

Hey! What's New? 2025-129

Five Key Themes for Audit Transformation

A new report from CPA.com and the AICPA creates a snapshot of what a typical audit firm transformation looks like, based on feedback from 54 U.S. firms of various sizes and maturity levels. The *Audit Transformation Survey Report* uncovers how firms are adapting to new standards and modernizing methodologies in as we approach 2026.

The report notes that the audit profession is undergoing a period of significant transition. “New technologies, evolving standards, talent constraints and rising expectations from clients and regulators are reshaping how assurance services are delivered. Yet, while ‘audit transformation’ has become a common phrase, there has been limited shared understanding of what transformation looks like in practice – or the actual progress that firms have made.”

This report provides perspective directly from firms on the current state of audit modernization. Drawing on data from our survey, the report offers “a clear picture of where firms are making progress, where challenges persist and what meaningful transformation entails. While the survey is not a representative view of all CPA firms, the themes provide a springboard to discuss this period of transition across the profession. The intent is not to prescribe a single path forward, but to ground the profession’s discussion in real-world practices, barriers, and opportunities.”

Across the dataset, the report says, “firms reported both optimism about the potential of transformation and uncertainty about how to operationalize it. Most firms continue to rely on long-standing methodologies; 75% have not formally documented a transformation plan, and nearly one-quarter report no use of AI or advanced automation tools. At the same time, firms that are further along in their journey cite measurable gains in efficiency, audit quality, staff experience and client satisfaction – offering an emerging view of what modern audit delivery can look like.”

The survey data boiled down to five major themes:

1. **Audit technology is evolving.** Advanced audit technologies and capabilities drive efficiency, enhance quality and deepen client insights. Firms that are further along on their audit transformation journeys report that their use of technology has improved their staff experience and helps serve as a value differentiator to clients.
2. **Efficiency is a key driver of audit transformation.** Efficiency has emerged as the driving force behind audit transformation. Firms looking to optimize audit performance recognize efficiency is more than just speed; it’s about creating capacity and eliminating repetitive tasks so staff can perform at their greatest and best use, while maintaining audit quality.
3. **Adoption of modern audit methodologies is beginning to accelerate.** Despite the significant potential for increased quality and efficiency, it is only recently that firms are seeking to fully leverage modern audit methodologies, notably risk.
4. **Metrics are evolving, but slowly.** As automation and AI become more widespread in audit and reduce the time spent on tasks, the traditional metrics of realization, utilization and billable hours are becoming less relevant. In their place, forward-looking metrics such as

deliverable-based accountability and client readiness will become more relevant as measures of audit transformation.

5. **Improving the experience for clients and staff.** Audit transformation is not only about efficiency. It's also about creating vibrant workplaces where staff thrive and grow and minimizing client disruption while delivering quality, and value. Advanced technologies and new methodologies can make both possible.

According to Erik Asgeirsson, President & CEO, CPA.com, and Susan S. Coffey, CPA, CGMA CEO – Public Accounting, AICPA, “Firms that are further along in their journey,” “cite measurable gains in efficiency, audit quality, staff experience and client satisfaction — offering an emerging view of what modern audit delivery can look like.”

The survey findings are, of course, relevant to audit professionals worldwide, so download it at [Audit Transformation Survey | CPA.com](#).