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consulting, either by buying an existing technology consulting firm or building it from scratch. So it's no surprise that one of the major skillsets for non-accountant hires is

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Jim Boomer • Jun. 13, 2018



With our profession facing automation across all service lines, CPA firms are doing what would have been unthinkable just a few years ago: recruiting non-accounting graduates. According to the 2017 AICPA Trends Report, 20 percent of all new hires are now non-accounting graduates.

It's one thing to read about this trend, but it's another to understand what firms are

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hires is professionals with IT experience.

Many firms are hiring technology advisors, especially those with experience working with early- to mid-stage startups, to help clients implement and run their accounting and financial functions. They're also looking for IT consultants who can perform general IT controls consulting, perform control assessments and assist in systems and organization control engagements.

Some firms are also hiring or acquiring developers with experience developing front-end applications and building digital workplace solutions. These developers and analysts will consult with clients to define their needs and design and implement portals, intranets and mobile apps.

Often, these professionals will have degrees in computer science or information systems and have experience working in a related field.

Financial

Many of your firm's high net worth clients already turn to you when considering transactions that affect their finances, so wealth management has been a natural extension for firms of all sizes. Hiring investment advisors with a CFP or CFA designation is becoming more common. It's especially beneficial if they can bring in an experienced advisor with a transferable practice.

Human resources

CPA firms providing HR consulting has been around for decades, even in small to midsize firms. Clients have a lot of confidence in their firm's integrity and abilities, so firms are administering cafeteria plans, employee benefit plans and health plans, assisting in recruitment and selection, writing policy manuals, helping clients with

discipline issues, teaching management classes, and developing compensation

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Niche experience

As firms drill down into niche areas, they're hiring professionals with experience working in those areas. For instance, a firm with a dealership niche may employ consultants who have worked in sales, marketing, finance or other areas of an automotive dealership because they can provide a unique understanding of the needs and issues of that industry.

Likewise for other niches, such as non-profit organizations, agriculture, communications, construction and real estate, financial institutions, gaming, government, healthcare, manufacturers, etc.

STEM majors

With big data, automation and machine learning on the horizon, many firms are stepping up their recruitment of students and experienced candidates with degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Increasingly, auditing and accounting are less about reporting on historical numbers and more about aggregating data to get insight from those numbers. That requires people who understand data and can use tools that pull whole populations of data together.

They're hiring candidates with a minor or a double major in accounting plus data science or data analytics, computer science, programming or management information systems.

The accounting profession is changing, and CPA firms increasingly realize that they must change with it or fall behind. This doesn't mean that accounting isn't still an

in-demand skill set, but soon accountants will be one of many professionals that

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