

# Inside<sup>+</sup> **OUTSOURCING**<sup>®</sup>

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## Fighting on all fronts

The Accounting Talent Index 2026 shows the multi-headed approach practice leaders are taking to overcome a people and skills shortage.

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# Accounting Talent Index 2026: global pressure

Advancetrack's 2026 index highlights the talent issues that the accounting profession is facing around the world.

NEARLY THREE QUARTERS of accountancy firms are now turning away clients because they lack staff, according to a global survey highlighting the growing drag of labour shortages on the profession.

Outsourcing specialist Advancetrack has released the [2026 Accounting Talent Index](#) – a global survey of accountancy leaders, which shows the scale of the ongoing recruitment challenge facing the industry.

According to the newly released findings, 73% of firms say they are turning away potential clients due to a lack of available staff, while the same proportion describe the impact of the talent shortage on their business as 'severe'.

## GROWING PAINS

While previous editions of the Accounting Talent Index highlighted the growing skills shortage, for the first time the 2026 findings show the issue has now escalated into a direct constraint on firms' ability to deliver work and generate growth.

The data suggests the issue is not easing. A total of 45% of respondents said the talent shortage is worse than three years ago, including 19% who believe it has worsened significantly.

Vipul Sheth, founder and MD of Advancetrack, said: "Firms are not short of demand – they are short of people. This year's Accounting Talent Index reinforces just how

**45%** of firms state the impact of the talent shortage is 'significantly' or 'somewhat worse' than it was three years ago.

challenging the environment has become for firms across the profession, and how the talent shortage is starting to put a ceiling on how much they can grow.

"Demand for services remains strong, but many firms are reaching a point where they just do not have the capacity to deliver. As a result, they are being forced to turn work away.



“Rather than a lack of ambition, our Index shows an urgent lack of available resources. Firms want to expand, but without the right people in place, that growth is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve.”

### SERVICE LINES AT CAPACITY

Further stats from the 2026 Accounting Talent Index show how capacity constraints are now widespread, with 69% of firms reporting service lines are operating at or near full capacity. As a result, 71% say their ability to grow is being slowed by recruitment challenges, while 70% identify talent shortages as a major barrier to expansion.

According to Vipul, the findings point to a profession that remains ambitious, but increasingly constrained by a lack of available talent. Despite the pressures, 73% of firms

## HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE THE CURRENT IMPACTS OF THE TALENT SHORTAGE ON YOUR FIRM NOW TO THREE YEARS AGO?



still expect to grow over the next 12 months, suggesting demand remains strong, but delivery is becoming more difficult. He added: “This shortage of skills is leading more firms to rethink how they structure their operations,

and that involves looking at a combination of technology, outsourcing and new ways of working to help bridge the gap between demand and capacity.”


The Accounting Talent Index 2026 is based on responses from 500 accountancy leaders across key global markets, including the UK, US, Australia and Canada. It provides a detailed snapshot of how firms are responding to the ongoing talent shortage and the impact it is having on growth. ■

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 You can download the full Accounting Talent Index 2026 by [clicking here](#).



# gbX and Accountex: reflections on the change agenda

Master change, and take control of your accounting practice's destiny, writes Vipul Sheth.

AS IS THE CASE after two mammoth events, it's time to take a breath and reflect on the past few days.

Our flagship conference, gbX 2026, held at the National Gallery, had an agenda for change. And right from the start, there was an enormous energy from both the audience and our speakers.

We had The High Performance Podcast presenters Jake Humphrey and Damian Hughes on in the afternoon, and I have no doubt that everyone in attendance left inspired to bring their A-game.

Our key panel focused on the growth paradox – how to grow and scale in a world where having both the right people, and the right number of people, is more difficult than ever. It was also an opportunity to present the [Accounting Talent Index 2026](#).

While the stats around resourcing, people and capacity are scary, practices that are prepared to try out new ways of working will be the ones to move forward. And the 2026 report highlighted that many are making changes to how they operate.

It was definitely our best event – a reminder to take learnings from previous years to make the next one at least a bit better... and this year's felt like a real step up. One client emailed to say it was the best conference they'd been to in 35 years – hopefully even more of you can share in that in 2027.

In reality, change in the business context is about making things better. Practices can be resistant to change because of two things: compliance services drive a solid and predictable rhythm, which can be disrupted where change is required. Secondly, practitioners have to concentrate on the



changes brought about by a new set of rules and regulations each year. Changing how you do things within a practice can then seem a step too far – or certainly put off to a 'quieter time in the year'.





Thinking about the disruption that AI is set to bring upon the accountancy profession, discussions around the topic were difficult to avoid at Accountex London. However, as our Accounting Talent Index shows, there is some trepidation about what that change looks like, and how a well-established practice can 'play around' with AI to find uses for it.

Many practices are still paper-based – and they will need to take steps towards digitising how they do things. We hope that the tax authority's digital agenda drives these firms to make that fundamental step, creating a platform for trialling AI and automation.

As we've said before, we're all bound to this change. Advancetrack mirrors how accountancy practices work, therefore AI is not something we can ignore. Thankfully we've always built around a strong tech platform and great people; we'll look to make AI work for us (and therefore, for our practice partners too).

Hopefully AI and further tech advances can help your practice improve, too. ■

**A BIG THANK YOU** to *inflow* for sponsoring our post-gbX Happy Hour alongside Advancetrack! *gbX* attendees went onto *The Bank Vault* at *Walkers of Whitehall* for drinks, light snack and great conversation.







## Audit Support Services

Firms looking to manage their audit resource this coming season, get in touch for quality staff on an Outsourced or Offshored basis

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# Getting ahead of the compliance race

Embracing change is critical in driving your practice through the barriers of increasing compliance and volatility, explains Vipul Sheth.

IN A WORLD where compliance becomes more complex, and clients require increasing levels of your support, how can you get ahead of the curve?

It's a question I ask because the operating environment for accountancy practices feels unrelenting. Let's be honest, it is unrelenting.

That doesn't mean it's a bad environment to be in, or one that shouldn't be attractive to a new generation of accountants and business advisers. But it requires existing practice leaders and owners to put the foot on the gas.

## BREAKING THE CYCLE

There are certain competencies required in moving a business forward: certainly, a pulling-together of vision, strategy, planning and then

driving through projects. Accountants are expertly trained, but that doesn't mean that running their own firm is necessarily easy or a natural thing to do.

It's easy to get caught up in the rhythm of compliance and associated back and forth of information between firm, client and then filings to government departments. But, as I said earlier, the world is becoming more complex and that means greater regulation, legislation and client needs.

Practices and their people can get caught up in the day-to-day, which becomes closer to firefighting as demands increase.

The problem this creates, though, is that operational change usually comes through a



piece of software becoming defunct, and a replacement found, rather than as a driver of growth or efficiency.

### LEAVING THE COMFORT ZONE

So, if you want things in your firm to change – whether streamlined processes, cost efficiencies or new service lines, what do you do?

Well, it comes from getting out of the comfort (or maybe that should be discomfort) zone. It's attitudinal – and you must drive that top-down. There will be people within your firm resistant or worried about change. However, for your firm to exist in five or ten years' time, you will need to have brought along very good people for the ride... and keeping them will have been about the promise of things to come.

### INSPIRE OTHERS TO JOIN YOU

You need a group of people who will be

advocates, leaders and adopters within the business to say: 'This is where we want our firm to head, and these are the changes we all need to make in order to make it happen.'

The fastest growing firms try lots of different things – if something fails, they try something else. Ambitious people help you build a better business, have better and more successful clients. Ultimately, the concerns about change

– disruption, cost etc. – are outweighed by creating a growth and improvement journey. Again, it's easy for me to say but if people don't want to be part of that journey then it's for the best; and find people who do. They may well be your practice's next set of equity holders. ■



Vipul Sheth is founder and managing director of Advancetrack



University of Warwick Science Park, Sir Williams Lyons Road, CV4 7EZ, UK

+44 (0) 24 7601 6308

[advice@advancetrack.com](mailto:advice@advancetrack.com)

[www.advancetrack.com](http://www.advancetrack.com)

[@Advancetrack](https://www.linkedin.com/company/advancetrack)

