

Leveraging Technology for a *Future-Ready* Profession

“**N**ever before in history has innovation offered promise of so much to so many in so short a time,” rightly says Bill Gates while referring to technology, which is constantly and comprehensively changing the way of life including in business and professional world. India and Indian accountancy profession, being at a positive turning point, are no exception to this trend. The technology-induced and artificial-Intelligence enabled globalisation and diversity challenges also offer opportunities for our profession. How the profession as whole and its members individually respond to technological changes and disruptions, and how they harness the trends, will be the key for their imprints on future.

In the times of full transparency and in-built validations, accountancy will become a very different profession in future. The result of this emerging scenario is the on-going change in the focus of auditors. The digital disruption is bound to impact the demand and expectations on what an accountant is and does in the modern networked economic world that hinges on technology.

In present times, the accountancy profession is grappling with and gearing up for three particular areas of technology including ‘digital financials, data analytics and cyber security’. The technologies such as cloud, mobile, and social media that have a potential to drastically change the way CA conducts himself/herself in business world; and the ‘new financial technologies, including digital-currencies and distributed ledgers’ are two other areas of significance. As such, it is time to focus on technology themes such as Blockchain, Automation, Big Data and Cyber Security. By tapping different dimensions of technology, the Accountancy profession can further optimise its potential as a great enabler, enhancer and facilitator of trust and professional excellence besides tapping enormous newer opportunities to serve the society and the economy. Technology can prove to be an effective answer to these times of ever-increasing expectations and challenges.

As a cradle of professional panache and the maintainer of a heritage of excellence, ICAI too is harnessing technology to push its relentless pursuit of new professional paradigms and to make inroads into the hitherto uncharted territories of excellence, professional capabilities and service to society and other stakeholders. While playing a pioneering role in XBRL domain in India, the ICAI is also looking into the usage and impact of big data, data analytics and artificial intelligence on the auditing procedures. Further, to assess the accounting and auditing issues in the emerging digital economy scenario, through sharing of knowledge and practices among the members, ICAI has recently constituted *Digital Accounting and Assurance Board (DAAB)* as a non-standing committee. DAAB will identify, deliberate and highlight issues in accounting (including valuation) and assurance (including internal audit) in the digital world.

All the organs of the ICAI, particularly the Committee on Information Technology, and Digital Transformation Process Reengineering Group are looking at technology as a strategic priority and as an enabling professional imperative. Leveraging tech-driven innovations, the ICAI has come up with a range of initiatives, some most important of which include: ICAI Mobile App, Development of Regulatory Forms – Online Mode, embracing social media, Online Member and Firm Card Online, E-Sahaayataa, Effective ICAI Payment Gateway Services, ICAI TV, ICAI Knowledge Portal, ICAI Digital Library, ICAI Publications Online Store, ICAI E-Learning, ICAI Cloud Campus, Centralised Dispatch System (CDS), ICAI Digital Hub for Students, ITT labs and Self Service Portal for Post Qualification and Certificate Courses Organised by Different Committees for Members of the Institute.

The eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL) is yet another dimension of technology in which ICAI is leading and facilitating the way at national level. The XBRL has revolutionised the business reporting the world over and is making inroads into India. ICAI is providing a pivotal support to government authorities/regulators in developing and implementing regulatory reporting platform based on XBRL.

XBRL not only enables reporting to be more accurate and efficient but is also very useful for data analytics just at the click of a mouse. As such, prominent stock exchange BSE and regulators like Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) and Reserve Bank of India have adopted XBRL as their electronic reporting language for their regulatory reporting requirements. The MCA vide its notification dated 16th February, 2015, has mandated the applicability of Ind AS (Indian Accounting Standards) for a certain class of companies from the Financial Year 2016-17 onwards.

In view of this notification, the ICAI has developed a separate XBRL taxonomy, referred as Ind AS taxonomy, for the Commercial & Industrial (C&I) Companies which are required to prepare their annual financial statements as per Ind AS. Along with the Ind AS taxonomy, business rules have also been prepared. Weighing on its immense benefits, the mandate for XBRL is gradually expanding in India. This scenario has also opened a new and expanding frontier of professional horizon for Indian Chartered Accountants.

With technology emerging as engine of growth for modern business world and CA’s work place, it is high time that Indian accountancy profession adopts and adapts to technology more and more, and innovatively put it to use to enhance professional capacities. Let’s jump on the technology bandwagon in our on-going journey towards a bright future brimming with untapped possibility and potential. Let’s be a future-ready profession. ■

Editorial Board ICAI – Partner in Nation Building