— Logan Graf, The Graf Tax Co.

The Traditional Accounting Firm Will Disappear

AI won't just change how accounting firms work. It will redefine what an accounting firm is.

The next 10 years will see the rise of fully autonomous accounting firms: highly scalable, self-operating firms, powered by agentic AI. At the same time, micro-firms—also powered by AI—will thrive by delivering highly specialized, high-value services to [niche markets](#).

“

We will see the world's first fully autonomous accounting firm. Not just automated. Autonomous.”

— Joe Carufe, Good Measure

Today's traditional firms could look more like horizontal teams, specialized intelligence agencies, consulting collectives, or community builders. Not all thought leaders agree on exactly *how* they will evolve, but they do agree that they will evolve as a result of AI.

“

The accounting firm business model, as we know it, will cease to exist.”

— Ryan Lazanis, Future Firm

“

My hope is that younger accountants recognize this moment for what it is: a chance to create massive positive change for the industry and for the consumers of accounting services... If we're willing to take the leap.”

— Erica Goode, The 15-Hour Accountant

3 Steps to Encourage Tech Innovation at Your Firm



Understand the benefits

The better you grasp technology's value, the easier it is to inspire your team.



Nurture your talent

People—not tools—make a firm tech-forward.



Celebrate your team

Value those who experiment, learn, and lead change.

Discover Your Action Plan

The Most Successful Firms Will Be the Most ‘Human’

As AI takes over the mechanical side of accounting, a firm’s most competitive advantage will be its people. Empathy, connection, and communication, will become the most valuable and irreplaceable skills of all.

“

The boldest shift won’t just be in what we can automate, it’ll be in how accountants use AI to do more meaningful work... The best firms will use AI like a co-pilot, handling the mechanics, so the humans can bring insight, empathy, and judgment.”

— Lynda Steffens, The Small Business Project

Today, many firm leaders excel at the work itself but struggle with the soft skills that will define success in 2036. They will need to shift their focus from developing technical skills to honing their interpersonal skills, building a strong professional network, and mentoring their teams to listen deeply, advise with clarity, and build trust in every conversation with clients.

“

Spend time with your team, mentoring them on professional judgement, communication, and fostering relationships with people.”

— Mark Shipton, Ignite CPA

How to Improve Your Team’s Communication

Discover the impact of clear dialogue, explore effective communication channels, and learn practical ways to foster stronger team interactions.

[Read Article](#)

“

If you care about your team and their individual success in addition to your firm’s, now is the time to uplevel them and train them for tomorrow’s needs.”

— Jennifer Green, Jade Consulting

“

In the world of AI investment, your largest investment still needs to be in your people. How are you helping them change their mindset to embrace experimentation and drive client outcomes? How are you helping them spend more human moments with their clients? These moments will unlock your greatest growth.”

— Jacob Schroeder, Ascend Consulting

As client relationships become increasingly integral to the success of your firm, there will also be a greater emphasis on proactively understanding their unique financial needs, goals, and behaviors. That includes adapting your services to be more inclusive and accommodating for different types of clients.

“

In 2036, firms will understand and better accommodate our neurodivergent community, with more bespoke structures, pricing, and communication styles.”

— Lauren Thiel, The Real Thiel

With accounting becoming more ‘human’ in 2036, the industry will become known for more than number-crunching. Professionals will be free to focus on more meaningful work, and more clients will seek out their services.

The result will be an entire profession reaffirming its true purpose—helping other business leaders make better, braver decisions about their future.

“

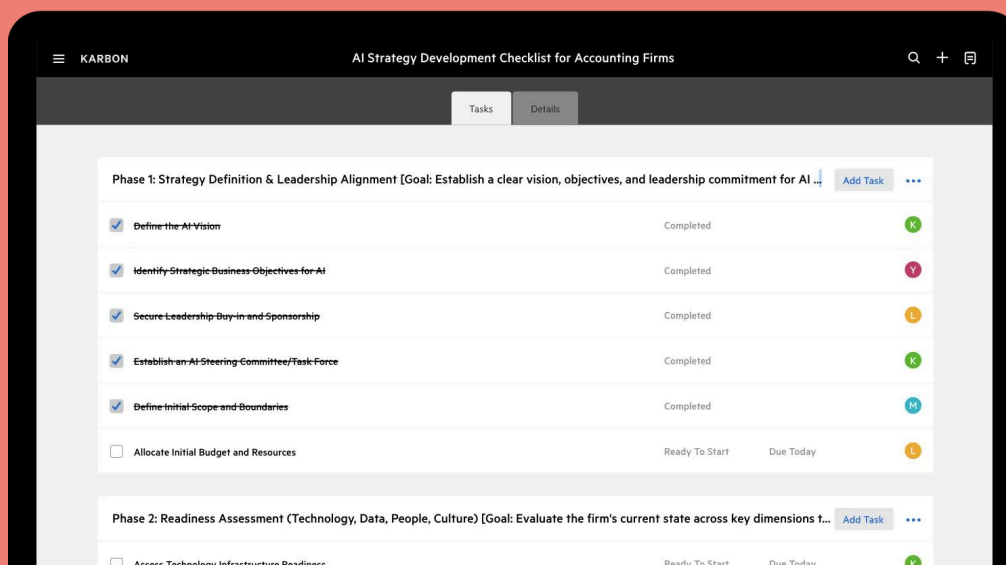
AI will attract more people to accounting. They’ll see it as a rewarding profession, using data to help small businesses make quick, brave, bold decisions... AI will make accounting more human.”

— Heather Smith, ANISE Consulting

AI Strategy Checklist

Develop your firm’s entire AI strategy, and set yourself up for long-term success.

[Download the Template](#)



Embedded Advisors

“

The most client-centric accounting firm of 2036 will feel less like a vendor and more like an embedded partner. It will anticipate client needs, act proactively, and deliver guidance that feels personal and always available.”

— Mike Libbey, YBL



Data Quality Will Determine Firm Success

A resounding message amongst the industry's leaders is the importance of data. The intel you have, and how you manage it, will become one of your biggest advantages (or disadvantages) in the years to come.

It will no longer be enough to simply have client data. It will be about how you structure, store, and activate that data to drive better decisions and outcomes.

“

Get your data structures in order now because that will be the backbone of your firm to ensure any future AI or automation implementation goes smoothly.”

— Brian Clare, Blueprint Accounting

Tomorrow's accounting professionals will need to think like data strategists. They'll require instant access to complete, accurate, high-quality, real-time data, paired with advanced analytical skills and business acumen. Success will depend on the ability to transform raw data into actionable insight, guiding clients not just on what has happened, but what to do next.

This evolution may give rise to new service models such as Decision Support as a Service (DSaaS) or Insights as a Service (IaaS), where firms are valued and priced based on the outcomes they help clients achieve.

“

Your greatest asset won't be your tax expertise or your ability to build a set of books... It will be your ability to translate data into action and relationships into results.”

— Madeline Reeves, Fearless Foundry

Firms with the highest quality data, and the most disciplined data structures, will be the most successful. But the real winners will be those that seamlessly blend data with AI and automation to deliver smarter, faster insights.

“

The structure of our knowledge and data must be ordered and managed in ways that are no longer stand-alone, but interconnected. Then there will be no limit to our ability to talk to our data and get insights out of that.”

— Jason Blumer, Thriveal/Blumer CPAs

“

Those that leverage AI to analyze data and give more robust advice to clients will be the future of our industry.”

— Tim Petrey, HD Growth Partners

Challenge

While AI will drive a data-literate future for accounting, it will also introduce certain complications. For example, clients using AI to collect, organize, or pre-process their financial data before sharing it will increase the risk of inaccuracies, which could lead to compliance or liability issues down the line.

Investing in strong data governance frameworks and training programs today will help avoid this.

Tech Stacks as You Know Them Will Be a Thing of the Past

The tech stack as you know it will disappear. By 2036, accounting firms won't rely on a broad collection of disconnected tools. They'll operate with a much smaller, unified, and intelligent ecosystem that connects every layer of the client experience, from onboarding to reporting and everything in between.

“

The firm of 2036 will run on an integrated ecosystem that blends AI, workflow intelligence, and real-time client dashboards. Instead of separate tools patched together, firms will have seamless platforms where compliance, advisory, and analytics converge.”

— Melisa Gaetani, Tino-Gaetani & Carusi CPAs

These systems will enable real-time visibility across all client data, automatically syncing financial information, client communications, and business metrics. Standardized workflows will move from one tool to the next without barriers, offshored teams will be empowered to collaborate over shared knowledge, and firm owners will receive real-time updates on profit margins, capacity, and client health.

“

In the future, the stack is invisible to clients... Tech is the backstage crew; the show is the empowered human.”

— Lauren Harvey, Full Stop Accounts

“

I believe the core technology won't be a ledger or tax software, but dynamic capacity and resource planning with fully flexible scheduling.”

— Gary Wood, CRC

The best-in-breed technology will have the most connected ecosystems and be the most autonomous: self-directing tasks, flagging issues, and reallocating resources without being prompted.

“

Run your firm like a product company: standardize the journey, build a data foundation early, price outcomes and not hours, and make hospitality your moat while agents do the work.”

— Dan Gertrudes, GrowthLab Financial Services

Challenge

The advent of AI means that social engineering and cyber threats, such as spear-fishing attacks and deepfakes, will become increasingly sophisticated.

Firms will need to invest in not just cybersecurity protocols and training, but in creating a culture of shared responsibility and vigilance to keep both their teams and their clients safe.

“

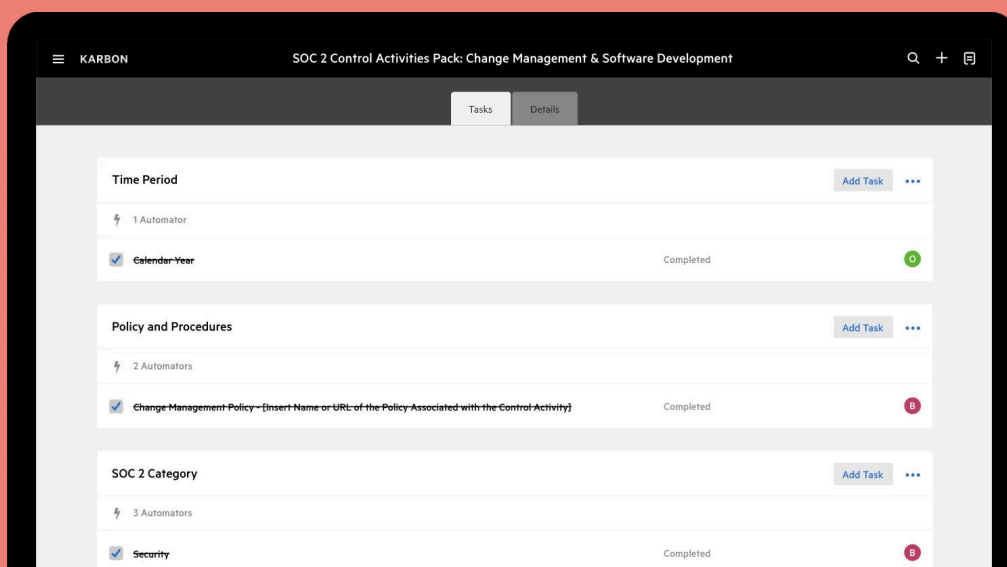
The biggest threat in this rapidly evolving world is cybersecurity and data misuse... We must maintain a curious nature and ensure we are practicing diligence in protecting our data.”

— Zane Stevens, Protea Financial

Your Comprehensive Cybersecurity Kit

Secure your firm with 88 best practice templates for SOC 2 compliance.

[Download the Template](#)



Knowledge Will Be Commodified

As a result of your data living across a single integrated, intelligent system, the collective wisdom of your firm will become one of your greatest commodities.

Institutional knowledge will be treated like a product that can be traded, co-owned, rented, and sold to the highest bidder. Elite firms and practitioners could come together and share insights, models, and intellectual capital across interconnected AI systems.

“

By 2036, the accumulated expertise of top-tier practitioners—their decision-making patterns, risk assessment frameworks, and strategic insights—will be captured in AI systems and licensed between firms... We'll see the emergence of 'knowledge cartels' in shared AI systems.”

— Thomas Sphabmixay, TMS/Wize Mentoring

The most connected ecosystem, combined with the most connected professional network, will separate the best of the best.

With firms predicted to niche down and become more specialized, their unique expertise will only make them more valuable. That, as well as a culture of documenting their reasoning, will naturally transpose into equally specialized [agentic AI](#). As a result, firms will be able to provide more intelligent, data-driven, actionable, and nuanced advice. This will make services more efficient, enabling higher fees and fewer resources.

“

Niche down, streamline processes, and don't try to be everything to everyone. The firms of the future will be the ones that choose their lane and run it better than anyone else.”

— Zane Stevens, Protea Financial

In 2036, knowledge won't just power the firm, it will be the firm. Those who understand how to capture, refine, and scale it will lead the next evolution of the profession.

Opportunity

Firm leaders who become systems thinkers now will set themselves apart in the future. By thinking of their services, processes, and team as parts of a whole system, they can understand where their greatest strengths and weaknesses lie, and start to design repeatable strategies for delivering great service and growing their firm by default. Regular continuous improvement meetings are a great place to start.

“

The next generation of accounting leaders should definitely be systems thinkers. They need to see the commonalities in processes, standardize and streamline them, and get their teams aligned on doing things the same way.”

— Isaac Perdomo, Opzer

Compliance Will Become Easier, Amplifying the Value of Advisory

Compliance will always matter. But it won't be as cumbersome as it is now.

Over time, most compliance tasks, like data entry and tax filings, will be automated away, shifting the focus toward quality control and interpretation. As this work becomes more and more streamlined, firms will be able to offer a more tailored service for their clients. Advisory will become the profession's new growth engine—but it won't look like the advisory of today.

It will be reimagined as 'holistic advisory,' a comprehensive service that aligns clients' personal and business goals with one cohesive strategy.

“

Interpretation of data and strategy will become more important. Taking what's happened and what we want to happen, and being able to mold that into a strategy that fuels growth.”

— Brian Clare, Blueprint Accounting

“

The best firms will have a team who is eager to help businesses grow.”

— Ana Lukac, New Wave Accountants & Business Advisory

Accounting professionals will act less like scorekeepers and more like co-designers of their clients' businesses. They'll shape everything from technology, operations, and cash flow, to less traditional services like marketing, pricing, sales strategies, and team structures.

“

Firms will need to be strong communicators, providing strategic, proactive advisory services.”

— Mark Shipton, Ignite CPA

Because of this, they will be deeply embedded in, and possessing a uniquely intimate knowledge of, their clients' businesses, making relationship-building skills all the more vital.

“

Our job is to shape businesses in real time... The most client-centric accounting firm of 2036 will be a co-creator of its clients' stories, translating real-time data into confident action.”

— Lauren Harvey, Full Stop Accounts

“

This is real, structured support for improving how a business actually performs. I'm talking about scenario planning, pricing strategy, profitability improvement, day-to-day efficiency measures, organizational structure guidance, succession conversations, and leadership support. Real-world, forward-looking guidance that actually shifts outcomes.”

— Lynda Steffens, The Small Business Project

Opportunity

By 2036, firms that can translate data into outcomes will lead the profession, but the ones that can effectively communicate both will win their clients' trust and loyalty.

Advisors who focus on mastering data storytelling now—using visuals, delivering high-impact presentations, and narrativizing their successes—will stand out as trusted partners who not only understand the numbers, but know how to help clients achieve their goals.

“

With real-time access to smart, intuitive insights, accountants will be able to dynamically translate the impact for their clients when it matters most, helping them make smarter, faster, and bolder decisions.”

— Karla Hourigan, MAD Wealth

Clients Will Have 24/7 Access to Services

As accounting professionals evolve into something more than advisors, they will increasingly depend on the intelligence of their systems to deliver sharper, faster, and more strategic recommendations for their clients.

The continuous, context-rich data flow will enable deeply individualized services, delivering both real-time and predictive insights, anticipating needs before they're voiced, and recommending the best possible next steps.

Over time, this level of responsiveness will become the new baseline. And at the center of this evolution will be agentic AI, or intelligent 'teammates,' that can function as personal strategists around the clock.

“

Each client will essentially have their own intelligent agent, trained on their financial history, communication style, risk profile, and goals... The value proposition won't just be fast service—it'll be customized, intelligent service at scale. That's how the best firms will scale intimacy. And that's how they'll win.”

— Joe Carufe, Good Measure

“

Imagine a client asks about a transaction and before you can respond, an AI agent has already suggested the right answer. That kind of automation removes friction on both sides and frees accountants to focus on strategy and insight.”

— Mike Libbey, YBL

Some even predict that clones or proxies will be readily available to step in for firm leaders, replicating their thinking, communication style, and expertise to serve clients in parallel. In fact, some are [already doing it](#)—like Ryan Lazanis.

“

My boldest prediction is that every firm owner will have their own clone... Perhaps multiple clones to be able to serve even more clients.”

— Ryan Lazanis, Future Firm

The outcome of all this innovation will be continuous client service that is unbound by business hours or time zones. Work schedules will become more flexible and autonomous, while client experiences become more immediate, intelligent, and deeply personal.

Disrupted Innovators

“

*Act as if the future is bright—because it is.
Unbelievably so. But it won't be if you lead with fear.”*

— Isaac Smith, TeamUp



The Cycle of Burnout Will End

For decades, too many in the accounting profession have worn exhaustion as a badge of honor. Long hours, relentless deadlines, and a cycle of burnout are accepted as just part of the job.

“

We've built a whole culture around swapping horror stories and war wounds. That's not how you attract new talent. We need to shift the narrative from pain to purpose.”

— Nicole Davis, Conscious Accounting

Over the next decade, this narrative will be rewritten. Automation will offer relief from low-value tasks, allowing accounting professionals to take charge of how they spend their time.

For many, that will mean more rewarding, client-facing work—and for some, that might mean less work overall. The current talent shortage, rather than burden the industry, could instead be the catalyst for lasting change. The very definition of success will evolve.

“

With two-thirds of CPAs set to retire in the next five years, scarcity will rewrite the rules—firms won't chase clients, clients will chase firms.”

— Meryl Johnston, Bean Ninjas/TeamUp

“

It's no longer about 'how many hours do I have to work?' It's now about 'how many hours do I want to work?' The accounting profession, once perceived as a rigid and demanding career path, will finally be celebrated as a flexible career choice that pairs well with healthy lifestyles.”

— Gary Wood, CRC

As the emphasis shifts from survival to sustainability, and as AI frees accountants up for more rewarding, client-facing work, deep passion will be restored to the profession. They'll be remembered for solving complex problems and shaping outcomes, while having the flexibility and autonomy to control their work hours.

Firm leaders who want to stay competitive by attracting and retaining the best talent will prioritize that above all else.

“

The focus has to shift to taking care of the staff, giving them ownership, and bringing the allure back to the profession.”

— Yuri Kapilovich, The Fun CPA

5 Ways to Foster an Award-Winning Culture

Being a great place to work is not about just maintaining your culture. It's about continuously elevating it.

[Read Article](#)

Accounting Will Undergo a Complete Rebrand

“

By 2036, the word ‘accountant’ will be obsolete. We’ll be known as business architects and changemakers, entrepreneurs who own the full business and societal impact layer.”

— Sarah Lawrance, Hot Toast

The forces reshaping the profession—AI, private equity, shifting talent demographics, growing expectations from clients, and a new generation of graduates—are setting accounting on an irreversible course of reinvention.

The future makeup of firms will look vastly different. Non-traditional hires will become more commonplace, pathways into the profession will diversify, and roles will expand to blend technology, creativity, and human insight.

Tomorrow’s accounting professionals will be data scientists, behavioral psychologists, marketers, storytellers, and salespeople.

“

We need to become better at sales—to identify new gaps, know our clients better, create new value in what we do, and to communicate and ultimately sell that.”

— Lauren Thiel, The Real Thiel

“

Accounting needs to open its doors in ways it has not in the past. The big question is, can we adapt as employers? Can accounting develop more inclusive leadership?”

— Meghan Blair, Snow & Blair/Ovata Collective

Career ladders will become career lattices as growth becomes horizontal and skillsets become multidisciplinary, blending strategic decision-making with creativity, curiosity, and emotional intelligence.

Accounting won’t just be reimaged. It will be revolutionized. Firm leaders who seize the opportunity now will help steer the profession in the right direction.

“

By 2036, we’re 10+ years into private equity’s transformation of the profession... Accountants become seen as strategic architects, almost like consultants crossed with tech entrepreneurs. They’re advising on M&A deals from coffee shops, leading growth strategy sessions at co-working spaces, and showing up to client meetings energized instead of exhausted.”

— Megan Roberts, HD Growth Partners

Opportunity

The firms that treat creativity and curiosity as core business skills—not just nice-to-haves—are the ones that will unlock new ways to serve clients, solve problems, and stay ahead of change.

By building space for structured experimentation, encouraging bold questions, and celebrating those who bring fresh ideas to the table, firms can create a culture of innovation that gives them a competitive edge now, and into the future.

Junior Roles Will No Longer Exist

By 2036, the traditional hierarchy of accounting firms will be a relic of the past. AI and autonomous systems will handle typical junior work like data entry and reconciliations, and institutional knowledge will be readily available across the firm, empowering new accounting professionals to take on more complex tasks, earlier in their careers.

“

Your newest graduate will handle complex tax restructuring with the same competence as today's senior partners because they can access the strategic insights of thousands of expert professionals who've handled similar situations.”

— Thomas Sphabmixay, TMS/Wize Mentoring

As a result, firms will flatten and become more horizontal in structure, and career progression will no longer be defined by years of experience. The distinction between ‘junior’ and ‘senior’ will eventually fade, replaced by collaborative, skill-based environments that reward initiative and curiosity.

“

The profession will need to focus on drawing in a new generation of professionals who feel inspired and excited about serving clients, and also lean into implementing AI as much as possible.”

— Madeline Reeves, Fearless Foundry

The next generation of accountants will enter a world where learning never stops. They'll expect mentorship, not micromanagement. Growth opportunities, not gatekeeping. Firms that embrace this shift and build cultures centered on coaching, collaboration, and continuous learning will attract and retain the best talent of the future.

How to Prepare for the Next Generation

The next generation will be lifelong learners, committed to personal growth and seeking mentorship.

[Read Article](#)

Soft Skills Will Matter More Than Technical Expertise

Leadership in the next decade will be vastly different than it has been in the past. Successful leaders will be known for their [soft skills](#), such as creativity, curiosity, empathy, entrepreneurship, and adaptability.

“

The strongest leaders will be visionaries—those who deliberately invest in themselves to develop skills of adaptability and resilience while leveraging their technical foundations to guide, empower, and inspire others.”

— Antoniya Beyriyska, Ask The Boss

The pace of change is not slowing down. Future leaders will lean into it. They will challenge long-accepted norms, be proactive about solving problems, and promote a [culture of curiosity](#) and experimentation at their firm.

“

The future of leadership in accounting will be defined by three words: adaptability, creativity, and communication.”

— Joe Carufe, Good Measure

“

I believe the next generation of leaders will exhibit equal parts adaptability, communication, and proactivity.”

— Matthew May, Sorren

The leaders that can stay agile, be proactive, and balance the need to keep up and slow down, while staying committed to their people and their own personal growth, will be the trailblazers of the future.

“

The next generation of leaders will have an abundant, future-focused mindset, curiosity, the ease of being digital natives, lifelong learners, and strong client-facing communication skills.”

— Heather Smith, ANISE Consulting

“

The next generation of accounting leaders will need the same traits that were needed in the past—the ability to diagnose complex problems and manage relationships with clients. That's not going to change, but the technology used to help solve problems will.”

— Jason Ackerman, BNA

Challenge

The greatest threat to the accounting profession isn't disruption—it's complacency. Firms that treat change as optional, rather than an opportunity, risk being outpaced by the agile-minded leaders of the future. Focus on fostering a culture of ownership, accountability, and proactive problem solving today.

“

Just like all revolutions of the past, we have to embrace this one, walk through it, and determine our next steps. But we CANNOT sit idle and wait.”

— Jason Blumer, Thriveal/Blumer CPAs

“

Courage to change is what will separate thriving firms from those that fade away.”

— Melisa Gaetani, Tino-Gaetani & Carusi CPAs

Leading Firms Will Be Purpose-First, Profit-Second

More and more, services will be valued and priced for creating meaningful outcomes for clients, and the impact of accounting professionals will be expected to extend beyond that into social-good services, like [carbon accounting](#) and ESG (Environment, Social, and Governance). Firms will stand out because of what they stand for.

“

What will set the next generation of leaders apart is their capacity to connect people, inspire change, and mentor others in a fast-shifting profession. They'll know how to harness technology, but will need to lead with empathy, adaptability, and purpose. The accountants of tomorrow will be more like impact navigators than number-crunchers.”

— Karla Hourigan, MAD Wealth

“

Firms will no longer compete on services alone. They'll compete on purpose. And that purpose won't just live on the website or be written on office walls. It'll show up in everyday behavior. In how people lead, in who they hire, and in the choices they make.”

— Lynda Steffens, The Small Business Project

The firms that thrive will stand out not just for what they do, but for *why* they do it. Purpose will become a competitive advantage. The most successful firms won't simply deliver services—they'll embody a mission. Their values will guide how they lead, who they hire, and how they show up for clients every day.

How to Align Your Team Around a Shared Mission

From the top of the organization down to entry-level employees, everyone needs to share a mission, language, and set of values to operate as a unified team.

[Read Article](#)

Constant Heroes

“

Don't worry about all the noise... Focus on serving your clients the best and you will succeed.”

— Jason Ackerman, BNA



One Aspect of the Profession Will Never Change

Amid all the transformation ahead, one constant remains: clients come first. Every consulted accounting leader underscored the same point—your North Star doesn't move.

“

Anchor around what is not going to change over the next 10 years. Clients will still need help understanding and running their businesses... And will want a trusted perspective who has context over their businesses as well. Build to that.”

— Matthew May, Sorren

Trust and human connection have been foundational to the profession for decades, and the next 10 years won't change that. In fact, it'll put a spotlight on it. As firms invest in AI, rescope their services, and implement new, interconnected systems, they will need to prioritize the [client experience](#) at each stage.

“

Continue focusing on adding the most amount of value and differentiating yourself in the eyes of clients by being there for them as a trusted advisor.”

— Yuri Kapilovich, The Fun CPA

The only real change is that there'll be a meaningful rise in access to high-quality financial and advisory services for small businesses and individuals who are currently unserved or underserved.

Through automation and intelligent systems, accounting firms will be able to deliver the same caliber of expertise and compliance support they offer today—but at a fraction of the cost and with far greater efficiency. Tasks that once required extensive manual effort, such as bookkeeping, tax preparation, and financial analysis, will become largely automated, enabling firms to scale their client base without increasing overhead.

As a result, firms will not only be able to assist more clients but also see a significant rise in billable output and profitability, all while helping democratize access to professional financial guidance.

“

AI will allow accountants to become advisors and have more time to help clients, meaning we can charge clients less to help their business. Right now, the clients that need us the most just can't afford our services.”

— Ana Lukac, New Wave Accountants & Business Advisory

Leaders need to remember, and remind their team, that the medium of the service may evolve, the heart of the work won't. Accounting is, and will remain, people helping people make confident decisions about their future.

“

Spend more time listening. Listen to your team, listen to your clients... When you allow their voices to shape the future of your practice, the unique combination of perspectives will take you much further than you will ever be able to go on your own.”

— Tim Petrey, HD Growth Partners

“

Slow down to speed up. Technologies are coming at us faster than ever... Take your time in reviewing and deciding, while keeping your firms' goals and future vision at the forefront. Remember you are the expert on your firm, your clients, and your service delivery.”

— Jennifer Green, Jade Consulting

AI Won't Replace Accountants. Here's Why.

Accounting has always adapted to change. AI is no different.

[Read Article](#)

The Rest is Up to You

By 2036, the accounting profession will look nothing like it does today.

AI-powered professionals will deliver faster, smarter services. Embedded advisors will help shape the businesses they serve. And bold innovators will continue to disrupt and reimagine what it means to be an accountant.

The transformation ahead is profound, and the outlook is optimistic. A decade from now, accounting will be defined by deeper work where human connection is valued, intelligent systems that turn data into impact, and sustainable careers with unlimited opportunities to grow.

And at the heart of it all: an unwavering commitment to helping clients succeed.

Right now, the best action you can take is to lean in. Experiment boldly. Push past what's familiar.

2036 is being built right now by those willing to lead it today. Are you one of them?

“

Don't future-proof. Future-build. Stop reacting. Start architecting the next chapter of your firm like you actually plan to lead it.”

— Nicole Davis, Conscious Accounting

“

Don't wait for everything to be perfect before making the next move, keep growing and changing.”

— Ana Lukac, New Wave Accountants & Business Advisory

“

Be nimble and stay grounded—and absolutely do not forget about the ones at home who love you and who you love right back. They will be the ones to write your obituary. Build your firm and life with them in mind.”

— Erica Goode, The 15-Hour Accountant

“

Don't wait to be disrupted. Design the firm you'd build if starting today with no legacy systems, then migrate there ruthlessly. There has never been a more exciting time to be in this industry.”

— Sarah Lawrance, Hot Toast



Practice Management Built for Growth

Boost productivity, strengthen client relationships, and drive profit with the #1-ranked practice management software.



karbonhq.com

