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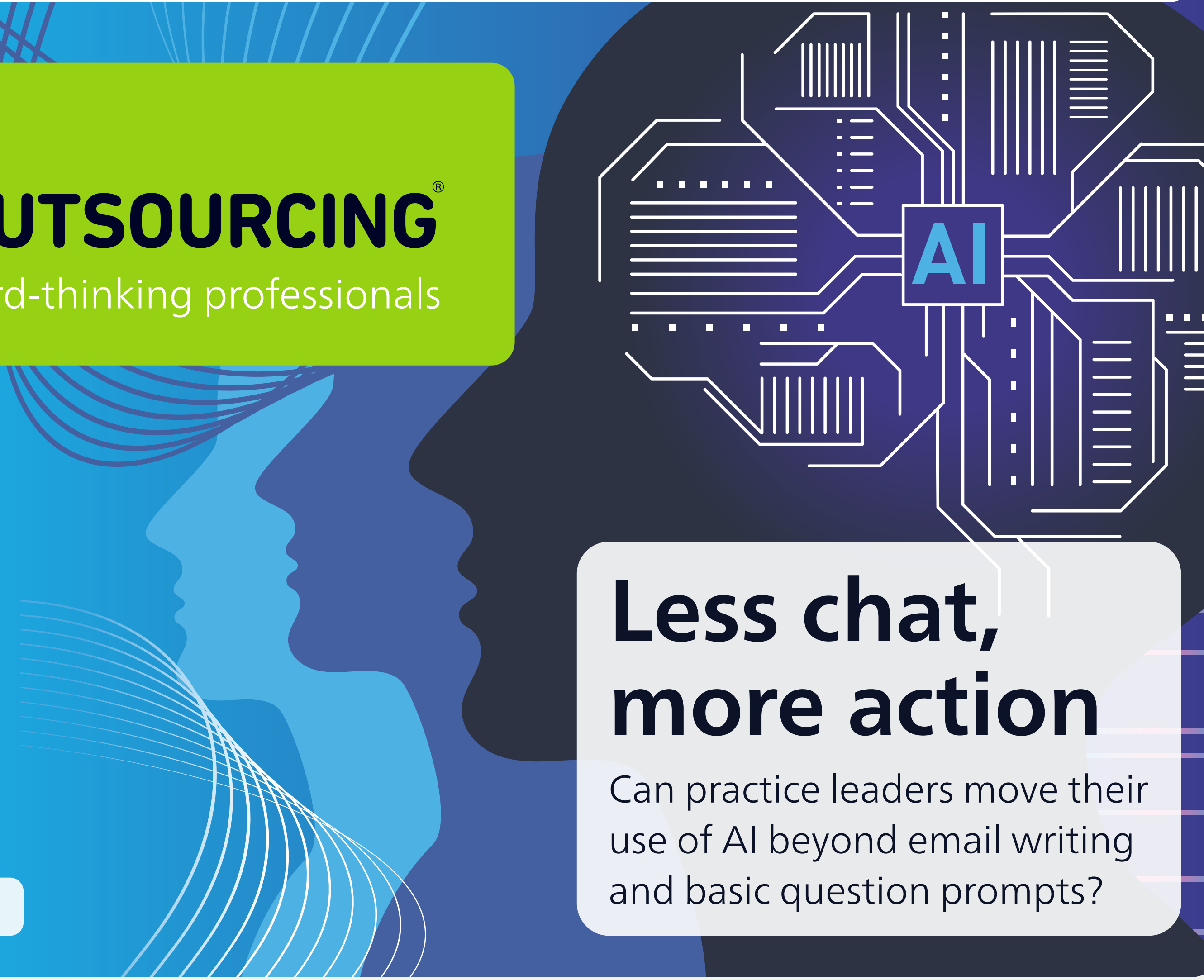
The newsletter for forward-thinking professionals



Less chat, more action

Can practice leaders move their use of AI beyond email writing and basic question prompts?

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AI: make time to take time

While all eyes may be on MTD, the chatter is about the use, or lack of it, among accountancy practices, writes Vipul Sheth.

IT'S (LITERALLY) BEEN an eventful few weeks, what with Advancetrack's flagship gbX conference, Accountex and the launch of the Accounting Talent Index 2026. I also attended the Kreston Global Conference – which Advancetrack sponsored – along with colleague Louise Walpole.

This period is an intense one for myself and the team, because we end up having a greater volume of conversations with clients, prospects and other vendors.

There has been chatter about the day-to-day for accountants – namely, getting clients, software and processes working as the first reporting period for Making Tax Digital approaches.

However, the main topic of discussion won't surprise you: AI. Or, to be more precise, what the world of accountancy will look like in an AI world.

The noise around artificial intelligence and professional services over the last couple of years has been how jobs will fall as AI steps in. You would think, therefore, that accountants would want to wrest control of this potential situation; in other words, how do we use AI to enhance and support what we do, rather than just take over calculations, processes and workflows?

MOVE AI BEYOND EMAIL WRITING

What concerns me is that it appears there's not enough work being undertaken by firms to navigate the changes that are coming down the track because of AI. Anecdotally, AI usage/testing is light-touch and very informal. Using it to write emails or rearrange the inbox is fine, but it's not enough.

The Accounting Talent Index provides quantitative evidence: just 16% of the 500 respondents said their firm was actively investing in AI.

I have said this before: It's difficult to pull your firm, or its individuals, outside of the day-to-day focus – particularly with the ebbs and flows of new compliance/tax requirements. But the most successful firms are those that embrace the new. Perhaps look at AI to make MTD easier for your firm and clients?

Martec's Law provides that technology advances at an exponential rate, and organisations can't change quickly enough to keep up. But those that are curious, and prepared to try (and sometimes fail), will eventually find new and better ways of working.

Some might say that accountancy firms backed by private equity have the financial clout to take more risks than other models of practice – I don't buy that. Independent practices can overcome financial barriers by having more opportunity to flex their culture – to be more inquisitive without spending their time reporting back to their owners every quarter.

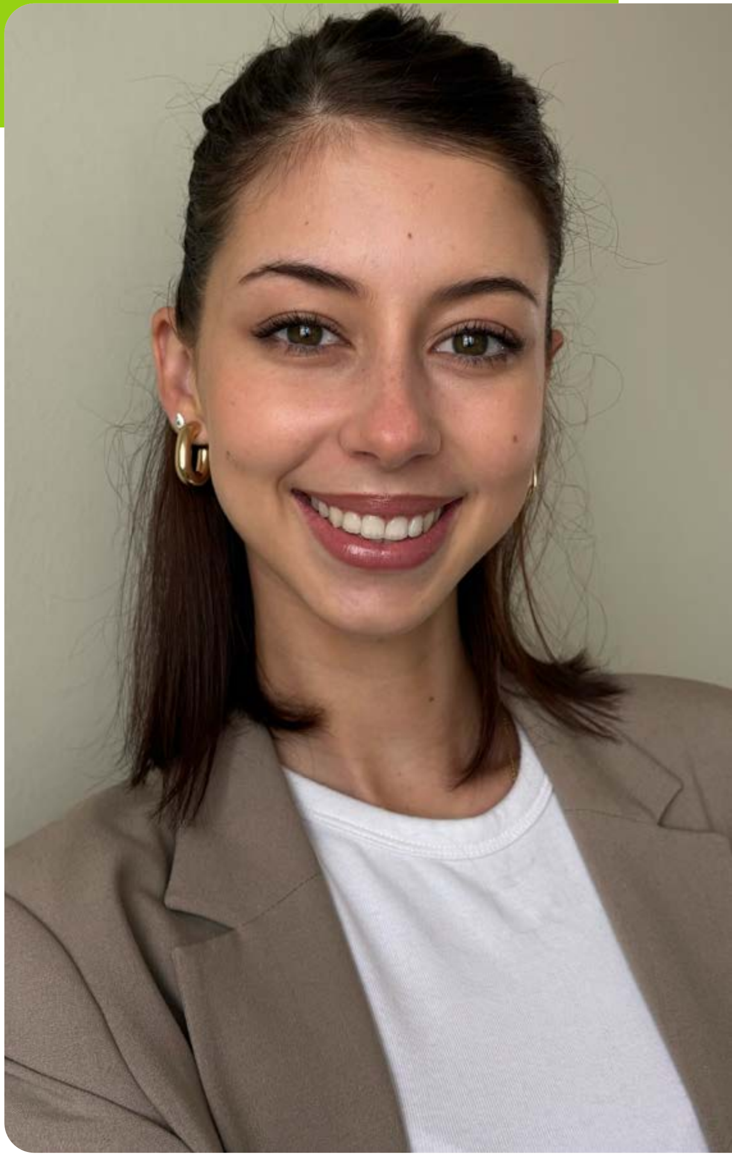
And before anyone asks, Advancetrack is far from immune to AI disruption. We are working very hard to leverage it to make us a better organisation, and by definition, better serve practices.

Vipul Sheth is founder and managing director of Advancetrack

Please get in touch if you'd like help in transforming your practice into one with sustainable growth.

In profile: Lucia van der Schyff

Lucia will look to put her learnings and experience into play in driving Advancetrack's social media presence forward.



WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

I'm Advancetrack's social media manager and will also provide marketing support to our head of marketing, Ashlea. There's lots to do and learn, having recently started. My first priority is to get up to speed and get to things that need to be done. I'm born and raised in Namibia. I moved to South Africa after high school at 18 and have been here for eight years. I put a big emphasis on studies while in Cape Town, including two undergraduate degrees in digital marketing and strategic business management and a post-grad in marketing in management.

HOW DID YOU GET THE ROLE, AND HOW HAVE YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS GONE?

I've freelanced while studying digital marketing but am passionate about social media. I came across the Advancetrack role on LinkedIn... I went through their hiring process and interviewed with Ash and was later offered the role. I've now been here for a month. My first few weeks have been focused on getting to know our offering better and finding ways to share (through social media) how we can solve the issues that accounting practices have.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS IN YOUR ROLE, AND FOR ADVANCETRACK, LOOK LIKE?

I've always been ambitious and go-getting, so I want to grow within my role. I see marketing as an integral part of a business and without it, it's not possible for any company to grow as far as they could. Ash has grown it and taken it to a great place; I want to assist her take it forward even further.

As for success, it will be nice to see Advancetrack's team increase and work towards the goal of further growth for the company. I'd like my work to make an impact.

Guest blog: Accountancy must go bold or go home

The Accounting Talent Index shows that more firms must undertake more strategies if they're to move the profession forward, writes Kevin Reed.

Now in its third year, Advancetrack's Accounting Talent Index report has evolved into one that is global – with strong levels of responses from Australia, the UK, the US and Canada.

TAKING STOCK OF AI

So, what do I make of this year's report? Let's take a step back first. The 2025 Index contained some fascinating stats around attitudes to AI and its impact on the profession. Respondents were broadly positive: AI will create work for accountants, not leave them out of work.

Of course, there is a catch: AI is likely to drive the restructuring of roles; some tasks may disappear but new ones will be created. Therefore, if you want your day job to stay the same then accountancy might not be the best place for you.

Despite my discussions with practitioners in recent months showing that AI is still in its infancy, it was eye-opening to see that represented in the 2026 Talent Index, particularly after last year's results. It would seem that AI adoption is fractured, and basically not well-formed across the profession – not just limited to my contact base… but a global position.

A RESTRUCTURE REQUIRED

The 2026 report also raises other concerns. There is still a significant proportion of practitioners that see the talent shortage as worse than it was three years ago. What three years of the Index has shown is that this problem is not a blip.

Delving into the sections covering the US, Canada and Australia showed that this issue is driving structural reform and mitigation. If we cannot persuade students that accountancy has a future, then it becomes a fait accompli that we will need fewer of them.

Reform and mitigation aren't reserved for accountancy institutions. The report highlights that many firms are doing many things to clear the talent hurdle. From introducing new tech and processes through to wellbeing initiatives, increased salaries, upskilling and outsourcing/offshoring. Personally, I'd prefer to see more firms doing more.

The current situation begs aggressive moves – it also makes me appreciate that, with such change required, PE has been an attractive proposition for many practices across the UK and US. But funding, or handing over ownership, doesn't have to be the only models; however, bravery and boldness of approach are required.

TOO MUCH WORK, NOT ENOUGH GROWTH

Finally, it's worth noting that keeping accountancy thriving means that the practices have to thrive. Sadly, it's a Catch-22 situation where firms are struggling to keep up with the workloads, impacting their ability to grow despite ambitions to do so.

This not only hurts the images of practices, making recruitment tougher, but it's pushing our existing accounting professionals over the edge. **A staggering 26% are considering leaving the profession.**

While I look forward to seeing the Accounting Talent Index 2027, I shall read it through my fingers.

***Kevin Reed** is editor of Financial Accountant magazine and a freelance journalist. His views may not align with those of Advancetrack.*