

# Future Skills for Accountants in a Digital World

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**Abstract:** *The accounting profession has started gaining momentum in the recent days as the field has undergone tremendous transformation over the years, coupled with rapid digitalisation, automation and data driven decision making processes making it more aligned with the need of the hour.*

**Keywords:** accounting

## I. INTRODUCTION

The accounting profession has started gaining momentum in the recent days as the field has undergone tremendous transformation over the years, coupled with rapid digitalisation, automation and data driven decision making processes making it more aligned with the need of the hour.

Traditional system of accounting mainly focussed on book-keeping, compliance with the laws, ensuring strategic and analytical functions. In a world that is driven by digital technology the accountants of today are expected to possess a diverse set of future-specific or future-oriented skill sets that will combine both accounting knowledge with technology, data analytics, business ethics and strategic planning processes. This chapter evaluates the essential future skills required for the accountants to perform their task relevantly and effectively in a digitally transformed business environment.

## DIGITAL LITERACY AND TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCE

The modern accountants must have knowledge about digital technology. It has become part and parcel of all walks of a business. It involves the ability to understand, utilise and adapt to digital technologies that are relevant to accounting process and various aspects of finance. Accountants must be having proficiency in cloud-based accounting software, enterprise resource planning(ERP) systems, Artificial Intelligence(AI) , automation using robotics, and knowledge about block chain technology. All these tools will be highly useful in automation of the routine tasks, improving accuracy, and enhancing real-time reporting, enabling accountants to focus on value-added activities.

## BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE AND DATA ANALYTICS

In an characterised by digitalisation, Accountants are increasingly expected to analyse large volumes of structured and unstructured data. A good extent of knowledge in data analytics will enable the accountants to identify the patterns and trends in the management of financial data. Apart from this a good knowhow of business intelligence tools, data visualisation techniques, and predictive analytics, allows the accountants to provide meaningful insights that may facilitate and support decision making and management of the resources.

## CYBER SECURITY AND DIGITAL RISK MANAGEMENT

As the business world has become more inclined to the digital technology in almost all activities, the financial information system has also been intertwined and interconnected. This has resulted in high extent of risk due to increasing cyber threats that the business firms are prone to. Accountants should have to possess the working knowledge of cybersecurity principles, data privacy laws, and digital risk management practices. Having good understanding of the internal controls, the information security policies of the firm, and the legal compliance requirements are very much essential for protecting the organisation's data and maintain the stakeholders trust.



### **EFFICIENT THINKING AND RIGHT DECISION MAKING**

By making use of the latest technology, automations and AI can bring about a positive impact in managing the data of the firm efficiently, But for professional judgement and efficient thinking process remains the monopoly of the human mind. Hence future accountants should have to develop strong critical thinking power within them to interpret the financial reports or data, locate the alternative solutions for various aspects of business and solve complex and complicated problems without much stress. They must also possess an ability to apply ethical reasoning and professionalism particularly in a business environment where the business systems are fully automated and has been influencing the financial outcomes of the firm.

### **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

The accountants of the future will be required to have good communication skills in order to dispense their duties and responsibilities effectively. The first and foremost reason is that, not all stakeholders may be financially literate. Therefore, the accountant will be expected to explain the complex financial and analytical information in a clear and understandable manner to the non-financial stakeholders. The financial managers will also have to collaborate with various functional departments like the IT and management, or any such departments for which the accountant should have to be an adept in presentation skills as well as maintaining good inter-personal relationship.

### **ADAPTABILITY AND LIFE LONG LEARNING**

It has become indispensable for the accountants of the future to continuously update and brush up their knowledge and skills. Adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning are critical for professional growth. They need to update their credentials through various types of certifications, training programmes, as well as self-learning processes that may enable the accountants to keep track with the emerging technological developments and updates as well have enough knowledge about the regulatory changes.

### **SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING**

Due to wide use of digital technologies in almost all areas of life and business, a lot of ethical challenges have arisen with regard to data usage, algorithmic bias, and transparency. The accountants of the future will be expected to withhold ethical standards in accounting while they are using advanced technologies. In addition to all these, there is a growing importance on sustainability and environmental, social and governance, reporting that necessitates the accountants to develop competencies, in non-financial reporting, and integrated reporting frameworks.

In fact, the future accountants must be able to blend their core technological expertise, with an advanced technology knowhow it is an implied fact that AI is ruling the entire universe, and the accountants of the future should have to possess high levels of knowledge in its application. In addition to all these knowledge of PowerBI and Tableau have become more indispensable for the future. Talent in the application and usage of advanced excel financial forecasting and cyber security awareness also holds importance.

Thus the digital transformation of the accounting profession has its own challenges and opportunities. Accountants who prepare themselves with knowledge of future ready skills in technology, business analytics, cybersecurity, communication and ethics will be able to scale their profession and turn out to be more successful in the digitalised economy of tomorrow. Above all the ability and expertise to integrate accounting knowledge with the digital competencies will define their value in the future.

