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How To Be an Indispensable Accountant

Beth Wallace writes, in *INTHEBLACK*, “by 2030, about 40% of workers’ current skill sets will be transformed or become outdated. Yet, instead of viewing this as a disruptor, professionals could see this as an opportunity to make themselves more valuable in the workplace.” This is the advice of the Career Industry Council of Australia’s (CICA).

To David Carney, executive director of CICA, this means becoming the person others rely on for judgement, perspective and calm when things are uncertain. “Indispensable professionals see the bigger picture,” he explains. “They connect the dots between data and decision making, turn analysis into action and provide insights that help the organization move forward.”

Wallace offers five strategies for becoming indispensable at work.

1. Develop multidisciplinary skills: Wallace notes that, for Amanda Kenafake CPA, CEO and executive director of financial services provider Power Tynan, “an indispensable accountant is someone who helps individuals and businesses achieve success — a goal that calls for a distinct set of traits. You could be technically perfect, but the truly indispensable part is connecting people to the right resources, helping them understand what success looks like, identifying key drivers, solving problems and spotting opportunities or challenges.”

2. Layer experience with technology: Wallace says that “another vital quality of the indispensable accountant is the ability to complement, rather than compete with, technology. “Technology can automate manual, repetitive tasks and streamline workflows, freeing professionals to focus on high-value analysis and stakeholder engagement. Likewise, artificial intelligence (AI) can elevate average performers, but if misused, can also pull excellent performers down. Human expertise and judgement remain essential to ensure AI enhances performance rather than limits it.”

3. Strengthen human skills: Wallace notes that Carney believes that human skills are becoming key differentiators. “Collaboration, empathy and ethical reasoning are vital to ensure technology benefits people, he says, rather than the other way around. Adaptability when circumstances change, as they always do. Communication skills that enable you to translate technical concepts for non-technical audiences. Emotional intelligence that helps you work effectively with different personalities and perspectives. Ethical judgement to recognize when the technically correct answer isn’t the right one.”

4. Undertake continuous learning: Accountants need to continuously update their technology skills, but also be open to retraining in other areas and rethinking the work itself. “The shelf life of skills is shortening, making continuous learning an integral part of work rather than an occasional activity, Carney says. He reinforces the importance of keeping up with new tools, emerging trends and shifts in the industry, as well as understanding, at least conceptually, how data flows, how AI makes decisions, and where the risks and opportunities of the technology lie.

5. Be inquisitive: Developing skills such as problem-solving and relationship-building requires just as much effort as building technical expertise, Wallace advises. “Beyond completing microcredentials, engaging a mentor, attending industry events or joining professional networks, accountants should also cultivate an inquisitive mindset.” This means observing and asking questions, whether about a client’s business or an employer. “Instead of having one conversation about cash flow or gross profits, you can start to build a strategy for the business, because you’re listening and talking to the owner or leadership about every line item and the story behind it,” she says.

In this way, finance professionals are often the bridge between operational reality and strategic vision, Carney adds. “You’re the ones helping leadership make decisions that balance risk against opportunity, short-term pressure against long-term sustainability.” One of the most valuable skills is the ability to translate complex financial or technical information into a clear and practical form for decision-makers, he continues. “Those who can do this effectively and convincingly will always be in demand.”

For more, check out [How to be an indispensable accountant | INTHEBLACK](#).