

# Technology – Empowering Profession

The world stands at the brink of a technological revolution and the scale, scope, and complexity of the transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced ever before. Professor Klaus Schwab in his book “The Fourth Industrial Revolution” explores that it is fundamentally different from the previous ones as it is expected that new technologies combining the physical, digital and biological worlds will impact all disciplines, economies and industries. At the heart of his analysis is the conviction that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is within the control of all of us as long as we are able to collaborate across geographies, sectors and disciplines to grasp the opportunities it presents.

Against this backdrop of technological transformation, accountancy profession has immense opportunity to add sustainable value. Advent of technology demands new set of skills, knowledge and competencies in areas like, artificial intelligence, machine learning, data science, robotic process automation, blockchain, etc. These technologies are emerging and transformational in nature and are already impacting assurance, accounting, taxation and other processes. Effective implementation of new technologies is the future of the accountancy profession, elevating it to a more efficient and more insightful level. It is the concatenation of evolving technologies with professional skills and judgement which would unlock real value of the accountancy profession in the digital era.

Automation of manual and routine tasks is taking place at an accelerated pace as standardisation of processes and cloud-based accounting systems has made data more easily available, easier to move between systems, simple to analyse, and also less susceptible to errors. This would help the accountants to focus more on value added activities and deliver qualitative professional services by providing real time, forward-looking insights to the stakeholders. However, it is equally important to ensure that there are adequate risk management systems in place to support usage of new technological solutions in professional work.

Digital era is a game changer and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), regulator of accountancy profession in the country, is proactively assessing the impact of digitisation

on accounting and audit for taking path breaking initiatives. ICAI has set up Digital Accounting and Assurance Board as a thought leadership forum with the inherent objective to address the accounting and auditing issues arising out of impact of digitisation to the business ecosystem. ICAI is intending to foster a cohesive global strategy for digital transformation of the profession through sharing of knowledge, practices amongst professional accounting bodies and *inter alia* competency building and capacity development of the profession, firms and stakeholders to be ready for the digital economy.

ICAI has taken a lead by developing “Digital Competency Maturity Model (DCMM) for Professional Accounting Firms – Version 1.0” for self-evaluation by accounting firms and is intended only to be a self-assessment tool for rating their current digital capabilities. The objective is that the accounting firms, irrespective of the size, assess the current level of digital competency and identify steps to move up the model and calibrate their functioning to the emerging context. Concept papers on blockchain technology, robotics process automation, cloud computing have been developed based on research of impact of these emerging technologies on the accounting profession. E-learning, podcasts, digital videos, webinars, workshops and training on ABCD of technology, i.e., Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain technology, Cloud computing, Data Analytics are upskilling the members to be able to leverage opportunities unfolding in digital era. Post Qualification Course on Information Systems Audit is the flagship course with the objective to create world class IT assurance professionals. Further, five day course on Blockchain Technology is designed to introduce the concepts of blockchain and explain the fundamentals of blockchain from perspective of a professional accountant.

In a nutshell, accounting profession will empower itself by strategically harnessing the technological changes and direct them towards a better future by collaborating closely with business and governments. Technology empowerment is the mantra for the future ready accountants paired with ability to lead, create and innovate in ever changing environment.

—Editorial Board ICAI: Partner in Nation Building